

**MANAGING
ALTERNATE REALITIES:
'AUTONOMY' VS.
'RELEVANCE'?
ENGAGING US
FOREIGN AND
SECURITY POLICIES**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Canadian foreign policy circles continue to debate how much the need for a cooperative relationship with the United States on issues of central importance to Canada circumscribes Canada's security and foreign policy options. A related question addresses Canadian governments' capacity to influence American foreign and social policies, whether explicitly towards Canada or more generally in their interaction with international institutions and security alliances.

Advocates of a more "independent" foreign policy sometimes argue, often on a variety of normative grounds (Clarkson 2002, Axworthy 2003, Byers 2007) that Canada should not only distance itself from US policies but challenge them when required by Canadian interests, "values", or goals of a norms-based international order. Supporters of closer policy cooperation may also argue on normative grounds rooted in shared western democratic values.

However, they usually contend that Canada can expand its interests and international influence by showing its ability to influence US policy choices as a trusted ally. (Granatstein 2003, Burney 2005, Rempel 2006) More nuanced analyses suggest that, particularly for smaller powers, the very concept of foreign policy “independence” is relative and contingent in a world of complex interdependence – “a rhetorical point of reference than a realistic basis of action.” (Chapnick 2006: 69. Also see Hillmer, Hampson and Tomlin 2005: 10.)

Bilateral US-Canada relations are characterized by a high degree of asymmetry of relative size and power within the international system, of security commitments and capacity, and of the relative importance and attention each government attributes to the relationship – in each case irrespective of partisan or ideological orientation. Canadian policymakers and commentators pay close attention to American policy decisions and priorities. They balance competing political pressures to cooperate with or distance themselves from their giant neighbor. At the same time, US political and security relations with Canada mix benign neglect, occasional irritation, and the routine cultivation of political and administrative contacts to manage the broad range of bilateral issues that often blur distinctions between foreign and domestic policies.

The wide range of issues engaged in the course of US-Canada relations, and the diverse sectoral, domestic and international contexts which shape policy decisions on these issues, lead policy observers in both countries to note that neither the United States nor Canada has a consistent set of strategic policies towards the other. Rather, disparate sets of policies informed by the diversity and decentralization of political, economic and societal relationships char-

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acterize bilateral relations. These in turn are shaped by different mixes of domestic political considerations, bureaucratic politics reflecting competing institutional interests *within* each government, and the personal agendas of senior policymakers. Interviews with a cross-section of officials with varying levels of seniority in both Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAIT) and the US Department of State (DoS) conducted at intervals between November 2005 and mid-2008 have reinforced these observations.

Security relationships, whether conducted through political or military channels, tend to focus mainly on issues related to the defense of North America, given the huge disparity of resources devoted to defense by the two countries. More recently, security relations have centered on questions of "homeland" and border security. We may characterize US dealings with Canada on wider foreign and security policy questions as relatively minor variations on broader strategic or regional US "policies towards allies." These serve as part of a broader typology of American policies towards Canada suggested by Mahant and Mount (1999) that will be discussed below.

This paper examines the nature of bilateral political and security relations in the context of a wider study of Canadian efforts to influence American policies towards Canada. It begins with an overarching summary of theoretical considerations informing the study. It then identifies central areas of complementarity and asymmetry at different levels of analysis. These include macro-political, binational and bilateral institutions and processes within North America, and broader sectoral questions central to the relationship in recent years. It concludes by suggesting that the highly segmented nature of the bilateral political / security relationship currently suits both national governments by enabling "cooperation as necessary", but also, from Canada's perspective, facilitating what Stuart (2007: 215) has described as a "perpetual courtship designed to avoid the altar."

II. THE POLITICAL-STRATEGIC CONTEXT IN US AND CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICIES

"Every relationship the US has in the world
right now is asymmetrical."

