

# "WHEN IN ROME" COM- PARING CANADIAN AND MEXICAN STRATE- GIES FOR INFLUENCING POLICY OUTCOMES IN THE UNITED STATES

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The United States is both very strong, in the sense that it towers over the rest of the world in virtually every measure of state capability, and very weak, in the sense that its policy-making process is extraordinarily fragmented and susceptible to external influences (Krasner, 1978). This combination of strength and weakness invites—and sometimes compels—other countries to try to influence American policy “from inside,” by cultivating cross-border alliances with powerful governmental and non-governmental actors in the US. Thus at the disciplinary intersections between International Relations, US Foreign Policy, and American Politics there has been a sporadic accumulation of theory and research on foreign lobbying and transnational coalition-building in the United States. The work that has been done so far, though, has mainly been concerned with understanding—in a general way—the challenges that the complexity of the American system poses for US diplomats and/or for for-



foreign governments, or cataloguing and evaluating—again, in a general way—the strategies that particular countries have pursued in managing their bilateral relationships with the US. That leaves a number of important questions unanswered, and even unasked: Why do different states “play the Washington game” differently? When and how do states change from one strategy to another? And what difference do these strategies make for their ability to influence policy outcomes in the United States?

Here I propose to make a start on the first and second of these questions, through a long-term historical comparison of Canadian and Mexican efforts to influence US policy. Canada and Mexico have generally been seen as not particularly comparable, because of their very different political systems, levels of economic development, and cultures. But these differences are precisely the kinds of things that seem most likely to provide explanations for different approaches to the management of bilateral relations with the US. There is in fact a solid baseline for comparison in the basic structure of their respective relationships with the US: Each is attached to the United States by a complex web of social and economic inter-penetration and interdependency, which creates bases for vulnerability and for leverage in bilateral bargaining. And each has been increasingly tied to the US (and each other), by various formal and informal policy-coordination regimes, including, but not limited to, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Prior to the early 1980s, the two governments pursued markedly different approaches to relations with the United States, with Mexico relying on formal intergovernmental contacts and Canada on informal bureaucratic networks. But the post-Vietnam assertiveness of Congress and of various “domestic” bureaucratic agencies, mounting protectionist pressures, and the NAFTA institutional framework have driven both governments toward the same kind of “multiple-pathway” approach. Among the key features of this strategy are efforts to access the policy-making structure at a wider variety of points, including direct lobbying of members of Congress and vari-

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ous regulatory agencies, and the reconfiguration of embassies and consulates as vehicles for identifying and coordinating ad hoc transnational alliances. In both countries, these trends have been supported by the rise of a new generation of political elites, often US-educated and with career paths and network relationships that straddle the respective borders.

However, this process of strategic convergence has been channeled by enduring features of the two countries' respective political institutions and cultures, including basic structures for diplomatic oversight and ratification, public-private relationships, and the organizational culture of foreign policy agencies. Variations in their political and social structures have set up important differences in where and how the two governments have adapted to changes in the nature of the US foreign policy-making structure. These differences seem to have had important effects on when and how they have succeeded in influencing US policy.

## **I. BARGAINING WITH THE UNITED STATES**

One does not have to accept the recently-ubiquitous parallel with imperial Rome to think of Washington as the political center of the contemporary world order; all roads lead there, and all important deals are made or broken there (Lind, 2002). The US has had its ups and downs over the last sixty years, but it still towers over the rest of the world, in military terms particularly, but in economic terms as well. America is no longer so powerful that it can do whatever it wants—if it ever was—but its support is still necessary to the maintenance of intricate regional security balances, to the economic institutions that keep the world economy running, and to the infinite variety of smaller states' biggest concerns (Nye, 2001). At the same time, Washington is an extraordinarily fragmented policy-making machine, with many decision-making tracks and many centers of power. And it is an extraordinarily "open" one, whose dedication to political pluralism is so reflexive that it regulates foreign and domestic lobbying in much the same way.<sup>1</sup> When we put these things together, it seems that one of the most important determinants of other states' success or failure within the larger international arena lies in their capacity to influence US policy.<sup>2</sup>

The American political system is a relatively inflexible one, anchored in a fairly rigid constitutional structure, which has been



deliberately designed to prevent concentrations of power and radical changes (Burns, 1963, 60; Huntington, 1982). We might therefore expect little change over time in the organizational forms and diplomatic strategies that other states rely on to try to influence US policies. The American political system is also too complex and too introverted (in design and in spirit) to be much differentiated in the way that it receives foreign inputs. We might therefore expect most states to tend to approach the US policy-making process in the same way. There are some important continuities and similarities in the way that other countries have engaged with the US over the last sixty years. But there have also been some significant changes in the way that policy decisions are made in the US, and in how other countries have adapted to these changes. Moreover, while the American system does tend to confront all other states with the same tangled labyrinth of cross-cutting institutional and legal mechanisms, other countries have responded very differently to this complex of opportunities and obstacles. Yet the whole question of other countries' efforts to influence US policy is remarkably understudied, having apparently fallen into the cracks between disciplines.

There is of course a very large literature on how American foreign policy decisions are made, some of which has directly addressed the resulting incentives and constraints for other countries (e.g., Maier, 1978; Cutler, 1980; Ikenberry, 1988). For the most part, though, this work has been premised on an implicit assumption that these incentives and constraints strike other countries in pretty much the same way, and that they will all tend to respond to them similarly.

There has also been a fair amount of research on other states' successes and failures in bargaining with the US (Nye, 1974; Keohane & Nye, 1977, 165-218; Paarlberg et al., 1978; Odell, 1980; Odell, 1985; Moon, 1988; Zartman & Rubin, eds., 2000). Most of this work is mainly concerned with the more general problem of bargaining under asymmetry and/or interdependence. Very little of it has paid much attention to what is unique about the United States as a target for (small state) diplomatic pressures. Most of the research on specific small states' efforts to influence US policy has looked to underlying structural features of the respective bilateral relationships. These include international-systemic conditions, asymmetry of resolve, fragmentation of decision-making, and the availability of transnational allies (Keohane, 1971; Krasner, 1978; Habeeb, 1988; Elman, 1995; Zartman & Rubin, 2000). Only a few studies have



looked past these structural features, to try to describe (and, to a lesser extent, to explain) smaller states' institutional adaptations and diplomatic strategies (Odell, 1980; Odell, 1985; Moon, 1988).

Drawing together bits and pieces from these scattered sources, we can put together a basic typology of different strategies that smaller states might pursue in trying to influence US policy outcomes. Here I am primarily thinking about strategies in terms of choices about different "pathways" for accessing the US policy-making process. Each pathway strategy is expected to match up with an associated organizational form. I assume that strategies will sometimes be conditioned by organizational forms, and organizational forms will sometimes be conditioned by strategies.

The most basic approach is a strict intergovernmental one, focusing on formal contacts between high-level negotiators, primarily through the respective foreign ministries, but occasionally moving up to cabinet-level negotiations. This is the way that things are most often assumed to work in conventional approaches to international relations. The primary dynamic in this kind of intergovernmental bargaining is the acquisition and exploitation of bargaining leverage, which—as explored in the vast and complex literature on bilateral bargaining—depends on a variety of conditions. These include alternatives to negotiated settlement, resolve, information, and signaling.

