I. GENERAL ARGUMENT

Closely interrelated public opinion on trade, border security, and defense issues has divided Canadians along predictable and traditional lines that reflect the persistence of certain continuities. As always, Canadians differ sharply on relations with the United States. They apply their conception of this relationship to their perceptions of the day, as on border security after September 11, and to Operation Iraqi Freedom and missile defense in early 2003. As usual this debate is playing out inside that most Canadian institutions, the Liberal party. (1) How the Liberals handle their differences on these matters in their ongoing leadership exercise likely will determine how Canada defines its relationship with the US in the coming years.

We can identify continuities or recurring themes in Canada’s approach to its relations with the United States, and in Canadian foreign policy generally. In 1951, External Affairs Minister (and later Prime Minister) Lester Pearson observed at the height of the Cold War and the Korean War that “it is not very comfortable to be in the middle these days.” (2) Pearson also conceded in 1951 that “the United States is now the dominating world power on the side of freedom. Our preoccupation is no longer whether the United States will discharge her international responsibilities, but how she will do it and whether the rest of us will be involved.” (3) Here Pearson betrayed an early concern with process, or the practice of foreign policymaking. That is, he assigned importance to how decisions are made. Pearson and most Canadian political leaders since his time have expressed a preference for multilateral policymaking through institutions like the United Nations. Adapting Robert Keohane’s definition, we may define multilateralism as a decision-making style or process seeking to coordinate national policies and undertake international initiatives in war and diplomacy through formal associations or institutions which countries support over time. (4)

To over-generalize, we may divide most Canadians into three groups respecting their positions on Canada’s desired relationship with the United States. Nationalists and continentalists represent the two poles. Both may be found in the inclusive Liberal party. However, appropriately for Canada’s ideologically flexible pivot party, neither polarity dominates within the party or in the general population. Many Canadians, and probably the majority of non-elites, fall somewhere in between. They harbor no ideologically driven agenda, but they wish Canada to safeguard its sovereignty and distinct identity from external (in Canada this means American) assimilation forces—up to a point. (5)

Canada’s nationalists, and internationalists and multilateralists on the left side of politics. They believe that Canada should maintain a national image and reputation different as from the United States as possible. They worry that closer trade and border ties threaten Canada’s sovereignty and endanger the survival of those differences that endure and matter to them. (6) But they conflate the nationalist orator to the relationship with the United States. They let their nationalism trump their nationalism when they eagerly surrender to an array of multilateral institutions. Many nationalists deplore what they consider to be American arrogance, presumption, free-market economics, and great power tendencies toward unilateralism in foreign policy. By contrast, for them Canada exemplifies a diverse and multicultural “caring and sharing social mosaic buttressed by a government-sustained welfare state, a universal identity-conferring medicare system, and a middle-power commitment to multilateral resolutions to international crises through institutions like the UN and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and through activities like peacekeeping.” (7) Nationalists fear that a closer relationship with the United States saps those qualities that provide a society and values that make Canada superior to its southern neighbor. Still worse, it threatens Canada’s cultural, economic, and eventual political absorption. Nationalists include the Liberals’ left, the Toronto Star, the New Democratic party, and much of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Canada’s shattering of artists, writers, and academics. (8) Many nationalists inhabit Canada’s Ontario-centered public sector.

Continentalists more or less accept that Canada differs from the United States in desirable ways. But they try to disentangle Canada’s national identity from its relationship with the United States. They contend that Canada can keep a separate identity without distancing itself from American policies. But just what is this identity? Can we tell? Continentalists claim, and value, much less of a distinct Canadian identity than nationalists for multiculturalism and especially for activist government. (9) They do not make clear whether they believe Canada to be superior, or whether they would regret the loss of nearly everything that nationalists believe distinguishes Canada from the United States. At the very least, their Canada has comparatively less to lose from assimilation. Continentalists admit less to lose from assimilation. They place prime importance on preserving and furthering cross-border trade and economic ties. Whereas nationalists fear the loss of Canada’s sovereignty, continentalists fear for Canada’s economic growth and living standard. They hold that Canada’s current interests demand a more tightly integrated North American economic area, an open border area, and close coordination on security, defense, and the 760mile border. (10) The continentalist impulse is strongest with private sector elites, the Canadian Alliance party and to a lesser extent the Progressive Conservative (especially Alberta)’s, the right-wing media led by Israel Asper’s CanWest Global Communications outlets like the National Post, and with the political elites of the center to right in every province.