Interview, US Department of State

Political scientist Charles Doran, writing in 1984, argued that *"the primary theoretical consideration in the U.S.-Canada relationship is that each government starts from different assumptions about international politics, and these assumptions in turn affect the weighting of the bargaining dimensions themselves."* (Doran 1984: 37, italics added) Doran divides the study of US-Canada relations into three dimensions: political-strategic, involving broad issues of foreign policy and national security which include formal and informal systems of alliances; trade-commercial, focusing on the economic dimensions of international relations; and psychological-cultural, namely the impact of domestic political cultures, competition, and concerns on the "democratic" context for policy-making in other areas. Depending on trends in bilateral relations and the political evolution of each country, the environment could eventually become a fourth such dimension which can shape or constrain policy developments elsewhere.

Doran's analysis of a quarter century ago remains largely true today, both despite and because of the end of the Cold War as a primary organizing context for international relations, differing responses to the political after shocks of 9/11, and the re-emergence of balance of power politics in US relations with Europe, Russia, China, and Latin America. (Kissinger 2008) Boundaries between the different dimensions of bilateral relations remain porous, just as the pressures of "intermesticity" blur traditional distinctions between domestic and international political and policy spheres. (Hale 2006)

The political-strategic dimension is the principal preoccupation of US foreign policies as the world's preeminent political and military power. The priorities and political attention of senior US foreign policy decision makers are largely focused on the management of global and regional alliances, regional stabilization, national defense, and (where politically feasible) the promotion of stable democracies. The United States remains the "indispensable power" to any reorganization of major international institutions in response to emerging global challenges or to the resolution of conflicts in many parts of the world.

As a result, bilateral relations with Canada are a secondary consideration of American foreign and security policies. Senior policymakers generally treat North American issues as a subset either of hemispheric diplomatic and security considerations or of rele-

vant domestic policies in setting national priorities and organizing their diplomatic activities. (For examples, see United States 1999, 48-57; and Rice 2008.) The State Department's shift of its Canada desk from the Bureau of European Affairs to that of Hemispheric Affairs during the 1990s symbolized the shift of Canada's diplomatic standing in Washington from that of a generally supportive power within the trans-Atlantic alliance to that of a peripheral actor in US hemispheric diplomacy, although Canada's engagement in hemispheric issues is encouraged and welcomed when supportive of broader US goals. (Interview, DoS, Washington, June 2006) Similar attitudes can be seen in more thoughtful discussions of foreign policy in the 2008 Presidential campaign, when Canada is not ignored altogether. (For one example, see McCain 2008.)

A survey of recent academic studies of US foreign and security policies reinforces this perspective. References to Canada are minimal – averaging one or two per book – and utterly peripheral to broader discussions of American policies or priorities.¹ Two exceptions to this pattern tend to reinforce this perspective. Katzenstein (2005) assesses Canadian attitudes towards the United States in the context of both US hemispheric dominance and its “deep ambivalence about supporting a more fully institutionalized regionalism that other states might use against the United States.” (226) Both Canada and Mexico are seen as “too proximate to and too dependent on the United States to play the role of both supporter states and regional powers.” (230) Mowle (2004) analyzes twenty case studies of negotiations between the United States and its “Atlantic allies” over security-related issues between 1995 and 2003. He suggests that the relative cohesion of European states (and Canada) is a key factor in determining whether multilateralism is to be used as a means of constraining American interests or of individual states negotiating the terms of their cooperation with American objectives. These observations are mirrored in domestic Canadian debates.

The primacy of political-strategic issues to US policymakers is also reflected in recent editions of the Congressional Research Service's annual survey of bilateral relations with Canada. Almost two-thirds of the initial summary is typically devoted to defense and security issues, with the balance divided between economic and environmental concerns. (For example, see Ek and Fergusson 2007: 7-21.)

