

Playing by the New Washington Rules: The U.S.–Canada Relationship, 1994–2003

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Eight years after its publication, the special issue of *The American Review of Canadian Studies* on “The State of the Canada–United States Relationship, 1995” seems almost surreal. Co-editors David Leyton-Brown and Joseph T. Jockel entitled the volume *Weathering the Calm*; their introduction described a “comfortable and unruffled” relationship. “The big bilateral issues have been dealt with,” they concluded, “and the current big issues are not bilateral ones.” The words “trilateral,” “multilateral,” and even “plurilateral” recurred in the articles that made up the volume. The United States and Canada, editors and contributors agreed, would work together with Mexico in a trilateral North American context, but would work together also in multilateral contexts within the hemisphere and around the globe.¹

The lead article in *Weathering the Calm* was “Promoting Plurilateral Partnership: Managing United States–Canada Relations in the Post-Cold War World,” by John Kirton. “The United States–Canada relationship during the mid-1990s,” Kirton argued, “has become an even more intense, cooperative, and close partnership.” Canada and the United States would work together, he predicted, to “operate, deepen, and broaden...the new NAFTA regime.” The new independent institutions that the two countries created for NAFTA would remove trade and environmental “disputes from high-level political controversy,” and make possible “a more equal balance of beneficial outcomes.” Kirton applauded a new “foreign policy convergence” between Canada and the United States, exemplified by U.S. acceptance of the “core Canadian values” of global peace and “respect for human rights, democracy, the rule of law and the environment.” The United States and Canada, Kirton predicted, would work as partners to create “new institutions to manage the Post-Cold War multilateral order.” Such cooperation would be critical to meet “transnational challenges at a time when new centers of power and polarity in world politics are reducing the ability of each North American country to accomplish its objectives alone.” The new global challenges, Kirton concluded, “will increase Canada’s importance, both as a proximate partner and as a country that can build the transregional linkages required to mount an effective collective response to the new challenges.”²

John Herd Thompson and Stephen J. Randall, the authors of *Canada and the United States: Ambivalent Allies*, reviewed in the *Weathering the Calm* edition of *ARCS* were less reckless than Kirton.³ With historian's caution, Thompson and Randall warned that, "two centuries of ambivalence inhibit even the most sanguine historian from the conclusion [that there would be] a new consensus and convergence between Canada and the United States." We also argued that there was not, and had not been, any "special" relationship between Washington and Ottawa. "In terms of U.S. foreign policy," we insisted, "what is striking about relations with Canada is how *unexceptional* the so-called special relationship has in fact been." Instead, the United States applied the basic principles of its foreign policy to Canada, principles we described as "liberal, capitalist, internationalist, and anti-colonial." In that first edition, however, and in subsequent second and third editions of *Ambivalent Allies*, Steve Randall and I made clear that we believed that the U.S.–Canada relationship in the twenty-first century would be "intense, close, and cooperative," even if the relationship was "conflictual in both its details and in some of its fundamentals." Far from predicting a dramatic change in the ground rules of the U.S.–Canada relationship, Randall and I explicitly predicted that we believed that the future of the U.S.–Canada relationship would be very much like that of the fifty years just past. We entitled the epilogue of *Ambivalent Allies* "Plus ça change." If readers buy enough copies of the third edition to allow a fourth, Randall and I will need a very different title for a very different epilogue.⁴

In twenty-five months in office, President George Bush—he has now so overshadowed his father that we can probably dispense with the middle initial—has rewritten the rules of U.S. foreign and defense policy. By doing so, he has rewritten the rules of the U.S.–Canada relationship. From the perspective of final days of the Anglo-American conquest of Iraq, the only word from the "-lateral" family that appropriately characterizes the U.S. relationship with Canada, and that of the United States with every other country, is *uni*lateral.

Considered in comparison with the present ill will, U.S. and Canadian approaches to international issues appear to have been more harmonious throughout the eight years of the Clinton administration than they actually were. Helms-Burton offers the best evidence that the 1990s were not entirely a period of "calm." As it had since the 1960s, Canada consistently denied the U.S. assertion that communist Cuba remained a threat to North American security. Canadians are not