We may foresee the outcome of the current debate to be, with reasonable assurance, a clear if qualified victory for continentalism. A newly professed continentalism has emerged and disoriented a nation whose successive Liberal governments have tried to be European-style champions of multilateralism directly above the United States. As ever, we must consider the dynamics of the Liberals’ internal politics as they chart Canada’s course and grapple with daunting new realities. After a decade in office, Jean Chretien will soon if reluctantly surrender party leadership, and with it the position of prime minister, to the more continentalist and business-oriented Paul Martin, his former finance minister. Chretien has operated as a temperamentally cautious nationalist tending off closer economic and security cooperation without ruling out either course. He portrays Canada as a bastion of multilateralism committed to Canadian membership in regional and local trade acts like the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization, as well as by peacekeeping activities, a leadership role in the UN, opposition to the United States’ war in Iraq, and the multilateral exercises not embraced by the United States like the Ottawa process to ban anti-personnel mines, the Kyoto global warming convention, and the International Criminal Court.

Chretien has distanced himself from what nationalists consider American policy excesses or instances of preemptive or precipitate unilateralism or Operation Iraq Freedom. But most Canadian nationalists strongly reject corporate-led economic globalization through NAFTA and the WTO. They endorse Chretien’s Iraq policy but maintain that he has shown too little resolve to resist American domination of Canada’s economy, particularly on trade and investment issues. However, Pollara, the government polling firm, finds that most Canadians believe Chretien strikes a satisfactory balance between nationalism and continentalism. Chretien has upheld Canadian sovereignty better than Brian Mulroney, his Conservative predecessor, who may forever carry a “yesman” stigma toward American leaders. Even though Chretien fully embraces NAFTA and leads the initiative to expand it into a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) in 2005, most Canadians may consider their prime minister a true Canadian nationalist. (11)

II. THE SETTING FOR THE CURRENT DEBATE

Recent polls have suggested that Canadians’ identities afford their policymakers limited flexibility. The Ekos Rethinking Government Project demonstrates that when asked how Canada should exercise power and a wish for a pro-active federal government to protect against Americanization, Quebec sovereignists, and power-hungry provinces. (12) At the same time, Ipsos-Reid polls identify a new Canadian with a strengthened attachment to Canada, but not to the Canadian state as such. This new Canadian considers a tolerance for diversity and a commitment to multiculturalism as the defining domestic aspects of national unity and identity. (13) No doubt thanks to a strong economy and the decreasing likelihood of Quebec sovereignty, some polls find Canadians optimistic, confident about their own futures, and upbeat about Canada’s prospects and the direction Chretien has been taking the country. (14) These Canadians will punish politicians who betray pessimism about Canada’s capacity to compete in the integrating North American and global economies that they welcome for opening new markets to Canada’s exports. (15) In other words, most Canadians, risk averse as always, accept Chretien’s embrace of Mulroney’s continentalist economic policies and his association of free trade with resist American domination of Canada’s economy, particularly on trade and investment issues. However, Pollara, the government polling firm, finds that most Canadians believe Chretien strikes a satisfactory balance between nationalism and continentalism. Chretien has upheld Canadian sovereignty better than Brian Mulroney, his Conservative predecessor, who may forever carry a “yesman” stigma toward American leaders. Even though Chretien fully embraces NAFTA and leads the initiative to expand it into a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) in 2005, most Canadians may consider their prime minister a true Canadian nationalist. (11)
multilateralism. Also, Chretien benefits from accompanying these policies with non-economic positions, as in Iraq, that distance Canada from unilateral United States initiatives, but only when Canada insurs no serious economic repercussions from charting its own course.