By contrast, the United States is a principal preoccupation of Canadian foreign policy. This applies whether Canadians seek to differentiate themselves from American policy positions as their political leaders attempt to project an “independent” foreign policy on the global scene, or seek to influence or complement American policies on questions of substantial interest to Canada. The very question of Canada’s capacity to pursue an “independent” foreign policy depends, in large measure, on whether Canadians see their enduring national interests to require careful and creative engagement of the United States with its policy goals and interests, or the pursuit of counterweights to American power and influence, or a combination of both. (Clarkson 2002, Gotlieb 2004, Bercuson and Stairs 2005) This balancing act is complicated by four major factors:

- the priority given by Canadian governments to strengthening bilateral economic relations central to Canada’s prosperity;
- the intertwining of border security and trade issues since September 2001;
- the anticipated responses of Canadian public opinion to what may be perceived as undue deference to US foreign policy and security priorities; and
- the degree to which the convergence or divergence of Canadian foreign and security policies is seen to influence American policy responses in *either* dimension of bilateral relations.

The mutual recognition of interdependence is central to the generally cooperative character of US-Canada relations, despite periodic cycles of relative closeness or friction between the two countries and their political leaders, and cycles of relative convergence and divergence in their foreign policies, whether global or hemispheric. (Doran 2006: 396-400) Major factors contributing to greater convergence or divergence include:

- domestic political cycles, particularly in Canada, and the relative tactical utility of anti-American variants of Canadian nationalism and its ideological cousin, self-congratulatory moralism, in the pursuit of partisan political advantage;
- the degree of parallelism or divergence of political and ideological trends in each country reflected in the recent

Obama-philia of some Canadian politicians and journalists, and the successful demonization of the Bush administration and its policies in major segments of Canadian public opinion;

- a greater orientation towards multilateralism or unilateralism in American foreign and security policies, thereby contributing to or detracting from the intellectual convergence of policymakers in each country, while also reducing or increasing the domestic political risks of cooperation with the United States for Canadian governments; and
- the degree to which senior policymakers in each country share perceptions of external threats to major domestic interests or national security. (Doran 2006, Kilroy 2006)

As a relatively small country bordering a much larger and more powerful neighbor, Canada has a strong interest in the functioning of a stable international order as suggested by contemporary theories of international relations. Ikenberry (2003) notes the fundamental trade-offs associated with cooperation of weaker and stronger states through international organizations. For small states, rules-based international systems limit the capacity of larger states to use their power arbitrarily or indiscriminately. They facilitate interaction for large states by drawing smaller states into international regimes consistent with their broader interests and reducing the need to resort to the explicit exercise of power in bilateral relations. However, such collaboration depends on two significant factors:

“the behavior of the weaker state or states involved in the creation of international institutions must have repercussions for the more powerful state, which in turn must have the ability to influence the weaker states, but also the self-restraint not to abuse that ability.” (Ikenberry 2003: 70)

However, as noted above, Canadian senior officials and foreign policy elites are deeply divided between competing political views of these interests and on how to secure them against external threats (including the unilateral exercise of American power). Just as important, they wish to secure a consistent American commitment to liberal internationalist principles of diplomatic, security, and economic cooperation. Liberal “idealists” such as Lloyd Axworthy (2003) and Michael Byers (2007) tend to argue that Ameri-

can power needs to be contained by international institutions. In this view, Canada should use its international influence to assert the preeminence of international institutions and “norms of global citizenship” over the projection of national interests in international relations. These attitudes are reflected in Axworthy’s efforts to secure the passage in 1997 of the Ottawa Convention on landmines in a form that largely disregarded American interests and concerns.² (Mowle 2004: 12, 46-50; Sapolsky 2005: 31-37)

Canadian critics of this approach argue that its implicit anti-Americanism – whether expressing domestic political ideologies or its systematic efforts to use international institutions to constrain the exercise of US leadership – is an inadequate, even dysfunctional, basis for Canadian foreign policy or constructive Canada-US relations. This view is summarized by Derek Burney, former Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Canadian Ambassador to Washington (1989-93), who argues that “the relevance and effectiveness of Canada in global affairs is never greater than when its views are trusted and considered by the US government, and when Canada is perceived by the rest of the world as having such a special relationship.” (Burney 2005: 14) Political access, trust and influence at the highest level of US foreign policies are generally restricted to nations viewed as reliable and trusted allies. Other nations may be extended selective access and influence to the extent that they provide significant support for particular US policies or have the discretionary capacity to frustrate major US policy objectives.