“genetically predisposed” to support Fidel Castro, as one lower-level U.S. official complained, but Canada’s actions made it obvious, as two journalists put it, that “the Liberals wear Canada’s relationship with Cuba as the badge of their independence in foreign policy.” The 1996 Helms-Burton Law sharpened this U.S.–Canada policy division. Its Senate sponsor was North Carolina conservative Republican Jesse Helms, who spent several months as a favorite target of indignant Canadian editorial cartoons. But President Clinton signed the bill promptly, his eye on the Cuban-American vote. Helms-Burton goaded the Canadian government into an even more proactive policy toward Cuba. Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy (1996–2000) enjoyed tweaking the eagle’s beak as much as any Trudeau-era minister. Axworthy made an official visit to Cuba in 1997, and Prime Minister Chrétien followed in 1998, efforts that infuriated the U.S. State Department without perceptible impact on Castro.⁵

Other items on Axworthy’s “human security” agenda in international affairs strained the bilateral security relationship. Canada’s crusade for a world ban on anti-personnel landmines culminated in the multilateral Land Mines treaty signed by more than one hundred countries in Ottawa in 1997; the United States, however, was notably not among them.⁶ The Clinton administration had no quarrel with Axworthy’s arguments about the civilian carnage caused by landmines, but the Pentagon remained convinced a general ban would compromise security in the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea. Editorial advice from the *New York Times* that he should “give top priority to the Canadian approach,” rubbed salt into Clinton’s landmine wounds.⁷ John Hamre, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense, dismissed “human security” as a meaningless slogan. Pointing to Canada’s minimal defense budget, then ranked 133 out of 185 UN countries in terms of percentage GDP, Hamre countered bluntly that the only things that really mattered in defense and security were “boots on the ground.” Defense analyst Joel Sokolsky has suggested however, that “what the Americans did not like about the Axworthy doctrine was not its ‘human security’ agenda; it was that a Canadian foreign minister had presumed to set that agenda for the international community.” Chrétien’s choices to succeed Axworthy as foreign minister—John Manley and Bill Graham—appeared intended to signal the United States that the Chrétien government wanted closer cooperation on security issues, globally and within North America.⁸

The Republican administration of George W. Bush did not make it easy for its allies to be cooperative. We must remember, however, that

the second President Bush did not personally invent American unilateralism. Kim Richard Nossal reminds us that it “is deeply rooted in American political culture,” and that the visceral appeal of unilateralism resonates not only in the executive and legislative branches of government, but within the electorate.⁹ The Bush administration, however, announced its unilateralist creed with a belligerence reminiscent of James Knox Polk. Bush dismissed international agreements as disparate as the Kyoto accord on international warming, the biological weapons convention, and the U.N. agreement on small-arms trafficking. As *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman put, the Bush administration “told Europe to take a hike on global warming, Russia to take a hike on missile defense...told Mexico to take a hike on immigration...and pulled out of the International Criminal Court.”¹⁰

These Bush positions all pained Canada, but most painful was Bush’s promise to revive Ronald Reagan’s “Star Wars” delusion, renamed the National Missile Defense system. NORAD seemed to make Canada an unwilling NMD partner because its early-warning radars would be used in a ground-based missile defense system. The Chrétien government did its best to remain non-committal on Canadian participation, a stance that probably reflected genuine division and uncertainty. Minister of Defence Art Eggleton assured U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld that Canada remained “open-minded on the NMD issue.” Political Scientist Joseph Jockel has pointed out the United States needs neither Canadian territory, airspace, water, nor the Canadian military to implement a form of NMD, although Canadian non-participation would cast doubt on the future of NORAD. Vice-Admiral Herbert Browne, deputy commander of U.S. Space Command, let Canadians know that there would be a cost if Canada remained outside. If U.S. satellites detected a rogue missile heading for Ottawa, the United States “would have absolutely no obligation to protect that city” unless Canada was an NMD partner. Eggleton referred to Browne’s comments as “blackmail,” although the State Department denied that they constituted official U.S. policy.¹¹

Months before September 11, 2001, commentators in Canada, Europe, and within the United States itself had bemoaned the Bush administration’s truculence. “The Bush team thinks that being the world’s only superpower means never having to say you’re sorry,” wrote *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman; the United States, he suggested, was acting like “a new rogue nation...unconstrained by treaties or

multilateral agreements.” The same day in the *Globe & Mail* columnist Jeffrey Simpson lamented that “what we have in Washington now are not only military hawks but diplomatic unilateralists who reflect a mixture of Republican muscularity, American triumphalism and deep-seated U.S. exceptionalism.” Canada, and indeed all U.S. allies, Simpson continued, had been “cowed into silence since they understand that nothing they can say will dissuade the Americans.”¹²

The terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center towers tempered U.S. unilateralism. The attacks also built an unprecedented Canadian sense of solidarity with the United States. Canada provided critical support in the immediate aftermath; hundreds of U.S. and U.S.-bound airliners with some 30,000 passengers were diverted to Canadian airports. The stranded passengers were fed, sheltered, and welcomed everywhere while they waited for air traffic to resume. In Ottawa, hundreds of Canadians attached small tributes to the iron railings around the U.S. embassy: flowers, flags, notes, candles, and a birch bark scroll with “God Bless America.” A crowd estimated at 100,000 gathered on Parliament Hill, and thousands more did the same in smaller ceremonies across the country.¹³ The *Toronto Star* received more than 2,600 letters from its readers offering condolences to the United States.¹⁴ After a visit to his home and native land, expatriate Canadian Robert MacNeil told his U.S. television audience that the “distance” that Canada maintained from the United States as “a psychological mechanism for asserting its own identity” had “narrowed down to maybe half a degree of separation.”¹⁵

The United States was easier to love in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, as President Bush asked America’s allies to join an international coalition to fight a global “war against terrorism.” Many Canadians at first worried that their country was not doing enough to assist the United States, especially when British Prime Minister Tony Blair immediately stepped to the front rank of Bush’s coalition. When President Bush told Congress, the American people, and the world that America “has no truer friend than Britain,” Canadians took mild offense; the President’s subsequent speech thanked almost every country on the globe for its cooperation *except* Canada. The slight became cause for deep national discussion among Canadians, and U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell handled damage control: “Canada was one of the first on the scene, with all kinds of help for us,” Powell told a press conference after a meeting with Canadian Foreign Minister John Manley. “We will be forever

grateful.”¹⁶ Prime Minister Chrétien’s decision not to make a personal pilgrimage to “ground zero” in New York City drew angry calls on radio phone-in shows.¹⁷ Charges that Canadian security failures had contributed to the terrorist attacks fed Canadian fears that their country’s response was inadequate. “The United States clearly views Chrétien as the sleepy night watchman on America’s northern frontier,” wrote two policy analysts, and a *Globe & Mail* editorial suggested that the Canadian government had been “asleep at the switch.”¹⁸ Hastily-conducted opinion polls showed that more than seventy percent of Canadians thought that Canada “should join the United States and also declare war on terrorism.”¹⁹ When the Chrétien government committed two thousand Canadian military personnel to the assault on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, only ten NDP MPs opposed military action. “This is not an American fight; it is ours,” approved the *Globe & Mail*.²⁰ Defence Minister Art Eggleton repeatedly assured Canadians that Canada was “Canada a full partner in the war on terrorism.”²¹ **[author query: which "Canada" should be deleted here?]**

This Canadian sense of North American unity did not endure. Canadians were almost unanimously proud of their troops’ accomplishments in Afghanistan. Canadian journalists breathlessly reported any U.S. praise of their contribution.²² But many Canadians felt, with considerable justification, that their country’s significant contributions had been unacknowledged in the United States. Americans who should have known better, such as *New York Times* foreign affairs columnist Thomas L. Friedman, provided examples. Two weeks after Canada announced details of its military commitment, Friedman told his readers, “My fellow Americans, I hate to say this, but except for the good old Brits, we’re all alone.”²³

Two incidents contributed to erosion of the Canadian sense of solidarity with the United States in the fighting in Afghanistan. First, in January 2002, the Bush administration seriously embarrassed the Chrétien government by locking up as criminals Taliban soldiers captured in battle by Canadian commandos, rather than treating them as prisoners of war under the Geneva Conventions. All four Canadian opposition parties moved a motion of censure of the government’s handling of the issue, and retired Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy cited the incident as evidence of “the political shambles arising out of our decision to become part of U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and the damage to our international standing by being complicit in Washington’s flouting of

the Geneva Conventions.”²⁴ It is difficult to imagine the Clinton administration putting a compliant allied government in such a difficult position, without offering Chrétien some face-saving gesture. Then, on April 17, U.S. warplanes accidentally bombed Canadian artillerymen in a “friendly fire” incident, killing four of them. The subsequent investigation brought charges that the U.S. high command had attempted to cover up the facts, and had done so with the complicity of new Canadian Defence Minister John McCallum.²⁵

President Bush’s post-9/11 flirtation with multilateralism lasted only a few weeks. He and members of his administration began in their speeches to promulgate a new set of Washington rules for international relations. In January 2002 Bush implausibly linked Iraq, Iran, and North Korea in an “Axis of Evil.” (Canadian-American journalist David Frum proudly took author’s credit for adapting the metaphor, and was summarily dismissed by the White House for his effrontery.) In a graduation address at West Point in June 2002, the President renounced the policies of containment and deterrence that had guided the United States for a half-century. In their place, he proclaimed what quickly came to be called the “Bush doctrine.” The United States would henceforward reserve the right to take unilateral preemptive action against “unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction”; to carry out these actions, U.S. forces would be prepared “to strike at a moment’s notice in any dark corner of the world”²⁶ The President made it clear that the first “dark corner” U.S. forces would shine military light upon was Iraq, ruled by “unbalanced dictator” Saddam Hussein.