The normal practice in all countries is of course for foreign governments to bring their concerns to the executive branch, which then may convey them to the legislature. However, given the separation of powers in the American system, foreign governments may sometimes feel obliged to try to influence key Congressional representatives directly if they expect the executive to be unsuccessful on their behalf, or if they see the executive as less sympathetic to their interests.

One alternative to the intergovernmental approach is the use of professional lobbyists or consultants—sometimes derided as "influence-peddlers"—to make informal contacts with powerful US decision-makers. A number of countries have relied extensively on this pathway in their efforts to influence American foreign and domestic policies (Howe & Trott, 1977; Moon, 1988). This has been a favored strategy for countries whose bilateral connections to the US are confined to a relatively narrow set of issues, or who face political or cultural barriers in dealing with the US directly, such as Japan and



South Korea. This kind of approach has been the source of major controversy in the US, and therefore in the countries which have employed it. The "Koreagate" scandal of the mid-1990s provides an example. Professional intermediaries are sometimes used to convey offers or threats designed to shift US priorities or positions, but they are more often used to persuade top decision-makers to see one or both countries' interests differently.

Another alternative pathway is direct engagement between middle- and lower-level officials. Here, technical arguments (and sometimes political and moral arguments) are made to try to convince bureaucratic counterparts to see the merits of the foreign government's position or claims, and/or to see their own government's interests, differently. These "technocratic" contacts may take place on an ad hoc basis, or they may be carried on through durable transgovernmental networks (Keohane & Nye, 1971).

The final pathway strategy involves efforts to influence the target state's policy indirectly, by mobilizing and supporting domestic actors in the US whose interests converge with those of the foreign government. This can take a wide variety of forms, but I will focus here on two basic types: "targeted" and "popular." In the "targeted" version, the influencing government tries to encourage a specific group within the US to see that its interests are at stake, and to press (more) aggressively for its favored policy. In some cases, the transnational "alliance" is little more than a coincidence of interests, but in others there is a meaningful pattern of mutual support, based on transfers of information, contacts, or other political resources. Common targets for this kind of indirect influence are industry associations, labor organizations, non-government advocacy groups, and organized ethnic communities. Usually, the resulting pressure is directed at Congress, and from there channeled toward the executive branch; in some cases, however, it may be aimed more directly at the White House or at specific departments or agencies. In the "popular" version of indirect influence, the influencing government attempts to mobilize a significant portion of the general electorate to support or oppose a policy it cares about. Both versions of this strategy are often pursued as ad hoc campaigns, coordinated by US-based lobby / public-relations firms, and may involve some combination of opinion polling, media networking, and television or radio advertisements (Congressional Quarterly, 1982).



Of course, this menu of options is not meant to be exclusive. All foreign governments pursue basic intergovernmental relations, and most concurrently pursue at least one—and sometimes all—of the other pathway strategies at any given time. It is nevertheless usually possible to identify larger tendencies and trends in the overall mixture of pathways that states follow in trying to influence US policy outcomes. These tendencies and trends can be matched up with concurrent developments in the US, Canada, and Mexico.

Some of the research on asymmetric bargaining has looked comparatively at the way particular countries' choices have been shaped (and rewarded) by different structural features—e.g., strategic relationships, institutional affiliations, economic interdependencies, domestic political structures, etc. (e.g., Fox, 1977). But the small amount of work that has been done on pathway strategies has either been broadly theoretical or narrowly descriptive of a particular country or group of countries. We therefore have few signposts for thinking about pathway strategies comparatively.

There is certainly some variation out there which calls for comparative analysis. Most lobbying on behalf of Israel, for example, is primarily driven by money raised privately in the United States, while lobbying on behalf of South Korea is primarily driven by (and paid for by) the South Korean government and tightly connected national firms. While British companies have recently topped the list of list of foreign lobby spenders, the British government spends virtually nothing on conventional "influence-peddler" lobbying. Japan, China, and South Korea, on the other hand, all continue to rely on former American officials and American public relations firms to help them navigate their way through Washington, in spite of the bad publicity that is stirred up when these diplomatic "hired guns" break the rules. Some of these patterns are not at all surprising. They seem to follow straightforwardly from the kinds of issues these states are most concerned about and the kinds of resources they have to work with. But others seem to be more a reflection of the "domestic political structure and cultural contexts" of the country that is trying to influence US policy (Moon, 1988, 72).

## II. COMPARING CANADA AND MEXICO

Nowhere is the question of influence on US policy more important than in Canada and Mexico, where even minor changes in American institutions and laws can have enormous political, eco-



nomic, and social consequences. This is true not only of US foreign policies, but of ostensibly domestic ones as well. Thus, we often refer to the US-Canadian and US-Mexican relationships as prototypes for a larger blurring of these two categories in a new kind of “intermestic” politics.

However, as Clarkson and Banda have noted, Canada and Mexico have not generally been considered usefully comparable, especially prior to their formal connection in NAFTA (Clarkson & Banda, 2004). There are of course some very important differences. Mexico’s early twentieth-century relations with the United States were confrontational, violent, and distant. Canada’s were sometimes tense, but more often friendly, cooperative, and quietly, cautiously integrative. Through virtually all of the Cold War period, Mexico was generally introverted, with its back deliberately turned to the US. Canada embraced a close partnership with the US, and was an active member of the larger North Atlantic community, participating enthusiastically in US-led multilateral defense and economic regimes. Most Americans see Canadians as pretty much the same as themselves (i.e., as Americans who have, rather eccentrically, chosen to live north of Buffalo, New York), but tend to see Mexicans as very different, culturally and perhaps racially as well. The Mexican diaspora in the United States has become increasingly large, concentrated, and politically organized. Its value as a strategic asset for the Mexican government is ambiguous, but there is a steadily-growing perception that it is on the verge of becoming an important force in US domestic politics (Masci, 2003). Canadians in the US, on the other hand, have always been scattered, depoliticized, and politically invisible.

Nevertheless, there are some important similarities, or at least parallels. First among these is of course that both Canada and Mexico find themselves living—for better and worse—in the shadow of the United States. They therefore find themselves obliged to engage in extensive policy coordination across a broad array of issues. They enjoy special opportunities to take advantage of the rich American market, but suffer from a state of constant anxiety about the danger of creeping assimilation or de facto annexation. For each of them, the US serves as both the primary protector and the primary source of risk. Millions of individuals from both countries cross the borders every year. The livelihoods, cultural opportunities, and family connections of many of their citizens depend on US policies in a very real way.