During the spring of 2003 Canadians debated Andrew Cohen's thesis that Canada has lost its place in the world by permitting its global influence to decline. Cohen argues that continuity and stand to global economicization, along with such domestic influences as an absence of visionary leaders and a widely-observed ignorance of the past (that for Cohen features a now forgotten Pearsonian golden era of Canadian influence as helpful filler through diplomacy) have caused Canada to lose much of its military and diplomatic influence and for Pearsonian era. (16) Lloyd Axworthy, a nationalist from the Liberals' left who served as foreign affairs minister from 1996 to 2000, tried to offset Canada's military weakness and poor "hard power" credibility with a Pearson-inspired emphasis on the "soft" power of human security agreements. Included the Ottawa process to ban anti-personnel mines and the establishment of an International Criminal Court. (17) These initiatives gained broad international support, but not from the United States. Nationalist-contingent disagreement on whether Axworthy's agenda was appropriate for Canada remains as sharp as during his time in office. (18) Perhaps more important, there is strong evidence that soft power already was fading decisively by early 2001, soon after Axworthy's political retirement and well before the September 11 attacks. Axworthy's successor, John Manley, who comes from the Liberals' business-friendly right, indicated that he considered maintaining a strong trade relationship with the United States to be his highest priority. (19)

III. CANADA RESPONDS TO SEPTEMBER 11

Just after the attacks on New York and the Pentagon, commentators north of the border warned that Canada would need to work closely with its neighbors to convince Americans that they could securely inhabit their desired "gated community while keeping the border open." (20) We should not let occasional, well-publicized incidents prevent us from recognizing that subsequent joint initiatives largely have achieved their objectives. In 2003, the United States, in its annual report on patterns of global terrorism, commented glowingly for its "excellent" overall bilateral cooperation on terrorism since September 11, referring twice to U.-Canada joint efforts as models that other neighboring countries might emulate. (21) To be sure, Canada placed as high a priority on its prime goal of a border open for trade and commerce as did the United States for 70 percent of its trade by the 1970s, and Canada has taken similar steps toward the elimination of barriers to trade and investment. With Canadian merchandise exports to NAFTA partners increasing 95 percent between 1993 and 2001 to CDN $580 billion--only $15 billion of it with Mexico--and with Canada's 43 percent of GDP (up from 26 percent in 1989 and four times the United States trade dependency) while the United States was receiving 86 percent of these exports to give an American CDN $96 billion trade surplus, Canada's officials were understandably anxious to provide the cooperation that the State Department has acknowledged. (22) Even before September 11, the security of trade and investment was already trumping Canadian policymakers' other concerns.

The Chretien government has publicized its commitment and support in the war on terror. It marketed a coffee table book that showed Canadians from Newfoundland to Yukon accommodating hundreds of mostly American air travelers stranded after September 11. The book also featured the well-attended and moving September 14 memorial service on Parliament's front lawn. (23) Chretien designated his deputy prime minister, by then to Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge. The two men developed a personal rapport that still eludes Chretien and President George Bush. Their "Smart Border" declaration of December, 2001, and subsequent initiatives have coordinated border policy through, for example, Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBET) and Integrated National Security and Enforcement Teams (INSET) to cooperate in guarding the border and to assist information exchanges among law enforcement, intelligence, and border enforcement agencies. To expedite truck and auto border crossings, the Free and Secure Trade (FAST) program for low-risk companies' truck shipments, and the NEXUS single alternative inspection system for frequent car crossers by low-risk individuals, have succeeded, to Canadians' palpable relief, in minimizing border delays at busy crossings across the continent. Canada has addressed American concerns about its alleged inability to screen for terrorist view, especially for the 70 percent of its refugee claimants who enter from the United States. Canada's non-citizen permanent residents (landed immigrants) are receiving new tamper-resistant identity cards that soon may feature embedded fingerprints or retina scans. Similar cards for all Canadians are under consideration, but public concerns about "big brother" may prevent both governments from imposing them on citizens. To date Canada has budgeted more than CDN $5 billion to enhance border security. (22)