The Bush administration codified its new Washington rules in a pamphlet released on September 17, 2002. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*²⁷ begins with a letter over George W. Bush’s signature that includes the phrase “no nation can build a safer, better world alone,” but the document states bluntly that the United States “will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively....” The strategy pronounced by the Bush administration, writes G. John Ikenberry, “is a general deprecation of international rules, treaties, and security partnerships,” a rejection of the “rule-based international order” that the United States built after 1945.²⁸ As Anthony Lewis puts it, “this president wants to overthrow the rules that have governed international life for the last fifty years.”²⁹

Canada had enthusiastically and consistently supported the United States in the creation of the rule-based international system over those

fifty years. Canada continues to vocally defend that system. Thus the new unilateral Washington rules bode ill for the U.S.–Canada relationship. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* mentions Canada specifically three times. Canada appears in a list with Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and (incongruously) Colombia, as a U.S. partner in promoting “a truly democratic hemisphere” through the Organization of American States and the Defense Ministerial of the Americas. (Mexico appears specifically only twice in the document, which will perhaps cheer those Canadians who worry that Mexico has overshadowed Canada in North America as viewed from the Bush White House.)

Of greater significance for the U.S.–Canada relationship, Canada is the only country to be named explicitly among “the family of transatlantic democracies” that the United States hopes to enlist, through NATO, in a coalition “of states able and willing to promote a balance of power that favors freedom.” The Chrétien government no doubt took note of the subsequent phrase that “we must...ensure that the military forces of NATO nations have appropriate contributions to make in coalition warfare.” Canada is presumably highly placed on the list of “transatlantic democracies” whose military forces provoke U.S. concern about their ability to make “appropriate contributions.”

The third specific reference to Canada occurs in the section that promises that the United States will “ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade.” The Bush administration pledges that it will press the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and that it will “resolve ongoing [trade] disputes with the European Union, Canada, and Mexico.” But the Bush administration has belied its rhetorical commitment to free markets and free trade by its imposition of new tariffs on steel, by the renewed harassment of Canadian softwood lumber exports, and by its vigorous support of greatly expanded subsidies to U.S. agribusiness. *The National Security Strategy* describes the farm subsidies and the steel tariffs as “transitional safeguards” to “help workers adapt.” The steel tariff increases exempted NAFTA partners, which led to short-lived Canadian enthusiasm until Canadian steel manufacturers discovered that the tariff made Canada the dumping ground for foreign steel shut out of the U.S. market. *The National Security Strategy* also complained that “laws against unfair trade practices are often abused” (by countries other than the United States, presumably) a complaint that seems particularly gratuitous in light of the softwood lumber dispute.

“The Americans have forgotten who their friends are,” complained Canadian Alliance MP John Reynolds about new U.S. farm subsidies.³⁰ In fact, Bush’s political advisors remembered exactly which friends matter. Canadian exporters don’t vote in U.S. elections; a president elected with fewer popular votes than his Democratic opponent understood that the U.S. farmers, steelworkers, and lumber producers might be critical to Republican legislative political success in the 2002 midterm elections, and to his own reelection in 2004. Canadian commentators complained about inconsistency between President Bush’s professed support of free trade and his political support for protectionism.³¹ There is, however, a consistent link between Bush’s trade policy and his foreign policy: the unprecedented contempt that his administration displays for international rules.³²

The presidential letter that prefaces *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* asserts that there can be but “a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise.” The idea that America should stand as a model to the world is over two centuries old. Never before, however, has any U.S. administration prescribed an American model for the world in such a degree of detail. The document threatens that the United States “will use our economic engagement with other countries” to press those countries to adopt U.S. economic policies that parallel those of the Bush administration: “pro-growth legal and regulatory policies,” “lower marginal tax rates,” and “sound fiscal policies to support business activity.” (The Bush administration has been spectacularly unable to implement this latter policy.) Given that U.S. “economic engagement” with Canada is the greatest that has ever existed between any two nation-states, this statement has profound implications for the U.S.–Canada relationship. The Bush administration’s response to virtually every Canadian economic complaint has been to suggest that Canada reshape its policies to harmonize with those of the United States. In agriculture, for example, the United States is adamant that the Canadian Wheat Board be eliminated; according to the U.S. Trade Representative, the Bush administration will “pressure Canada to enact long-term reforms” to its “state-run monopoly.”³³ On softwood lumber, the U.S. position is that there would be no dispute if Canadian provincial governments would abandon their stumpage system and follow the U.S. system of selling timber rights at auction.³⁴