Structurally, Canada's and Mexico's bargaining positions with respect to the United States are similar, in that each pairing is characterized by extensive, highly asymmetrical interdependence. Donald Wyman (1978, 87) has argued that the disparity in the overall economic development of the two countries has meant that asymmetric interdependence has not worked the same way for Mexico as it has for Canada. Specifically, Canada and the US may be meaningfully interdependent, but Mexico is simply dependent. But the parallel—at least in broad, structural terms—is probably much better than Wyman allows. Bargaining power in asymmetric interdependence comes from the expected costs associated with disruption and adjustment. In that sense it is not at all clear that Canada's higher standard of living improves its negotiating position.<sup>3</sup> If anything, it might make Canada more sensitive to US pressure. In any event, the overall extent of the asymmetry probably trumps any relative difference: the Canadian economy may be about twice as big as the Mexican economy, but it is less than one-tenth the size of the American economy. Thus both countries are in a position to cause discomfort for the US, but not real pain—except perhaps in the short term, for certain industries or regions (Keohane & Nye, 1977, 202-203; Chabat, 1997). While both countries may be able to hold out for what they want against short-term, concentrated US pressure, neither could survive a severe, long-term disruption of bilateral trade and investment.

Canada and Mexico have thus been confronted with the challenge of deflecting or restraining the exercise of American power. Both have responded in similar ways, at similar times. In the 1950s, both were relatively open to US capital, drawing it in to fuel their post-war development. In the 1960s and 1970s, both turned in the direction of state-led development, bringing them into conflict with US investors and exporters. In the 1980s, both tried to further development through traditional exports, which brought them into conflict with embattled US domestic producers. Both have attempted to use oil and gas as an engine of national development, sometimes charging into the US market, sometimes holding back, switching back and forth between preferences for managed or market-driven arrangements. Both have at times gone out of their way to show off their diplomatic "independence," playing up their continuing ties to Cuba, for example, and their reservations about US intervention in Central America. Both made a sharp turn in the 1980s



to the right of the political spectrum, cutting government spending and regulation, brushing off protectionist pressures, and removing restrictions on foreign investment. Since then, both have signed regional preferential-trade agreements with the US (and with each other), and both have made moves toward other kinds of formal, integrative policy-coordination and dispute-resolution.

### III. A "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP"

Canada's early Cold War approach to managing relations with the United States was shaped by the legacy of war-time collaboration and the policy-coordination imperatives of post-war economic interpenetration. Day-to-day management of the relationship was extraordinarily decentralized. Lesser conflicts were often resolved in informal meetings or by telephone, by middle- and lower-level functional experts working through durable transgovernmental networks (Holsti & Levy, 1971; Keohane & Nye, 1977, 165-218). Larger conflicts were generally managed through senior official and/or cabinet-level meetings. At both levels, bilateral bargaining was governed by a distinctive "diplomatic culture," in which, as Kal Holsti (1971) described it, "conflicts of interest... [were] essentially 'problems' to be solved rather than... confrontations to be won," public grandstanding was avoided, disagreements were resolved "on their merits" through technical arguments, and coercive issue-linkages were scrupulously avoided.

The US-Canada relationship, in other words, tended to tilt toward the "technocratic" approach outlined above. Canada had little need for the services of professional lobbyists, because its officials knew and understood the relevant parts of the US political system, had extensive contacts with their American counterparts, and had a reasonable expectation that they would get a fair hearing for whatever grievances might come along (Gotlieb, 1982). There was a tacit understanding that the State Department (and, when necessary, the White House) would "go to bat for Canada" vis-B-vis Congress and the domestic agencies, and that Canada would stay "out" of US domestic politics. Canadian diplomatic efforts were sometimes supported by de facto transnational allies—i.e., US domestic coalitions whose interests converged with the Canadian position—but there were very few instances where Canadian officials went out of their way to contact these groups or to coordinate their pressure on the US executive (Nye, 1974).



Canada's adoption of this sort of approach was partly a function of its domestic political structure. The parliamentary system was well-suited to this kind of network-driven "quiet diplomacy," because it facilitated internal cohesion, inter-departmental coordination, control over information, and rapid policy changes. The Canadian leadership found that it could maintain a fairly high level of control, and yet allow enough "slack" in the executive hierarchy to permit the cultivation of informal, transgovernmental contacts.

Canada's bargaining style was also a reflection of its domestic political culture. The cultural similarity between the US and Canada made the bilateral relationship relatively "easy" for both countries, and sustained a sense of familiarity and trust. These feelings were reinforced by the legacy of war-time collaboration, which not only greatly expanded the network of inter-personal and inter-agency connections, but also reinforced a shared "problem-solving" ethic and a sense of common purpose. Based on their experiences in the domestic arena, Canadian officials were used to backroom compromises. They were uncomfortable with the public, adversarial pluralism of the American system (Stairs, 1982, 682). But they generally did not have to face it directly, because their transgovernmental connections usually insulated them against the rough-and-tumble of US domestic politics.

Canada had a number of diplomatic disappointments during the early Cold War decades, but that was partly a function of its high expectations. Overall, it was far more successful in bilateral negotiations than the overall asymmetry of power would have led us to expect (Keohane & Nye, 1977, 165-218). But all good things, of course, must come to an end. The same informality that made the network-driven system of bilateral management so advantageous for Canada during the 1950s and 1960s also made it dependent on the relative cohesion of the US foreign policy-making process during that period. When the American system fragmented in the 1970s, the network-driven system began to unravel, and the Canadian bargaining position began to deteriorate.

#### **IV. "SO FAR FROM GOD, SO CLOSE TO THE UNITED STATES"**

Mexico's early post-war approach to managing its relations with the US reflected a reaction to the pain and frustration of the preceding fifty years. Essentially, Mexico's apprehension about



political domination and economic exploitation outweighed its attraction to the opportunities promised by closer bilateral ties, and it made a deliberate effort to close itself off from the US. Mexico turned its back to the north, and directed most of its attention inward (and occasionally to the south) (Randall, 1995). In terms of the types of pathway strategies listed above, Mexico in the early Cold War decades was about as close as any state has ever been to the ideal type for the strict intergovernmental relations model. Day-to-day relations were carried out by a very traditional, rigidly hierarchical foreign ministry, which was leashed very tightly by the political leadership. For more important matters, Mexican governments insisted on a very structured sort of bilateral summitry, with a tightly-controlled agenda. In negotiations, they favored a formal, legal approach to framing of issues and agendas, and consistently resisted issue-linkages, including “positive” ones (i.e., cooperative issue-trading) (Knight, 1997). When US officials informally proposed greater inter-bureaucratic consultation and coordination, their Mexican counterparts politely but firmly declined (Cope, 1996). There were occasional complaints in Mexico about the weak professionalism of the foreign service, and about the risks involved in some particular presidents’ direct confrontations with the US (e.g., Eccheveria’s support for Castro’s Cuba in the late 1970s), but there was overall a solid consensus within the political elite on this general approach (Chabat, 1989).

These patterns were partly an extension of underlying features of the domestic political structure—Mexico’s “perfect dictatorship.” The quasi-corporatist authoritarian system built by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) was remarkably successful at co-opting internal challenges and maintaining the party’s grip on power. And, for better or worse, it effectively foreclosed the option of transgovernmental network-building. The tight concentration of power created a foreign ministry that was preeminent on paper, but extraordinarily weak in practice—isolated from and subordinated to the presidency and the party leadership (Chabat, 1989). US officials had little incentive to try to establish close working relations with their counterparts in the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE), because the latter had little real influence over the country’s foreign policy agenda, and little useful information to exchange (Wyman, 1978, 89; Cope, 1996).