In this view, Canadian foreign policies should be guided by pragmatic views of Canada’s national interests, whether in cooperating with the United States, pursuing diverging policies, or seeking to broker differences between the US and other countries. It should approach both multilateralism and bilateral engagement with the United States as “a means to an end, and not an end in itself.” (Burney 2005: 14) This outlook views Canada’s “North Americanist” and “internationalist” foreign policy priorities as complementary and interdependent, rather than competing elements in a conflicted foreign policy. (Axworthy 2004; Hillmer, Hampson and Carment 2005: 10) These tensions are also reflected in the need for Canadian governments to accommodate domestic public opinion which has been deeply divided in its attitudes towards the United States in recent years (Graves 2007: 110-11), partly but not exclusively due

to the ways in which the Bush Administration is seen to have exercised its power in international relations.

This ambivalence among both Canada's foreign policy elites and the Canadian public, combined with Canadian political debates' focus on domestic economic and social issues, has four practical implications for Canadian foreign policies, especially for its policies towards the United States. First, the main emphasis of Canada's bilateral relations since the mid-1980s has been to maximize the economic advantages to be derived from their trade-commercial dimension. Since 2001, an effective condition of securing these benefits has been to reduce real or perceived risks that political indifference or administrative negligence could allow Canada to become a conduit or staging-point for terrorist attacks against the United States and strengthen the position of US domestic interests indifferent to the economic costs of "thickening" the border.

Secondly, Canada's broader foreign and defense policy goals have tended to be relatively segmented and poorly coordinated in recent years, often lacking the commitment of fiscal resources necessary to translate intentions into effective action. (Bercuson and Stairs 2005) Thirdly, the two countries tend to address bilateral political and security issues on a case-by-case basis, with the nature and extent of cooperation being heavily contingent on the political salience of particular questions – their sustained public visibility and perceived importance – and the perceived balance of political risks and benefits of accommodating US interests in Canada.

However, Stuart (2007: 283-84) suggests that political and economic relations between Ottawa and Washington have become sufficiently institutionalized at the level of individual departments and agencies, due to the pervasive, if asymmetrical, interdependence of the two countries and many of their citizens, that they are largely immune to these periodic cycles of political friction. This comment is echoed by many of the interviewed Canadian public servants whose positions require day-to-day involvement with counterparts in the United States, although they tend to distinguish between working-level relations and the pursuit of major policy initiatives. This argument makes the institutional context for the management of bilateral diplomatic relations between the two countries worthy of further examination.

The institutional context

Responsibility for foreign and security policy decision-making in both countries is broadly distributed among different departments and agencies of their governments. In the United States, elements of Congress also play a significant role which is defined partly by members' interests and capacities to exercise political leverage as chairs of relevant committees or sub-committees of the House or Senate. Several State Department officials interviewed for this study noted the absence of any formal inter-agency process in Washington for managing US-Canada relations. (Interviews, DoS 2006-07) Defense policy observers note a similar reality within the sprawling US defense bureaucracy. (Mason 2004: 1)

This vacuum may be filled by the US Embassy in Ottawa, depending on the Ambassador's policy interests and access to senior decision-makers in the White House and State Department. (Interviews, past and present DoS officials, Canada, Fall 2007, January 2008; Cellucci 2005: 38) Since the early 1980s, individual Secretaries of State have chosen to meet periodically with their Canadian counterparts in efforts to manage the relationship. The nature, scope and frequency of those meetings, which often range well beyond traditional diplomatic priorities, depend partly on the approaches of individual cabinet secretaries and partly on the broader state of the political relationship. (Doran 2006, Gotlieb 2006)

