



Ten decisions that will define the Coalition

A wargame on 20th October 2010.

Westbourne Communications has teamed up with the **Institute for Security & Resilience Studies** (University College London) to hold a three-hour wargame with some of the brightest minds in Westminster.

Wargames are a tool best used at moments of change, as they allow decision-makers to consider how different organisations can react to change, and each other.

In our wargame, players were chosen from the worlds of Fleet Street, Whitehall and Westminster. During the session, held at Westbourne's HQ, they adopted a number of identities (Chancellor, union-leader, etc) and reacted to challenging events. The results can be found overleaf, and the diagram covers the wargame timelines we played out.

The objective was to define the choices facing the Coalition in the period until Election 2015. Our wargame took place days after the launch of the new National Security Strategy, the Strategic Defence & Security Review and the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The results can be found overleaf.

Participants

James Bethell (Westbourne), **Sumeet Desai** (Reuters), **James Forsyth** (The Spectator), **Dan Fox** (ISRS), **James Frayne** (Westbourne), **Blair Gibbs** (Policy Exchange), **Mike Granatt** (ISRS Senior Fellow), **Mark Littlewood** (Institute of Economic Affairs), **Deborah Mattinson** (Britain Thinks), **JP MacIntosh** (ISRS), **Gabriel Milland** (Policy Exchange), **Neil O'Brien** (Policy Exchange), **David Singleton** (PR Week), **Mike Smithson** (Political Betting) and **Will Straw** (Left Foot Forward).

Institute for Security & Resilience Studies: Based at University College London (UCL), the ISRS brings the issues of security and resilience in the 21st Century to a world class centre of research and learning, in order to catalyse innovations that are vital for the challenges ahead of us as individuals and organisations from all market sectors and nations.

Westbourne: Based in the heart of Westminster, Westbourne offers a full range of public relations, public affairs, political intelligence and issues management services.



10 decisions that will determine the success or failure of the Coalition

NATIONAL ECONOMICS IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

1. Decision Point: *Will George Osborne launch a Plan B “growth” package with new cuts e.g. ahead of disappointing Q1:2011 growth figures.*

Yes: International structural imbalances (eg escalating currency wars) are set to overwhelm domestic economic measures so critical to have options ready.

No: Any perception of a lack of resolve by the UK may undermine market confidence in Sterling and erode electoral credibility.

2. Decision Point: *Should Britain back down to pressure from international economic bodies over issues like banking reforms, military commitments, European federalism, etc?*

Yes: Britain faces an irresistible change in the World Order as the *ancien regime* gives way to energetic new countries of the developing world.

No: Coalition’s belt-tightening will put Britain back into the premier league as a global financial centre & 6th largest economy, which Cameron will demonstrate as a senior figure on the world stage.

3. Decision Point: *Will Cameron decide to break with the Coalition and the spirit of national unity, and instead adopt short-term dividing lines?*

Yes: Blaming everyone else worked as a tactic for PM Brown.

No: The pressures created by the cuts will actually force the Coalition together and make national unity the only realistic option.

UK ELECTORAL POLITICS

4. Decision Point: *In the event of an Oldham by-election, will it serve as a flash-point for hot issues, or rally the electorate around common goals?*

Yes: It could mitigate the pain of the May election campaign and results, not least on immigration.

No: The potential to reassert first-past-the-post results sooner rather than later is a greater prize.

IMMIGRATION PRESSURES

5. Decision Point: *Should either the Coalition or the Opposition pre-empt immigration issues erupting over public services and unemployment by calling for an effective new migrant scheme?*

Yes: This could be a consensus-building issue for mainstream parties closing their flanks to BNP-UKIP.

No: Impossible to deliver the measures that would answer popular concerns, particularly when available controls only impact skilled immigrants needed by business.

6. Decision Point: *Engage with EU member states over immigration?*

Yes: Immigration is a common challenge across the EU (eg dilemmas for Sarkozy and Merkel) and there’s a window of opportunity to adapt ECHR and movement of labour.

No: The issues are too complex and toxic. It isn’t possible to sustain the necessary political will and deft handling.

POLICING AND PRISONS

7. Decision Point: *Will police resources become overstretched and require support, particularly in the run up to Olympics 2012?*

Yes: The potential for terrorism or a breakdown in public order needs to be reconsidered.

No: The police service needs to take a lead on productivity gains rather than exploit their role.

8. Decision Point: *Rights and responsibilities demonstrably out of balance.*

Yes: Policy on prison places, CCTV, DNA and ID cards needs reconsidering.

No: Liberties need to be reasserted after the last Govt regardless of circumstances.

STRATEGIC FORCES AND OPERATIONAL THEATRES

9. Decision Point: *Should Britain learn to accept that Iran has become a nuclear power?*

Yes: Any direct attack on Iran will stop gas and oil from the Gulf, which the world cannot take.

No: The nuclear arms race that ensues across the region and beyond is dire to contemplate.

10. Decision Point: *Should Britain withdraw sooner than planned from AfPak theatre of operations?*

Yes: AfPak operations are too costly and not gaining sufficient traction within realistic timescales.

No: Keep digging in otherwise the credibility of the West takes another severe knock.