These patterns were also partly a reflection of the domestic political culture. The Mexican elite’s worldview was strongly condi-



tioned by the legacy of the revolution and the history of repeated US interventions. This worldview included a near-religious devotion to the principle of non-intervention and to the primacy of international-legal principles. The idea of directly lobbying Congress or building transnational alliances in the US was thus virtually unthinkable in Mexico, both because it would be a gross violation of tightly-held principles, and because of the apprehension that it might encourage the US to interfere in Mexican domestic politics (Eisenstadt, 1997, 96-97). Mexican officials, politically socialized to an inclusive, hierarchical system, were ill-equipped to deal directly with the aggressive pluralism of the American system, and naturally recoiled from it. These tendencies were further reinforced by a deeply-rooted culture of political clientelism in Mexico, which suppressed bureaucratic initiative and diplomatic creativity (Fox, 1993).

This strategy of political isolation and formal-legal diplomatic engagement brought mixed results. On one hand, it prevented Mexico from enjoying some of the economic and diplomatic advantages that Canada derived from its close relationship with the US. On the other hand, from the perspective of the governing regime, it was seen to prevent exploitation and to maintain a certain political stability. It depended in part on successful summitry, on a general American inclination to put overall Mexican stability ahead of narrow or immediate US interests, and occasionally on *de facto* transnational alliances with US interests with a stake in the bilateral relationship. Looking back, we can now see that the first and second of these things depended in turn on the relative cohesion of the US foreign policy-making process during the early Cold War decades. This may have made the third one increasingly important over time (Chabat, 1997, 63).

## **V. SYSTEM SHOCK: FRAGMENTATION OF US FOREIGN POLICY-MAKING**

The 1970s are often noted as a turning point for US relations with Canada and Mexico (and indeed with all countries). Normally, the catalyst that people have in mind is the Nixon administration's decision to confront America's perceived relative decline head-on, by forcing adjustment costs onto strategic allies and economic partners (i.e., through the Nixon Doctrine and the August 1971 "shocks"). Since then, the US has regained some of the dominance it enjoyed in the early Cold War years. Even so, some of the most striking features



of 1970s American foreign policy have endured—including some of those most troubling for Canada and Mexico.

In the long run, the more important transformation of the 1970s seems to have been the further fragmentation of the institutional machinery for US foreign policy decision-making. This process had two main parts. First, there was a simultaneous tightening and fragmentation of the executive branch, as the White House strengthened its control over decision-making on the most pressing foreign policy matters, while various “domestic” agencies (e.g., Commerce, Interior) moved to capture a larger share of what had been left to the State Department (Destler, 1972; Hopkins, 1976). Second, there was a new attentiveness and new assertiveness on the part of Congress, the Senate in particular. The domestic struggle over President Kennedy’s Trade Expansion Act had drawn Congress into a more active role with respect to trade and investment policies. Vietnam and Watergate encouraged them to take a more active role with respect to national security policies as well (Franck & Weisband, 1979).

At the same time, Congress itself has become far more fragmented, as the legislative discipline once imposed by powerful Congressional leaders unraveled in the 1970s. Whereas particular majority leaders, and even committee chairs, could effectively deliver or derail a vote on a particular issue, the breakdown of the hierarchical committee system meant that voting coalitions on foreign policy issues formed in a more ad hoc way, making it harder for other governments to anticipate them and to engage with Congress more generally.

The implications of this fragmentation became clearer in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In that period, prolonged economic turmoil deepened the sense of frustration in the US, and weakened the institutional barriers between domestic and foreign policies. With the severe recession of the early 1980s, Canadian and Mexican elites increasingly came to recognize that things had changed in Washington. Congress had become more assertive in pressing for the interests of embattled local interests, while the White House and State Department were less able (and sometimes less willing) to deflect these pressures through traditional strategies of concealment, compensation, or cooptation (Pastor & Fernandez de Castro, 1998).

Canada had of course been “shocked” by the Nixon administration’s refusal to exempt it from the August 1971 balance of



payments measures, and by Nixon's matter-of-fact declaration that the "special relationship" was dead. But the bigger, more enduring shock for Canada came in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in a series of diplomatic disasters (Holmes, 1982). The struggle over Canadian broadcasting regulations made it clear that local interests in the US were now even better equipped to "capture" Congress and use it as a vehicle for confronting foreign rivals, and that Congress was now prepared to make its own coercive issue-linkages. The failure of the East Coast fisheries treaties to gain Senate ratification reaffirmed that even formal pacts with the administration could not ensure the creation of needed policy-coordination regimes, as local interests could use Congressional clout to derail them at the ratification stage. As the recession deepened, there was an increase in the number of protectionist challenges to imports from Canada, and a more dramatic increase in the anticipation of further protectionist challenges, particularly the aggressive use of strengthened countervailing and anti-dumping laws. In all of these disputes, concentrated US domestic interests were able to push Congress into aggressive action. Congress was able to push the White House in turn. Canada's traditional bureaucratic allies, on the other hand, were unable and/or unwilling to help deflect the pressure. The result, in each case, was diplomatic frustration and domestic political turbulence.

Mexico's shock was a little more gradual, and came to a head later. In the 1970s, Mexico had gambled that oil prices would remain high and interest rates would remain low. When it suffered reversals in both areas in the early 1980s, Mexico was forced to default on its massive foreign debts and suffered through a severe and protracted economic downturn—the so-called "lost decade." Mexican elites gradually came to realize that the established import-substitution development strategy was no longer sustainable. They would have to try to reorient the economy to export competitiveness (Pastor & Wise, 1994). In the process, they felt the sting of Congressional protectionism, and the frustration of not being able to rely on executive branch allies to deflect it. In the mid-1980s, moreover, Mexico was subjected to sustained criticism from both the Reagan administration and senior Congressional figures over its "uncooperative" policies on immigration, drug interdiction, and US intervention in Central America (Chabat, 1989). Senator Jesse Helms' infamous "Mexico-bashing" hearings raised threats of harsh restrictions on immigration and trade, and fears of a backlash against Mexican-



Americans (Brinkley, 1986). The US had apparently become indispensable to Mexico, and yet at the same time increasingly unpredictable and even threatening.

## VI. COPING WITH THE NEW WASHINGTON

There are a number of striking parallels in the way that Canada and Mexico reacted to these changes in the US domestic political structure. The most obvious similarity, and the one that has so far been most extensively studied, is (of course) the parallel change in the two governments' attitudes toward formal, integrative regimes, culminating in the CUSFTA and NAFTA agreements.

Canada's turn began even before Pierre Trudeau stepped down in 1984. The recession and the failure of the National Energy Program provoked strong criticism of the Liberals' handling of the relationship with Washington and of the economy more generally, undermining support for what was left of the party's developmentalist agenda. Alarmed by the early signs of mounting Congressional protectionism, the Liberal leadership endorsed the Macdonald Commission's recommendation for the initiation of bilateral talks on sectoral trade liberalization (Doern & Tomlin, 1991). Mulroney's Conservatives picked up on this agenda and ran with it, as part of a larger effort to cut government spending, deregulate the economy, and attract foreign investment. Mulroney then decided to make a "leap of faith" to across-the-board free trade, as a way to set up barriers against US "trade remedy" laws, spur growth and competitiveness, and "lock in" controversial domestic reforms. In 1987, after two years of intense bargaining, the Mulroney government was eventually able to overcome domestic opposition and US ambivalence to an ambitious bilateral agreement.