This U.S. attitude to Canadian policies out of sync with their own is not unique to the Bush administration. The Clinton administration’s

approach to cultural trade issues was identical to the Bush attitudes to wheat and lumber: if Canada would only agree to do things exactly as they are done in the United States there would be no cultural trade disputes. Americans do not understand, much less sympathize with, Canadian complaints of U.S. cultural domination and Canadian policies to achieve “cultural sovereignty.” Canada remains the most important foreign consumer of American popular culture, importing more than \$4 billion of cultural commodities annually, four times the value of U.S. cultural imports from Canada. As but one example, the Canadian television viewer’s love affair with U.S. programs intensified during the 1990s until by 2000, Nielsen reported that Canadian viewers spent 36 percent of their television time watching the twenty-six U.S. channels widely available on their cable systems, as compared to 7.4 percent watching the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the national publicly-supported network. Most humiliating, the U.S. shows “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire” and “ER” were watched by more Canadians than “Hockey Night in Canada.”³⁵ Given similar U.S. dominance of virtually every popular cultural genre in Canada, many Canadians ask why the United States could not simply tolerate Canada’s modest assertions of cultural nationalism. The U.S. response is that any cultural concessions it might make to Canada would force similar concessions to other U.S. trading partners.

The Chrétien government made two sudden nationalist advances on the cultural front in January 1995. First, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission ruled, as Canadian law required, that Nashville-based Country Music Television be deleted from Canadian cable systems in favor of the New Country Network, a Canadian competitor. Heritage Minister Michel Dupuy cited the cultural exemption in NAFTA as the basis of Canada’s right to protect its cultural industries. U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor replied with threats of retaliation, also as permitted by NAFTA. Trade war over television regulation was resolved by a merger, as Country Music Television absorbed the New Country Network. A journalist described the situation in the vernacular of the country music genre: “the hurtin’ is over and the lovin’ has started between the country music broadcasters.”³⁶

The second Canadian assertion of cultural sovereignty targeted a split-run edition of *Sports Illustrated*. Ottawa slapped on an 80 percent excise tax. To Canada’s fury, the U.S. trade representative side-stepped NAFTA and instead launched a broader complaint to the World Trade

Organization. In June 1997 the WTO upheld the U.S. complaint, condemning Canada's postal subsidies to domestic magazines as well as the excise tax on spit-run editions. Canada blustered with Bill C-55, which imposed heavy fines upon split-run magazines if they accepted Canadian advertising. Not surprisingly, U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky dismissed the new policy as "the same old story," and warned of U.S. retaliation. The issue was deemed serious enough that President Clinton telephoned Prime Minister Chrétien urging compromise. On May 27, 1999, a trade war was averted with what was in effect a managed trade agreement similar to that which once existed in softwood lumber. Canada permitted foreign-owned magazines exported to Canada to carry a modest amount of Canadian advertising: 12 percent, gradually increasing to 18 percent. Canada also agreed to end restrictions on foreign ownership of magazines. It is difficult to imagine similar summit diplomacy between Chrétien and George W. Bush.

The split-run magazine case demonstrated that determined U.S. opposition could indeed constrain Canadian cultural protectionist policies. But the Chrétien government has also refused to make use of cultural promotion, to which the U.S. government has traditionally made no serious objection. Instead, the Chrétien government has steadily withdrawn support for those institutions that promote Canadian culture: the CBC, the National Film Board, and Telefilm. The parliamentary grant to the CBC, for example, shrank by a third between 1993 and 2000. Such actions suggest that Canada is moving toward market-driven, U.S.-style cultural policies in an apparent convergence of U.S. and Canadian governments' understandings of "culture." This convergence perhaps imperils Canada's cultural sovereignty more than any threatened U.S. retaliation to specific Canadian policies of cultural protection.³⁷

The National Security Strategy of the United States of America also pledges to "strengthen our own energy security...by working with our allies, trading partners, and energy producers...especially in the Western Hemisphere," one of at least ten references to Canada by implication in the document. The United States continues to import fifty percent of its oil, and Canada, with proven oil resources second only to Saudi Arabia, is the number one foreign source of supply.³⁸ Given Vice President Dick Cheney's statement that "conservation may be a sign of personal virtue, but it is not a sufficient basis for a sound, comprehensive energy policy," U.S. dependence on foreign oil seems unlikely to decrease significantly. Cheney chaired a White House task force that argued that America faced an