The roles that the President and senior White House staff play on bilateral issues depend on several factors, notably the management styles and priorities of individual Presidents, the formal and informal inter-agency processes used by different administrations to coordinate policies, and the ability of Canadian ambassadors to secure regular access to senior advisors who enjoy the President's confidence. (Rothkopf 2005, Gotlieb 2006) The tone of personal relations between individual Presidents and Canadian Prime Ministers may contribute at the margins to facilitating or hindering the broader management of bilateral relations or the resolution of particular issues. However, the breadth and depth of US-Canada relations, whether on issues of security cooperation in North America or the far broader range of economic and cultural relationships which go beyond the scope of this paper, generally insulate the management of bilateral issues from the cycles of relative political closeness or distance between the foreign policies and personal relationships of particular administrations and governments. (Heynen and Hig-

ginbotham 2004; Mason 2004; Doran 2006; Ek and Fergusson 2007; Stuart 2007; Confidential Government of Canada interviews, Privy Council Office ("PCO") and DFAIT 2006-07)

In Canada, the management and tone of bilateral relations often reflects the respective priorities of the Prime Minister's Office, individual Foreign Ministers (whose term in office rarely extends more than two or three years and has averaged less than one year in the Harper government), and other agencies responsible for policy coordination, particularly the PCO and DFAIT. Former Ambassador Allan Gotlieb, who served in Washington under both Trudeau and Mulroney governments during the 1980s, writes that each was capable of pursuing its own foreign policy reflecting different versions of the national interest, "one to enhance our relations with the United States, the other to distance ourselves whenever we can get the chance." (Gotlieb, 2006: 535) Interviews conducted by the author with officials of all three agencies suggest similar patterns of behavior in more recent years. These patterns reflect this central paradox of Canadian foreign policy. Perhaps in recognition of this reality, most Canadian Ambassadors since the early 1980s have either been political appointments or senior Foreign Service officials enjoying the personal confidence of, and direct access to, the current Prime Minister.

The primary emphasis given to security issues since 9/11 has also created an impetus to close working relations between cabinet officers responsible for the oversight of homeland security and public safety issues: Foreign Minister John Manley with Homeland Security Advisor, later Secretary Tom Ridge in 2001-02; Public Safety Minister Anne McLellan with both Ridge and his successor Michael Chertoff in 2002-05; and Chertoff with Conservative Public Safety minister Stockwell Day since January 2006.

These conditions help to ensure that neither Canada nor the United States has a single overarching policy towards the other in the context of political-strategic relations, much like other aspects of their bilateral relationship. Still, the political attention and priority devoted to managing the broader relationship is proportionately much greater in Canada than in the United States.

Assessing American Policies towards Canada: A Typology

Mahant and Mount (1999: 14) have suggested a general policy typology to evaluate American policies towards Canada in this

highly segmented policy environment: “exceptionalism”, “exemptionalism”, alliance related, unilateral and deliberate assertions of American power, and inadvertent effects arising from domestic policy processes. In reality, particular policies may combine elements of more than one of these categories.

The first category, “exceptionalism”, suggests that American policies towards Canada are distinctive, reflecting US recognition of Canada’s distinct interests as an independent ally, the existence of some form of “special relationship” that warrants particular consideration, and this relationship’s capacity to make a significant contribution to US interests. The most prominent example of “exceptionalism” in political-security relations is the binational NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense) alliance, with its shared command structure and operational integration of North American air and now maritime defense. More recently, when Congress eliminated the passport exemption for both Americans and Canadians (re-)entering the United States, Canadian diplomats working with business interests from US border communities succeeded in securing acceptance of “enhanced drivers’ licenses” as acceptable alternatives for Canadian provinces on the same basis as for US border states. (US Department of Homeland Security and Department of State 2008: 48-50)

The second category, “exemptionalism”, has a long history resulting from the economic interdependence of the two countries. The politics of “exemptionalism” are most visible in the fine tuning of micro-economic or regulatory initiatives in the day-to-day activities of diplomats, interest groups, and policymakers on each side of the border. As a result, Canadian citizens or firms are exempted from the application of restrictive US rules applying to foreigners, usually when equivalent or comparable standards or policies exist in Canada.