Mexico's turn toward economic integration began a little later, and took a little longer. The debt crisis and prolonged economic slump of the 1980s convinced Mexican elites that they had to take radical steps to jump-start the economy, or risk political catastrophe. The realization of this new consensus was catalyzed by an important generational shift, as the insular, nationalist cohort that launched the ISI development agenda and fine-tuned the PRI machine were gradually replaced by a new generation of pro-market tecnicos, often US-educated, and with strong network connections to US officials and transnational business leaders (Pastor & Wise, 1994). By the end of 1989, Carlos Salinas was ready to make his own leap of faith. Salinas'



reasons for pursuing free trade were generally similar to Mulroney's: contain US "trade remedy" laws, increase economic growth and competitiveness, and "lock in" domestic reforms.

Also important, but less extensively studied, are the similarities and differences in the two countries' attitudes toward "high politics" issues. On one level, there is no comparison, as Canada is a member of the NATO community, with a long history of military and diplomatic coordination with the US, in both continental and international contexts. By contrast, Mexico has been almost entirely disengaged from the US on these kinds of issues, with a few significant exceptions such as relations with Cuba and drug interdiction. But there may have been a kind of convergence here as well. As the relative "weight" of Canada's contributions to trans-Atlantic and continental defense cooperation has declined over the last thirty years, so has its influence over US foreign policy decisions. To be sure, this has been seen by some as opening up new space for Canada to follow its own path. In any case, while Canada-US cooperation on diplomatic and defense issues is still extensive, it seems far less "automatic" now than it was forty or fifty years ago.

Neither Canada nor Mexico usually casts much of a shadow in Washington on defense and security issues today. There have, however, been some very important exceptions to this rule, such as the recent tensions over the war in Iraq. Foreign policymakers in both countries recognized that they had to accommodate their respective publics' visceral opposition to the Bush administration's Iraq policy. Even so, recognizing that international political endorsement would be crucial to the policy's acceptance in the US, they were generally apprehensive about the White House reaction to a blunt rejection. This balancing act was executed reasonably well by Fox, and clumsily by Chrétien—though perhaps not as clumsily as Martin's subsequent handling of the ballistic missile defense decision. While the respective bilateral security agendas are quite different, there is an underlying similarity in the popular expectation that each country can make its own, ad hoc decisions about whether to sign on to any given US security initiative—turning the "coalition of the willing" idea on its head—according to its own assessments of the mixture of decision-making and burden-sharing, and of the direct and indirect sovereignty implications. This has only made more difficult the already uphill battle for Canadian and Mexican diplomats in trying to convince American elites (in every part of government and outside



it) that their respective countries are close and reliable allies, deserving of special attention and consideration (Mason, 2003; Massari, 2003).

Cutting across these different issue areas are some less visible, but equally important, changes in the two governments' priorities with respect to "pathways" for influencing US policy outcomes. Again, the parallels are striking, suggesting the importance of the opportunity structure represented by the US political system in shaping other countries' strategy choices. Yet there are also some important divergences, which seem to indicate the enduring importance of institutional and cultural differences.

First, each government restructured executive decision-making and administration in order to reflect (and act on) changed priorities and strategies in their respective relationships with the US. The most striking change was the reorganization of the foreign policy bureaucracy to reflect the new importance placed on trade and investment: In both countries, the foreign ministries were subordinated to or partially displaced by trade negotiators, and foreign service generalists deferred to economists and other kinds of technical experts. In 1982, Canada merged its Foreign Affairs and International Trade departments, with upper-level executive positions dominated by the leading individuals and offices of the latter. Mexico effectively excluded the SRE from the NAFTA negotiations. The SRE had always been a weak bureaucratic player generally seen by the leadership as hostile to greater economic integration. The Commerce and Industry department (SECOFI) gained primary responsibility for the negotiations, but cross-cutting responsibilities were also given to other agencies, in order to maintain a high level of central control (Chabat, 1997, 38; Eisenstadt, 1997, 98). These institutional changes have since been reversed, though, and now look in retrospect like epiphenomenal reflections of a (historically) momentary executive preoccupation.

The more important and enduring change in both governments seems to have been the concurrent, but more gradual, concentration of independent foreign policy information-gathering and policy analysis capabilities—particularly with respect to relations with the US—in the hands of the administrative offices of the political leadership. In principle, this concentration of power within the executive shored up each government's capacity to pursue the kind of top-down, adaptive foreign policy that was so indispensable during the

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early Cold War years. But in practice it has also clearly increased the propensity for "politicization" of diplomatic goals and strategies in relations with the US.

Since the collapse of the PRI "perfect dictatorship" in the late 1990s, the concentration of executive power has been partially offset for Mexico—at least in some issue areas—by the evolution toward a genuine separation of powers between executive and legislative branches. The President's office still dominates the foreign policy agenda, but Congress has been remarkably assertive over the last few years, pressing the executive to bargain more aggressively, or blocking particular kinds of diplomatic settlements, on issues ranging from cross-border trucking to the longstanding trade dispute over high-fructose corn syrup. It is still too early to tell what kinds of long-term impacts this might have on Mexico's approach to relations with the US. In some cases, it seems to have weakened the executive's hand, and in others to have strengthened it, by allowing Mexican negotiators to play the same kind of "good-cop, bad-cop" game that their American counterparts have used against them for decades.

Second, each government set aside past reservations and began to make deliberate efforts to influence members of Congress. Both governments continued to focus their energies on the executive branch, and continued to expect the administration to "go to bat" for them vis-à-vis Congress. But they also made it plain that they would not continue to rely completely on the White House and State Department to assure passage of important legislation or agreements, or to deflect pressures for policies that threatened their interests. Both governments attempted to influence Congress both directly and indirectly, using similar strategies. The main differences were in the weights put on different resources and target groups.

Canada put most of its energies into direct influence, using "in-house" contacts and resources. Under the direction of the new ambassador, Allan Gotlieb, the embassy budget was expanded, and its mission broadened to include new efforts to monitor Congressional opinions and activities, and to establish working relationships with Congressional staffers (Doran & Sokolsky, 1985; Gotlieb, 1989). The embassy (and the government more generally) also attempted active cultivation of ad hoc transnational alliances, particularly in disputes over US trade and investment policies. And Canada attempted from time to time to influence Congress indirectly, through issue-specific media campaigns organized by prominent US lobby



firms. These “public diplomacy” campaigns have played a noteworthy part in a small number of recent disputes, such as those over the negotiation of the 1997 Landmine Ban Treaty and recent rounds of the never-ending dispute over softwood lumber (Price, 1998; DFAIT, 2002). However, the principal focus has remained on the longstanding “technocratic” approach, occasionally supported by direct, targeted lobbying.<sup>4</sup>

The longer-term pattern comes out clearly in the historical evolution of the Canadian government’s handling of American initiatives to divert water from the Great Lakes. When members of Congress from the Midwest pushed a project to divert water to service the city of Chicago in the mid-1950s, the Canadian government protested in the usual way of that time, through its transgovernmental contacts, occasionally bolstered by gentle summit-level pressure from the prime minister (Wagner, 1973). Latent transnational allies in the US—i.e., Great Lakes power and shipping concerns—were “available,” but Canadian officials made no effort to engage with them. When legislative momentum came to a head in 1959, the Canadian ambassador, Arnold Heeney, reluctantly resorted to calling the Senate Majority Leader, Lyndon Johnson, and asking him to block the bill. Heeney later characterized this as the exception that highlighted the rule of that time. It was, he recounted, the “only...occasion on which I felt justified in going directly, and literally, ‘to the Hill’” (Heeney, 1972, 127).