“energy crisis,” fuelling energy-related issues that have important implications for the U.S.–Canadian relationship. U.S. oil development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, a favorite project of the Bush administration, would severely threaten the calving grounds of migrating caribou herds, upon which northern Canadian native peoples rely for food, and the most likely way to transport the oil would be by pipeline through Canada’s Yukon, with further environmental implications. Secretary of State Colin Powell assured the Canadian government that it would be consulted on Alaskan oil development, but pointed out that implementation of the plan would not depend on Canadian approval.³⁹

President Bush used the Cheney report to argue for the need for a North American energy policy at the Québec Summit of the Americas in the spring of 2001; Bush, Chrétien, and Mexican President Vicente Fox established a trilateral North American Energy Working Group.⁴⁰ Chrétien does not face the political obstacles to a North American Energy policy that Fox does: as Robert Pastor puts it, “exclusive [public] ownership of Mexico’s oil, gas, and natural resources [is] written into their Constitution and their national psyche.” Canada’s PETROCAN never became a PEMEX, and was privatized by the Mulroney Conservative government; the Liberals made no attempt to recreate it as a Crown corporation. Canadians are nonetheless ambivalent about Bush’s energy invitation. Canada’s petroleum producers are eager to fuel America’s SUVs, but worry that if Canada embraces a North American energy program, they might actually lose markets to an expansion of domestic U.S. or Mexican production. Pipeline projects promise Canadian jobs, but threaten environmental damage and possible resistance from Canada’s native peoples. There is also the nationalist fear that a North American energy policy would mean a return to U.S. corporate ownership of Canada’s oil and gas industry, which since 1980 has declined from more than 75 percent to less than half.⁴¹

However difficult the Bush administration’s new Washington rules may make U.S. relations with “our Northern neighbor,” U.S. conceptions of Canada are unlikely to change very much. Most Americans are unlikely to notice that U.S.–Canada relations are stormy, and if they do notice, they won’t notice much. Given that “War on Terrorism” followed by War in Iraq has made Americans even more preoccupied than usual with U.S. affairs, there may be some marginally greater American propensity to ignore Canada. But Jeffrey Simpson’s acrid comment that Americans “know and care the square root of squat about Canada” is unfair.

Americans don't know or care very much about Canada, but they do cling tightly to a few deeply engrained stereotypes, like the "Great White North" images of snow and wildlife used to advertise Canadian beer on U.S. television. A long-running commercial for Molson's Ice Beer described Canada as "the land where ice was born." A stereotype that holds U.S. journalists even more tenaciously than it does civilians is that Canada is BORING. A text book used in journalism courses lists "No one cares about Canadian politics" among the maxims young journalists are taught, and "not giving Canada much attention" as a tradition that rules in U.S. newsrooms.⁴² The best example of Canada's ennui-inducing property, however, is the category on MTV's game show "Remote Control" which is named "Dead or Canadian? Sometimes it's hard to tell."

Some Americans think of Canadians, except for NHL hockey players, as left-wing wimps. During the Gulf War, when Major League Baseball decreed that all players would wear both the Canadian and U.S. flags on their batting helmets as a patriotic gesture, Pittsburgh Pirate centerfielder Andy Van Slyke scraped the Maple Leaf off his helmet because, in his words "Canada is a pacifist, socialist country." When Prime Minister Chrétien mused that "the West" might bear some responsibility for creating the circumstances that breed terrorism, Fox News commentator Bill O'Reilly took his comments as evidence that "Canada shows its true colors." "I expected something like this," O'Reilly opined. "Chrétien is a socialist....His government allows nearly everyone into Canada even if they have false documentation."⁴³

Even the RCMP has become a target for right-wing American journalists. *National Review* ran a cover photo of the Mounties' Musical Ride, printed over with "WIMPS" in 30-point type, on an issue that featured an article on "Canada's Whiny and Weak Anti-Americanism."⁴⁴ Less bellicose Americans—and there are many less bellicose Americans, Canadian stereotypes of the United States to the contrary—will continue to see Canada as a potential haven of sanity from the strife of a country in a constant state of low-level war. As they did during the Gulf War (author query—should this be Vietnam?), young Americans will no doubt believe that they can flee to Canada to avoid being drafted to fight in Iraq, Iran, or North Korea—even if Canada eventually becomes a U.S. ally in those wars, as it was in the Gulf War.