Canada's business community, led by Tom D'Aquino of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE), and the trucking industry endorses FAST and NEXUS but want more assurance. They have lobbied the federal government to negotiate a comprehensive partnership agreement with the United States that will keep the border open in the event of future terrorist attacks. The United States' pending Enhanced Border Security and Visa Reform Act setting up a Visitor and Immigrant Status and Indication Technology system (VISIT) worries many Canadians. Under this law, by 2005 non-citizens entering or leaving the United States by any means of transportation will need to provide passports, fingerprints, iris scans, and/or digital photographs. United States Ambassador Paul Cellucci has indicated that his country may exempt the Canadian citizens among the 300,000 people who cross the US-Canada border each day. However, some Canadians fear that Congress will decide otherwise. (24) To avert such a development, Allan Gotlieb, former Canadian ambassador to the United States, wants his nation to propose a "grand bargain" featuring a "community of laws including a customs union, a common perimeter, abolition of all trade remedy laws like those authorizing countervailing and anti-dumping duties, and a single set of binding rules assuring free movement of people and goods across the border." Gotlieb argues that nothing less can allay American fears of a fully integrated border, immigration and security policies they desire. Canadians finally would get the assured access to the American consumer market that they had failed to attain in the 1987 free trade negotiations. Warning that incrementalist strategies, Gotlieb insists that only a comprehensive linkage arrangement can overcome Congress's protectionist tendencies. (24)

IV. THE DEBATE TAKES SHAPE

All Canadians appreciate the need for a relatively open border and the continuation of a close trade relationship. But nationalists and continentalists differ materially on how to approach the United States--or rather, it often seems, George Bush's America. Columnist Jeffrey Simpson points out that although U.S. President George W. Bush's rhetoric was "Pearsonian" in its call for a "new era in relations" with Canada, in practice his administration has been "Derbyshire-like" in its lack of vision. Instead of "keeping the country in the American orbit," as Prime Minister Paul Martin's previous government sometimes did, Chretien's government has been "friend in its time of need." Mulroney invokes a past that preceded Cohen's. He recalls that in the two world wars Canada behaved as a United States. They profess mortification that Chretien failed to support Canada's closest allies and we want to keep it that way." Observe the difference from 1960s era Social Credit leader Robert Thompson's positions. (25) Continentalists present a second argument that one might summarize as "the Americans are our best friends and we want to keep it that way," based on the flimsiest of foundations" and, moreover, endangers Canada's relationship with the United States. Mulroney laments that they believe compromise Canada's identity-defining values and constructive international role. Besides, they can suggest, with Simpson, that Canadians can afford the Americans the fully integrated border, immigration and security policies they desire. Canadians finally would get the assured access to the American consumer market that they had failed to attain in the 1987 free trade negotiations. Warning that incrementalist strategies, Gotlieb insists that only a comprehensive linkage arrangement can overcome Congress's protectionist tendencies. (24)

Controversially strong, they generate more publicity for their positions than nationalists, in part because they advance specific proposals like Gotlieb's "grand bargain." Continentalists basically offer two arguments. First, led by Gotlieb and an influential, neo-conservative, anti-government agenda that he argues has dominated the two-decade and two-party

"imported from the United States of the white people. (20) It can occur by"
to Iraq's reconstruction, although of course wholly through multilateral agencies. (32) Besides, International Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew acknowledged in early 2003 the U.S.'s present and probable future status as Canada's "one market that counts." Stingy by a 27.2 percent countervailing duty on Canada's softwood lumber exports in 2002, Pettigrew led a trade delegation to Washington early this year to lobby Congress and the Bush Administration with a six-point agenda driven by a desire to increase Canada's stubbornly static 19 percent share of the United States import market. Apart from expanding Canada's advocacy program at the state level in the questionable belief that state-based politicians and opinion leaders could be persuaded to influence their congressional delegations on Canada's behalf, Pettigrew's wish list resembles parts of Goliath's "grand bargain." (33) However, the ever-warey Chrétien is unlikely to commit Canada to Goliath's proposed level of integration. Instead, he hopes to generate much-needed goodwill in Washington by accepting President Bush's scaled down plan for continental missile defense. The Prime Minister already had been here in 2000 when he had deferred a response to President Bill Clinton's invitation to join missile defense. His hesitation is understandable. Nationalist-continentalist divisions in the Liberal cabinet and parliamentary caucus once again put off a decision on this issue in spring, 2003. (34)