A similar problem emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s with North Dakota’s Garrison Diversion Unit project. The Canadian response represented its first really concerted effort to directly engage with the new, more fragmented Congress. The Department of Foreign Affairs and the Washington embassy naturally began with informal contacts with their executive-branch counterparts, but they also set their sights on Congress, energetically lobbying members on both sides of the issue, and attempting to form ad hoc transnational alliances with like-minded state governments, private-sector interests, and environmental NGOs (Gotlieb, 1989; Nossal, 1978). The Garrison project was eventually scrapped, but it is not at all clear how much of the credit ought to go to Canadian lobby efforts, as opposed to domestic interests in the US that would have opposed the project with or without Canadian encouragement. When the water diversion issue re-emerged in 2005, in the form of the new Devils Lake project, these same strategies were tried again, with similarly ambiguous results.



Mexico, on the other hand, tilted to indirect influence. Beginning in the mid-1980s, the Mexican government began to invest increasingly heavily in the services of professional lobbyists based in the US, both old-school "influence-peddlers" and thoroughly modern public relations managers like Burson-Marsteller and (later) Allyn & Co. In the three year run-up to the ratification of the NAFTA, Mexico spent more on lobbying in the US than any other country had ever done in a similar period (Katz, 1992). Mexico's hired guns developed and coordinated a massive and highly organized public information campaign, featuring high-profile television ads, targeted media information packets, business association meetings, and regional grass-roots campaigns to mobilize the Mexican diaspora (Eisenstadt, 1997, 99). The fact that the NAFTA vote in the US eventually came down to a last-minute frenzy of presidential vote-buying raised serious doubts about the efficacy of the whole effort, and the "Mexico Lobby" has since been scaled back dramatically. Nevertheless, Mexico continued to rely on this kind of indirect influence through most of the 1990s.

More recently, Mexico has strengthened its Washington embassy, and intensified its efforts at direct engagement with members of Congress. In responding to recent tensions over border security and immigration, for example, the Congressional Liaison office has made a concerted effort to monitor and "manage" House and Senate opinion on potential legislation affecting the status of undocumented immigrants living in the US and the policing of the border, and to prepare the ground for the negotiation of a broader bilateral immigration regime. The Mexican government, moreover, made a effort to encourage and publicize Mexican-American opposition to unwelcome aspects of recent US immigration reform, as part of a larger effort at what I have called "indirect," transnational influence (Althaus & Pinkerton, 2005). This is strikingly different from the way that Mexico handled similar tensions in the early 1970s, not so much in terms of the diplomatic message, but the pathways by which it sought to influence US policy. Back in the 1970s, Mexican protests against unilateral American restrictions were confined to formal diplomatic channels, with only the most peripheral efforts to monitor and influence Congress and the American public. Like Canada, Mexico has since shifted to a much more complex "multi-pathway" approach. And, again like Canada, the practical results have been profoundly mixed, as seen, on one hand, in the successful deflation



of potential opposition to new consular matriculation cards, and, on the other hand, in the failed effort to derail legislation for new border fencing and patrols.

Third, both governments renewed and extended their efforts to raise awareness about their respective countries, by funneling money and information to university research initiatives and independent “think tank” projects. Mexican support for university research in the US has been quite substantial over the last twenty years, particularly by comparison with other Latin American countries. During the run-up to the NAFTA, the Mexican government poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into the coffers of a small number of high-profile Washington think tanks whose researchers generally favored the agreement (Velasco, 1997). Many prominent experts were deeply involved in the effort to promote the NAFTA. Some of them actively collaborated with Mexican officials in identifying targets and refining arguments. Funding for policy research on Canada remained fairly steady through the 1990s, in spite of budget cuts. It was increasingly aimed at research focused on contemporary policy debates. There was some effort to engage with US-based think-tanks, but with mixed results. (Recently, the Treasury Board signaled its intention to cut to one year the renewal of federal funding for Canadian studies in other countries, including the United States. These programs survive for now, but the proposed budget plan suggests that they may be at risk (Fraser, 2006).)

In addition to—and at least partly as a consequence of—these shifts in the way that Canada and Mexico thought about pathways of influence, there were also marked changes in their respective bargaining styles. In particular, two important negotiating taboos were broken, or at least substantially weakened. First, both governments relaxed longstanding reservations about “public diplomacy.” They attempted to influence US decision-makers and domestic groups through the media (Cooper, 1989). This was in part a direct response to a concurrent shift on the part of the US. As Congress became more assertive on foreign policy issues, public grandstanding increased markedly, even on issues that were currently in negotiation. In all three countries, press coverage of foreign policy issues became more extensive and more polarizing. It became harder to “keep things quiet” and/or to send subtle or complex signals through the media.<sup>5</sup> But the shift toward public diplomacy was also a deliberate strategic move for Canada and Mexico, in the sense that the media was now



seen as one of the few levers left to smaller countries in trying to get attention in Washington. It was also seen—at least by some in each country—as a crucial tool for indirect lobbying, in trying to reach both targeted and more general audiences. Nevertheless, strong reservations about public diplomacy have endured in both Canada and Mexico. It is still considered an “exceptional” strategy, generally kept in reserve for serious breakdowns.

Second, both governments became increasingly inclined to consider issue-linkage as a bargaining strategy. Prior to the 1980s, both countries were generally reluctant to pursue “positive” linkages (i.e., issue-trading), and quick to react to perceived “negative” linkages (i.e., threats, retaliation). Positive linkages were avoided partly because of the domestic political risks involved in making cross-issue trade-offs, and partly because of an apprehension that these trade-offs might later become bases for US leverage. Of course, both countries made some positive linkages during the early Cold War decades, but they tended to downplay the trade-off and disavow the precedent. The free trade negotiations changed all that, making “package deal” bargaining a normal—if not necessarily routine—feature of bilateral bargaining. Both countries avoided negative linkages because of domestic political risks, an apprehension that they would encourage the US to do more of the same, and—at least in the Canadian case—a set of shared normative commitments (Holsti, 1971; Wyman, 1978, 112-113).

Mexico has always been cautious about making negative linkages, but has shown from time to time that it is prepared to use carefully-veiled blackmail where necessary. This was revealed, albeit somewhat obliquely, in late 2002 and early 2003, when Mexican officials warned their American counterparts that lack of progress on the immigration agenda would weaken Fox’s domestic political standing. This in turn would put ongoing security cooperation talks at risk (Sullivan and Jordan, 2002). Canada has also shown that it is prepared to play hardball when it can, and it has flirted even more boldly with coercive linkages. In recent rounds of the perennial softwood lumber dispute, for example, both the Chrétien and Martin governments hinted at a linkage to natural gas exports (Gotlieb, 2001; Adams, 2005).