Canadian anti-Americanism, pronounced dead in the mid-1990s to be "as dead as the dodo,"⁴⁵ was resurgent before September 11, 2001,

temporarily receded, and surged again in response to the Bush administration's aggressive international policies. Anti-Americanism nourishes a Canadian national identity; as they have for two centuries, Canadians continue to use Americans as the "other" against which they define their "imagined community." Molson Breweries successfully promoted its "Canadian" lager beer with television commercials in which an actor shouted, "I AM CANADIAN!" before delivering a string of homilies based on Canada–U.S. differences: "I believe in diversity not in assimilation," "I speak English and French, not American," and "I have a prime minister, not a president," before concluding that "Canada is the best part of North America." Dubbed "Joe Canada," the actor became an English-Canadian folk hero, ranting live at fairs and exhibitions across the country before crowds wearing "I AM CANADIAN!" tee shirts that reproduced his slogans.⁴⁶

The "Joe Canada" rant included the phrase, "I don't live in an igloo or eat blubber, or own a dogsled," an illustration of the perverse pride that Canadians continue to take in American unfamiliarity with their country; Comedian Rick Mercer turned American ignorance into the CBC's "Talking to Americans," the highest rated Canadian TV comedy ever produced. Mercer visited the United States in the guise of a CBC news reporter to conduct "man on the street" interviews with Americans about bogus Canadian issues. Mercer found a Harvard professor who agreed that Saskatchewan should end its cruel seal hunt, oblivious to the province's plains location, and Columbia students who protested Canada's tradition of abandoning senior citizens to perish on northern ice flows. Mercer's greatest coup was tricking presidential candidate George W. Bush into referring to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien as "Jean *Poutine*"; "poutine" is a Canadian snack food made of French fries topped with cheese curd and gravy.⁴⁷

Three social scientists who conducted survey research on the values of North Americans concluded in 1996 that "many of the cultural differences that have long divided Mexico, Canada, and the United States seem to be eroding," and observed "a gradual but persuasive decline in nationalism." But despite predictions that the "new North America" of NAFTA meant that old national identities were about to be absorbed into a common North Americanism, there seems little evidence that this is actually happening. Contemporary U.S. nationalism is rampant, not in decline.⁴⁸ Rather than accelerate a "North American trajectory," the changed political environment for the U.S.–Canada relationship will

probably enhance the sense of difference that Canadian feel from the United States. Canadians continue to point to what they argue are significant differences between Canada and the United States: the official constitutional enshrinement of both French–English biculturalism and multiculturalism; a more welcoming attitude to immigrants; a more generous welfare state that includes a national health care delivery system; the existence of a social democratic party and a more effective labor movement; more generous government recognition of native peoples; livable cities in which citizens experience much lower levels of urban violence; and effective gun laws and a murder rate a tenth of that in America. These small differences may even become more real. The most recent Canadian speech from the throne was explicitly crafted to underscore the differences between Canada and the United States. The domestic policies of the Bush administration, the massive increases in the U.S. deficit, and more increases because of defense expenditures, mean that the U.S. social safety net won't be converging with that of Canada anytime soon.⁴⁹

NAFTA, significantly, goes unmentioned in *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Although Canadians were skeptical of NAFTA at its inception, a majority is now committed to it; a recent poll shows that 66 percent of Canadians would like an even closer economic relationship with the United States.⁵⁰ From Canada's perspective, despite highly visible trade disputes, the U.S.–Canada economic relationship is working. Expressed as a percentage of Canada's GDP, exports to the United States almost doubled between 1990 and 2000, and more than doubled to Mexico in the same period. (Of course, NAFTA cannot claim all the credit for the increases. The weak Canadian dollar, which fell below \$.70 U.S. in 1997 and remained at that level through 2002, has contributed to the export boom.⁵¹) Canadian Foreign Affairs minister Bill Graham recently mused about expanding NAFTA "beyond trade and tariffs...to cover social, environmental, justice, and other issues," and a poll taken in late summer 2002 found that a majority of Canadians favor a North American "continental parliament" among Canada, Mexico, and the United States.⁵²

The hopes animating these desires spring eternal among Canadians: the hope that the United States can be constrained within multilateral agreements, and the hope that those agreements will be governed by explicit rules. Even more than they have been in the past, Canadians will be disappointed. Deeply felt concerns about border security, and U.S.