A third category, policies towards allies, is visible in the rapid growth of specialized international networks in recent years for the coordination or negotiation of technical policy and administrative arrangements between the United States and other nations. Relevant examples include generalized US policies towards its NATO allies, while making distinctions for the capacity and levels of co-operation of individual countries, and related policies of defense procurement and transfers of strategic technologies. A significant development in these policies recently noted by scholars and, in-

creasingly, by policymakers, has been the growing distinction between core and peripheral members of US alliance networks (Sands 2006, Smith and Williams 2008) combined with a willingness to extend advantages or concessions in unrelated policy fields in recognition of such countries' cooperation with significant US policy objectives.³ (Schott 2004)

A fourth set of policies – ones that treat Canada as a “dependent” or “satellite” nation – is more likely to arouse tensions between the two countries. Such policies often involve efforts to project American power through the extra-territorial application of American laws (although such arrangements rarely single out Canada for “special treatment”), or the systematic use of regulatory pressures to secure policy concessions. Recent examples include issues of information sharing among police, intelligence and regulatory agencies, the treatment of Canadian nationals suspected of terrorist links, and restrictions employing certain dual nationals by US defense contractors, including those based in Canada.

Finally, realities of cross-border cooperation and economic integration between the two countries often result in measures which appear to fall into the fifth category: policies which often forget or ignore Canada unless or until technical adaptations can be made to US legislation to accommodate Canadian interests, circumstances, or sovereign rights.

The result of “dispersed relations” (Stuart 2007) on political, security and related economic issues is that bilateral relations are often the product of a series of two- (or multi-) level games with differing patterns of cooperation, “satisficing”, or conflict in which the behavior of each party is contingent on the other's expected response. Milner (1997: 8-9) suggests that “cooperation may be tacit, in which parties retain considerable freedom of action, negotiated or coercive – involving the actual or threatened use of unilateral action.”

Coordination, whether formal or informal, may involve behavior including “mutual enlightenment” over participants' policy goals and intentions, “mutual reinforcement” of policy goals to overcome domestic or foreign opposition, “mutual adjustment” involving adaptations of national policies to reduce conflicts, or “mutual concessions” in which policy adjustments by one state are conditional on reciprocal adjustments by another. (Putnam and Bayne 1987: 260, Milner 1997: 9) The next section assesses the application

of these principles to particular aspects or dimensions of US-Canada relations.

III. LEVELS OF ANALYSIS: UNPACKING THE US-CANADIAN POLITICAL-STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP

We may trace the range and depth of American dealings with Canada in the “political-strategic” dimension of international relations to Canada’s active but conflicted engagement in the global commons through a wide range of international organizations; its close hemispheric relationship with the United States, especially on matters of North American security and defense; and the varying levels of cooperation and interoperability between the two countries’ armed forces, defense and aerospace industries, and civilian homeland security sectors.

Historically, it has been in the interests of both countries to deal with these issues on a piecemeal and uncoordinated basis in order to maintain their policy discretion, to limit the extent to which power relationships define a fundamentally asymmetrical relationship, and to accommodate varied and cyclical domestic political conditions in each country. This section will examine three different aspects of the US–Canada relationship: macro-political relations, North American defense, and security relations.

Macro Political Questions

“Every country wants to believe it has a special relationship with the United States.”

Interview, US Department of State

The US government historically has viewed Canada as a friendly neighbor oriented towards cooperation in international relations, and with many common national interests, but with domestic political needs to assert a degree of independence from American policies and priorities. The “special relationship” of the 1940s and 1950s, born in the common struggle of the Second World War and Canadian support for strong US engagement and leadership in building the postwar international order, depended heavily on the personal relationships and shared outlooks of senior foreign policy decision-makers of that era.