It is worth noting here two additional differences in the way that the two governments have responded to political developments in the United States. First, there has been a marked difference in their



respective attitudes toward engagement with US courts. Canadian officials, who are very familiar with the American legal system, can tap into an impressive reservoir of relevant legal expertise. They have therefore been more aggressive in supporting Canadian interests in US courts, and in pressing their case in quasi-judicial institutions like the US International Trade Commission, as well as in the CUSFTA/NAFTA dispute-settlement procedures, and the GATT/WTO. The Mexican government has improved its capacity to pursue legal challenges over the last ten years, but it is handicapped by the much more substantial differences between its legal system and the American one. It is important to recognize, however, that both governments have tended to move strategically between the legal and political tracks. This difference in approach is more a matter of degree than a qualitative difference.

Second, there is the diaspora effect—or rather the latent diaspora effect, since it is not clear that the Mexican-American community can affect bilateral bargaining consistently. Nevertheless, the Mexican government has attempted to mobilize segments of the Mexican-American population to support or oppose policies that are important to Mexico. During the negotiation of the NAFTA, for example, the Mexican government spent substantial sums on trying to rally Mexican-American support for the agreement, hiring public relations experts to conduct targeted advertising campaigns, and recruiting prominent Hispanic business leaders to host major regional events (Eisenstadt, 1997, 102-107). When it tried to muster Mexican-American support for President Fox's proposal for a radical opening of the US-Mexican border, it was frustrated by cross-cutting priorities within the diaspora community itself (Pastor, 2001, 102; CNN, 2006).

## VII. RECENT ASSESSMENTS AND NEW DIRECTIONS

Given the extent and the intensity of the opposition to the CUSFTA and NAFTA agreements at the times of their respective ratifications, it is remarkable that they have since become so taken for granted. Some fairly broad sectors of society in both countries still resent the NAFTA. This sense of grievance played an important role in the highly polarized and controversial Mexican federal elections earlier this year (Vargas, 2006). But among the political elites in both countries today, the main axis of debate is not over whether or not to roll back the free trade agreements. Rather, they debate whether to



push even farther down the road to continental integration. The two main aims, for both, would be to enhance the existing trade and investment dispute-resolution mechanisms and prevent America's post-9/11 preoccupation with security from smothering transnationalized production networks, trade, tourism, and immigration (Dobson, 2002; Kitchen, 2004; Ramirez, 2002; Hufbauer & Vega-Canovas, 2003). This new inclination to consider—if not yet actually pursue—package deals (i.e., positive linkages) probably reflects both an increased confidence in the respective governments' capacities to bargain effectively with Washington, and a general perception that the only way to capture Washington's attention is to confront it with a bundle of trade-offs which opens previously non-negotiable areas.

The Chretien government made the day-to-day management and cultivation of Canada's bilateral relationship with the US a relatively low priority throughout the 1990s. The institutional machinery for "multi-pathway" engagement and "public diplomacy" that had been built up while Allan Gotlieb was the ambassador to Washington fell into disuse and atrophied. In Mexico, on the other hand, the break-up of the "perfect dictatorship" and the coming to power of new political elites under Vicente Fox opened the door for Mexico to embrace the "multi-pathway" approach. Remnants of the old institutional and cultural obstacles continued to get in the way, but the new government effectively strengthened the Washington embassy's capacity to engage with Congress, various executive agencies, academics and think-tanks, and the general public (Borunda and Gonzalez interview, 2005). The Congressional Liaison staff was given new momentum, filled with hand-picked political appointees, and given new resources and clear support from the political leadership. And new Mexican consulates were established in various American cities, bringing the total up to forty-five by 2005.

Under the short-lived Paul Martin government (2003-2006), Canada "rediscovered" the "muti-pathway" approach that it had all but abandoned in the 1990s (Higginbotham & Heynen, 2003). It launched a new "Washington Advocacy Secretariat," housed within the embassy, and charged with coordinating inter-governmental, transgovernmental, and transnational engagement with the US. The Secretariat's main focus is on monitoring and engaging with members of Congress. But it has also kept track of media coverage and think-tank debates, and it endeavors to promote and maintain posi-



tive images of Canada within the US public more generally. Also, with an eye on the Mexican example, the Martin government committed to build new consulates across the United States.

In recently pursuing intensified “multi-pathway” strategies, Canada and Mexico have at the same time, but apparently quite independently, uncovered new wisdom in the old cliché that “all politics is local.” They have moved to translate this into new diplomatic tactics (Robertson interview, 2005; Borunda & Gonzalez interview, 2005). First, those within the embassies charged with monitoring and engaging with Congress have recognized that many difficult bilateral disputes, as over water diversion projects at both borders, began as local policy initiatives. These disputes might have been defused before they became politicized at the national level, through early, direct engagement with local officials and interests. Both governments have therefore turned their attention to building up contacts at the state and local level in certain key regions, and to building more consulates, as a way to watch out for potential conflicts and build up network contacts with local expatriates and transnational businesses.

Second, Canadian and Mexican officials have recognized that the best way to influence the way members of Congress vote is to highlight the relevant policy initiatives’ likely effects on their constituents. They have learned—often the hard way—that where constituent interests are not clearly at stake, members frequently trade their votes away or tie them into legislative alliances, and there is little that foreign negotiators and lobbyists can do to bring them back. Building effective transnational alliances therefore generally depends on identifying legislators whose constituents’ interests happen to coincide with those of Canada or Mexico, and then making the case that the help or harm done by the anticipated piece of legislation could make a difference to the member’s re-election prospects or larger legislative agenda. To advance these arguments effectively, Canadian and Mexican officials need to have detailed state- and/or constituency-level information about legislation and regulations, jobs and investment, public opinion, media coverage, and the like. Both embassies have therefore begun to collect as much of this kind of information as they can. They compile it in a way such that they can call it up at the click of a button, on their way to their next meeting “on the Hill” (Robertson, 2005; Borunda and Gonzalez interview, 2005). Again, diplomatic frustration has been the catalyst for strate-



gic and administrative innovation, and again the overall trend is to policy convergence.

The timing of this new emphasis on engagement with Congress and other centers of power in Washington might seem ironic, given the Bush administration's post-9/11 success in reclaiming executive control over some aspects of foreign and domestic policy-making, and its apparent emphasis on personal relationships between national leaders. These developments give the impression of a return to the "imperial presidency" of the early Cold War decades, and a renewal of the traditional, state-to-state model of diplomacy. Yet post-9/11 decisions on agricultural subsidies, steel quotas, and energy security remind us that policy-making in the US is still very fragmented, and the White House is not always in control.