preoccupation with security (**author query: are these intended to be separate concerns?**) have eliminated whatever slight possibility might once have existed that NAFTA will be broadened and deepened. The most charitable assessment about the expectation that Canada and Mexico might be able to cooperate to constrain the United States is that it is wishful thinking. The Bush administration, to provide one example, refused to accept the International Criminal Court, despite the fact that Canada and Mexico were its harshest critics on the issue.⁵³ The question of how best to deal with the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq provides a more dramatic example of the futility of Mexican–Canadian attempts to constrain their larger North American “partner.” During a state visit to Mexico by Prime Minister Chrétien in February 2003, Mexican President Vicente Fox pledged that Mexico would use its membership on the UN Security Council to press a Canadian compromise resolution that called for Iraq to disarm by March 28 or face war.⁵⁴ The Bush administration ignored the attempted compromise, and it never reached a vote; by March 28 the U.S. invasion of Iraq had been underway for a week.⁵⁵

In the months that preceded the American invasion of Iraq, the U.S.–Canada relationship descended to its lowest point since the bitterest days of the War in Vietnam, perhaps lower. Many Canadians, as did many Mexicans, Europeans, and some Americans, vocally opposed the Bush administration’s unalterable course towards war. One Liberal Member of Parliament was indiscreet enough to let a television camera catch her saying, “Damn Americans! I hate those bastards.” *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristoff put this angry comment in context for his readers. “When even the Canadians, normally drearily polite, get colorfully steamed at us, we know the rest of the world is apoplectic. After all,” he continued, “the latest invective comes on top of the prime minister’s spokesman calling George Bush a ‘moron’ last fall.”⁵⁶

The Chrétien government agonized over its position on an invasion of Iraq from the time that President Bush first declared that the United States claimed the right to attack Iraq without specific provocation. Finally, the government announced that Canada would join a U.S.-led coalition against Iraq only if the invasion had formal UN sanction. When U.S. and British forces attacked without that sanction, they did so without a Canadian contingent. Given the state of the Canadian forces, and other Canadian military commitments in the “War against Terrorism,” it is difficult to imagine how Canada could have made an

effective contribution to the war in any event. The real significance of Canadian participation, however, would have been symbolic rather than military. The *New York Times* list of the member-nations of the “coalition of the willing” patched together by the Bush administration pointedly noted that, “the group did not include the United States’ closest neighbors, Canada and Mexico.”⁵⁷

Just as they had been divided about the U.S. War in Vietnam three decades earlier, Canadians divided about America’s adventure in Iraq. Opinion polls suggested that six Canadians in ten supported their government’s decision not to participate. Some of the forty percent who felt otherwise were motivated by fears that the United States would hinder the \$1.3 billion dollars worth of trade that crossed the U.S.–Canada border each day; this was the main theme of pro-participation statements by the Canadian Council of CEOs, and by provincial Premiers Ralph Klein of Alberta and Ernie Eves of Ontario. Vocal supporters of U.S. policy included hockey great Wayne Gretzky, who told a reporter that President Bush was “a great leader.” A nameless opponent of the war hung a sign that read “U\$ Lackey” on Gretzky’s statue in front of the Skyreach Centre in Edmonton. Prime Minister Chrétien himself summed up Canadian ambivalence with his assurance that, “Of course, I hope that the Americans will do as well as possible.”⁵⁸

The Prime Minister’s comment could have brought little comfort in Washington. Not surprisingly, the Bush administration’s response broke all the polite rules of binational diplomacy. Presumably acting on instructions, the U.S. ambassador to Canada, Paul Cellucci, told an audience of business people in Toronto that, “there is a lot of disappointment in Washington” over the level of Canadian support for the war effort. He warned that Canada might indeed suffer economically for its impertinence, because U.S. concern for “security will trump trade.”⁵⁹ Lest any Canadian miss his message, Cellucci repeated the essence of his remarks before similar audiences in Vancouver and in Calgary. As the military phase of the invasion of Iraq ended, the Canadian government attempted to conciliate Washington by promising its vigorous participation in rebuilding Iraq, regardless of whether that rebuilding was a multilateral project of the United Nations, or unilaterally directed by the United States. There was no sign that Washington heard or cared.⁶⁰ In a message delivered “with the diplomatic version of a bullhorn,” the White House cancelled a scheduled state visit to Ottawa by President Bush. The President will, however, spend the weekend before the aborted

visit at his ranch with Australian Prime Minister John Howard, whose government sent a contingent to join the U.S. invasion of Iraq.⁶¹ Canadians and their leaders might as well resign themselves: as long as the Bush Republicans are ascendant, the U.S.–Canada relationship will be played by the new Washington rules.

NOTES

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