The Prime Minister's positions on issues, and even his poor relationship with President Bush as he approaches his self-scheduled February, 2004, retirement, may matter little in the long run. Paul Martin has signaled that he can adapt more comfortably than Chrétien to a unipolar Pax Americana. In fact, Martin's father, Paul Martin Sr., was the minister who unsuccessfully warned Prime Minister Pearson that criticizing President Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam bombing campaign would prove counterproductive. (35) The son has absorbed his father's "quiet diplomacy" lessons. Martin proposes closer ties with the United States, strengthening the military and missile defense initiative. Martin, and possibly Bush, may turn their attention to the Globe and Mail that relatively safe symbolic gestures like participation in missile defense can convince Americans of Canada's commitment to a supportive security policy. They may even restore Canada's relevance and maneuvering room in world politics and avert its isolation from American initiatives to maintain North America's "one market that counts." (36) To be sure, all such initiatives incur opposition from Liberal and other nationalists. However, the absence of a strong nationalist (or other) challenger for Martin in the leadership campaign may increasingly focus the opposition to his agenda within the marginal parliamentary New Democrats as well as elsewhere in various leftist protest groups.

V. CONCLUSION

If Lester Pearson found the middle ground to be uncomfortable during the Cold War, Canada's current policymakers risk a still more perilous position in a war on terrorism where the United States rules out rules. With Canada's southern neighbor dominating world power assiduously prone to unilateralism, continentalists believe a concern for process and style through multilateral initiatives that they generally oppose anyway has become an unaffordable luxury. Like Britain, which lost an empire and subsequently had to find a new role, Canada may need a new role that accommodates its changed geopolitical situation. One key issue that divides continentalists and nationalists addresses Canadian influence on American policy. Continentalists insist that Canada can move American policymakers in its direction, but not when it criticizes American defense policies. Nationalists essentially respond that Canada stands little chance to influence a unilateral-minded and protectionist United States. (37) Besides, servility is demeaning. It compromises Canada's sovereignty and multilateralism and middle-power diplomacy. Canada presently offers us two competing and incompatible images and reputations, reflecting the fact that nationalists and continentalists conceive very different Canadas. Every country carves out a niche or role in world politics, but Canada has two of them. Nationalists perceive an autonomous peace-seeking middle-power working globally through multilateral institutions. Continentalists endorse the more realistic but emotionally less gratifying niche as the faithful American ally. Neither of these roles adequately respects Canada's current social and political realities.

Chretien's style has made him resemble a nationalist to confirmed continentalists like Mulroney, while he looks like a continentalist to nationalists like Clark. As Prime Minister, Paul Martin will exploit every relatively safe identity-conferring opportunity (like Kyoto and the ICC) to chart a distinctively Canadian course. He recognizes what strong continentalists fail to appreciate: most Canadians want to be treated differently from the United States. But Quebec based leaders like Martin also recognize prevailing opinion in their economically continentalist province. Mindful of his father's experience that inclines him closer to continentalists than to nationalists on more sensitive issues, Martin will try to maximize Canada's trade and diplomatic leverage with the United States, especially if independent policies risk reprisals that could damage the economy that he surely believes he could restore to health. In our final instance of continuity, Martin will use his proposed new Cabinet Committee on Canada-U.S. Relations to inch Canada closer to the United States and extend the nationalists' "Mulroney-Chretien era." Martin's changes will be subtle and more symbolic than substantive. He will succeed if he can display what Reg Whitaker: Hails the Liberal party's, and Chretien's, long recognized talent for de-politicizing politics. (38) His chances are good. Nationalists are hobbled by their incapacity to offer their own blueprint for influence on Washington or to provide risk averse Canadians with a plausible alternative to Canada's trade and investment dependence on the United States. As long as reporter Drew Fagan can ask why multinational's would locate their operations in Canada when the huge United States market could be closed to them at any time, (39) and when former Ambassador John Noble can remind Canadians that Canada cannot generate the wealth to pay for popular social programs like medicare without secure access to the American market, Canada's continentalists inside and outside the Liberal will retain the upper hand on trade, investment, defense, and border security issues.

NOTES


(2) Pearson is quoted in Tom Keating, Canada and World Order: The Multilateral Tradition in Canadian Foreign Policy (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), 95.

(3) This Pearson quotation is found in Edegeb E. Mahant and Graeme S. Mount, An Introduction to Canadian-American Relations. (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 2nd Ed., 1969), 191. Italics are in the original.