## VIII. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

On one hand, the patterns described above highlight the way that basic changes in the domestic political structure of the United States can drive changes in the way other states try to influence its policies. In this case, the change over time suggests a basic convergence of Canadian and Mexican diplomatic strategies and institutional adaptations. The different political institutions and historical experiences in Canada and Mexico drove them to pursue very different strategies for relating to the US during the early Cold War decades. American officials' perceptions of the essential dissimilarity and separateness of the two bilateral relationships reinforced this pattern of divergence, and their capacity to accommodate these different patterns of engagement was facilitated by the relative centralization and cohesion of the policy-making machinery during this period. The turning point came in the 1970s, with the perception of relative decline and the resulting impatience with other countries' "free-riding," and the further fragmentation of policy-making within the American system. Governing elites in Canada and Mexico perceived these changes—and their diplomatic implications—in much the same way, at about the same time, and in turn pursued similar coping strategies.

On the other hand, these patterns show that there are still important variations in the way that Canada and Mexico respond to similar incentives and constraints, even within the context of ongoing regional integration and economic globalization. Some of these differences can be traced to differences in the specific economic,



demographic, or other structural features of the two relationships, or to specific features of the particular issue in play. Others are anchored in enduring institutional or cultural attributes of the two countries. Canada is still more inclined to pursue a "technocratic" approach, relying on close transgovernmental connections, and careful marshalling of sophisticated technical arguments. Mexico still tends to fall back reflexively on formal intergovernmentalism, but is moving rapidly toward a mixture of the kind of "hired gun" lobbying favored by Japan and the kind of "technocratic" engagement pioneered by Canada. Whether it ultimately tilts one way or the other over the next twenty years is likely to depend on—and perhaps also to influence—the degree to which it becomes a more distinctively "(North) American" society.

## IX. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The general convergence of Canadian and Mexican strategies for influencing US policy might lead us to expect further trilateral institution-building (Pastor, 2001). But the underlying domestic political pressures that catalyzed this new approach, and the approach itself, have cross-cutting implications for the push to further formal integration. The fragmentation of the American political system has made the exercise of American power more complex and less predictable. It therefore created new incentives for Canada and Mexico to try to make "grand bargains" that might further channel and constrain American power. Both countries have enjoyed some success in using direct and indirect lobbying to deflect anticipated challenges from Congress and/or various "domestic" agencies. Recent examples include the Canadian campaign to delay post-9/11 border restrictions and the Mexican effort to create and protect consular identification cards for undocumented immigrants.

But overall they have both found the new US policy environment a difficult and unpredictable one. In Washington, Allan Gotlieb has often remarked, a foreign government is "just another special interest, and not a very special one at that" (Gotlieb, 1989, 43-44). Canadian and Mexican officials have therefore been drawn to further institutionalization as a way to set up foundations for legal claims, and create a new basis for access and predictability. Bilateral tensions and political weakness in Ottawa and Mexico City stand in the way of any "package deals" or major institution-building for the foreseeable future. But even after "the planets are ... aligned" for further



integration, the proliferation of power centers and veto points within the American system will make it harder to put together “package deals.” It might make any future agreements more likely to unravel.<sup>6</sup> Further complicating the picture are the enduring differences between basic Canadian and Mexican diplomatic priorities and strategies, which have complicated—and will continue to complicate—further trilateral institution-building.

The pattern of convergence and divergence described above also helps to explain the way that each of the two governments have tried to cope with bilateral tensions over security policy—for both, the war with Iraq, and for Canada also ballistic missile defense. Both Canada and Mexico have tried to “change the subject,” by highlighting areas of longstanding cooperation, and by exploring “new” bases for bilateral cooperation, with particular emphasis on border security and intelligence-sharing. Both have worked hard to repair old network contacts, and build new ones, in the White House, but also in Congress, in various bureaucratic departments, and in the private sector.

Political elites in both countries have learned some lessons from their experiences in negotiating with the US over the last few years. We might hope that they will not “over-learn” those lessons by carrying them too far. Luckily for both, the respective lessons diametrically oppose each other, so clear-cut counter-examples are in plain view for each, just on the other side of the United States.

In Canada, the lesson learned is that long-term neglect of personal relationships at the political leadership level has a souring effect on the bilateral relationship more generally, whether it is driven by a mixture of populist opportunism and apparent contempt for the very idea of personal diplomacy (Chrétien) or by acute anxiety about short-run domestic pressures (Martin). This souring effect does not necessarily lead directly to diplomatic disaster, of course, but it clearly does give the White House reasons not to spend its scarce political capital on the foreign government’s behalf. Canada’s new Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, made his intention to repair personal relationships a point in his election campaign. He has clearly tried to follow through in his first months in office. But it is important that he and his constituents understand that no matter how friendly things are in summit meetings, and no matter how much ideological and policy-agenda overlap there might be, a lot has changed in Washington since the “good old days” of the early Cold



War years, and even since the Reagan-Mulroney accord.

What better proof of that could there be than the trials and tribulations of Vicente Fox? He hung his presidency on the expectation that good personal relations with George W. Bush would open the doors for a revolutionary agreement on immigration and border security. There has of course been a partial breakthrough, at least at the level of political rhetoric, in Bush's apparent support for some kind of transitional regime to integrate at least some undocumented immigrants. Many Mexicans have welcomed this apparent reversal, but very few of them see it as a vindication of Fox's approach to managing the bilateral relationship. They are right not to make this mistake. But they must also guard against an even bigger mistake—putting all of the blame for Fox's immigration reform setbacks on the terrorist attacks of September 11. There is no question that the War on Terror has distracted the White House. While it has encouraged most Americans to think of their borders in terms of external threats, the bigger obstacle to a comprehensive reform is politics as usual in the United States. The bottom line is that the constituency that opposes the kind of immigration reform that Fox has proposed is bigger, better organized, wealthier, and more effectively organized than the constituency that supports it. Many worried that bilateral relations would suffer if the PRD candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, won the summer 2006 presidential elections. But there is some danger of the same—albeit on a much smaller scale—even with Fox's PAN successor, Felipe Calderón, if the Mexican political elite takes a page from the Chrétien government, and makes a point of trying to distance itself from its predecessors by going out of its way to de-emphasize personal relationships and lower expectations.

For both countries, the "secret" to successfully managing their respective bilateral relationships with the US seems to be in recognizing that, while some things have changed since 9/11, others have not. Stepping back a little, it seems that the less dramatic changes of the 1970s will ultimately prove to have been the most important ones. If that is correct, the best thing that both governments can do is to maintain the "multi-pathway" strategies that they have pursued since then, and to seek as much balance as possible among the various elements. This is not what they are most comfortable with in principle, and it is frustrating, difficult, and expensive to pursue in practice. But historical experience suggests that there really is no (single-pathway) alternative.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In fact, foreign lobbying is in some ways less closely watched than domestic lobbying (Congressional Quarterly, 1982, 78).

<sup>2</sup> An argument could be made for thinking about the American domestic policy process as an important institutional layer of the international system.

<sup>3</sup> On the mechanics of asymmetric interdependence, see Hirschman, 1945; Keohane & Nye, 1977; and Wagner, 1988.

<sup>4</sup> On incentives for, and obstacles to, “public diplomacy” more generally, see Potter, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> For a spirited defense of “public diplomacy” as a means for the US to influence Canada, see Cellucci, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> The planetary alignment metaphor is borrowed from Higginbotham & Heynen, 2004.



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