(4) Keating, 4:5.


(7) For a post-September 11 nationalist manifesto, see Stephen Clarkson, Uncle Sam and Us: Globalization, Neoconservatism and the Canadian State (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

(8) For nationalist perspectives on events as they occur, consult www.thestar.com and HmResAnchor www.ndp.ca.

(9) For corresponding continentalist points of view, visit www.nationalpost.com and www.canadianalliance.ca.


(11) Columnist Richard Gwyn concludes from Angus Reid polls that Canadians under Chretien have confidence that Canada is maintaining its identity in dealings with the United States. Richard Gwyn, "Good Global Citizenship Matters to Canadians." Toronto Star, January 5, 2003.


(15) Bricker and Greenspon, 45-86.

For the Axworthy record from several perspectives, see Fen Osler Hampson, Norman Hillmer, and Maureen Appel Molot, editors, Canada Among Nations 2001: The Axworthy Legacy (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2001).

For criticisms of Axworthy's "soft power" as useless unless backed up by credible "hard power" and as damaging to Canada's influence in world affairs, see Denis Stairs, "The Axworthy View and Its Dilemmas," Policy Options (December 1998), 10-11.

For critiques of Axworthy's views on American "virtues," see John Ibbitson, "Will They Get Us Coming and Going?" Globe and Mail, May 13, 2003, A23.

For a defense of Axworthy's proposal, see John Ibbitson, "Canada Has Good Cards—Let's Ask the U.S. to Play." Globe and Mail, March 1, 2003, A19.


The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade made this announcement on May 14, 2003. For information on Canada's response to the Iraq crisis, visit www.dfaitmaeci.gc.ca/foreignpolicy/iraqcrisis/menu.cn.asp.


Peter McKenna, "Martin's Foreign Policy." Globe and Mail, May 12, 2003, A15. So far, the right-wing CanWest Global media, and the liberal Toronto Star, both commend Martin's foreign policy views. See Andrew Coyne, "Mr. Martin Gets It Right." National Post, May 2, 2003; and "Martin Stakes Out a Solid Global Role." Toronto Star, May 3, 2003. (unsigned editorial)


Whitaker, 49. Also, John Ibbitson notes the narrow range of acceptable political debate for ambitious Canadian politicians. He observes that "to stray more than a few degrees from the centre of consensus is to risk alienation" (i.e., defeat). John Ibbitson, "The Dirty Little Secret about Canadian Politics." Globe and Mail, April 7, 2003, A13.

Clarkson, 40-42.


The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade made this announcement on May 14, 2003. For information on Canada's response to the Iraq crisis, visit www.dfaitmaeci.gc.ca/foreignpolicy/iraqcrisis/menu.cn.asp.


Peter McKenna, "Martin's Foreign Policy." Globe and Mail, May 12, 2003, A15. So far, the right-wing CanWest Global media, and the liberal Toronto Star, both commend Martin's foreign policy views. See Andrew Coyne, "Mr. Martin Gets It Right." National Post, May 2, 2003; and "Martin Stakes Out a Solid Global Role." Toronto Star, May 3, 2003. (unsigned editorial)


Whitaker, 49. Also, John Ibbitson notes the narrow range of acceptable political debate for ambitious Canadian politicians. He observes that "to stray more than a few degrees from the centre of consensus is to risk alienation" (i.e., defeat). John Ibbitson, "The Dirty Little Secret about Canadian Politics." Globe and Mail, April 7, 2003, A13.


Whitaker, 49. Also, John Ibbitson notes the narrow range of acceptable political debate for ambitious Canadian politicians. He observes that "to stray more than a few degrees from the centre of consensus is to risk alienation" (i.e., defeat). John Ibbitson, "The Dirty Little Secret about Canadian Politics." Globe and Mail, April 7, 2003, A13.


Whitaker, 49. Also, John Ibbitson notes the narrow range of acceptable political debate for ambitious Canadian politicians. He observes that "to stray more than a few degrees from the centre of consensus is to risk alienation" (i.e., defeat). John Ibbitson, "The Dirty Little Secret about Canadian Politics." Globe and Mail, April 7, 2003, A13.