This relationship declined during the 1960s and the 1970s with the retirement of leaders of the post-war generation in both coun-

tries, and with an easing of Cold War-related tensions that prompted a number of Western allies to become more active in asserting their own distinctive national interests and priorities in international relations. (Sands 2000: 65-69) American responses to strategic and economic overextension during and after the Vietnam War, such as the “Nixon Shock” of August 1971, and the decline of Canada’s economic and military power relative to other allies, reinforced these factors.

These trends did not prevent President Ford from inviting Canada to join the G7 in 1976 to balance the preponderance of European countries in this informal club of Western leaders. (Bothwell 1998: 217) Nor did it preclude effective cooperation with Canadian governments on a variety of issues during the 1980s and 1990s – despite Canada’s periodic efforts to distance itself from American policies such as its open door policy to Cuba, its persistent diplomacy aimed at isolating South Africa’s *apartheid* government, or its efforts in the 1990s to promote more robust institutions for international governance.

During the 1990s, American public opinion generally endorsed the conclusion of the US Commission on National Security in the 21st Century (1999:115) that “if the United States has a best friend ... and partner ... it is Canada.” While American public perceptions of Canada as a “close ally” declined somewhat after Canada’s refusal to support American military action against Iraq, Canada’s standing in the United States continues to benefit from a relatively benign public image. Table 1 notes that while Britain has surpassed Canada as the country most likely to be perceived as a “close ally” by the American public since 2001, only Australia has had a comparably favorable public image among Americans in recent years. Canada’s image in the United States stands in sharp contrast to the image of countries such as France or Mexico with whom the US government maintains cooperative relations on many issues of international and border security.

Table 1 - U.S. Public Perceptions of Other Countries (selected)

		2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Canada	Close ally	60	57	51	48	64	57
	Friendly but not ally	27	27	29	37	27	31
	Not friendly or enemy	6	10	10	12	8	10
Britain	Close ally	64	74	70	74	74	70
	Friendly but not ally	22	12	14	18	11	21
	Not friendly or enemy	6	6	6	4	11	7
Australia	Close ally	43	53	45	44	61	54
	Friendly but not ally	34	24	32	36	26	28
	Not friendly or enemy	9	8	10	9	9	11
Israel	Close ally	37	44	43	41	47	42
	Friendly but not ally	28	25	26	31	28	26
	Not friendly or enemy	22	19	20	19	20	27
Mexico	Close ally	29	33	29	27	31	27
	Friendly but not ally	41	39	44	47	42	39
	Not friendly or enemy	21	20	16	20	23	31
France	Close ally	28	13	15	17	19	20
	Friendly but not ally	36	33	35	38	35	38
	Not friendly or enemy	25	43	42	41	44	38

Source: Harris Interactive 2002-2007

US foreign and security policies' highest priority towards Canada since the late 1990s, in common with US attitudes towards other allies, has applied consistent pressure to increase its share of the burden of collective security both within North America and through NATO. At the same time, US policymakers recognize that Canadian defense priorities and the resources used to meet them are a matter for internal domestic politics. (Mason 2004: 3, Cellucci 2005: 75-76)

During the 1990s, most Western nations, including the United States, reduced their defense spending both in absolute terms and relative to the size of their economies. Defense spending by larger powers, including the United States, Britain and France, dropped from between 4 and 6 percent of GDP to between 2.5 and 3.1 percent. Canadian defense spending declined proportionately to 1.2 percent of GDP during the same period – among the lowest of any NATO member country. (NATO 2007) The latter's budget reductions reflected growing domestic fiscal constraints as well as both Conservative and Liberal governments' perception that Canada's defense contribution was largely peripheral to American security needs.

Disputes over relative levels of defense spending become more acute during periods of increased international tension, when demands for consultation by prospective U.S. allies are not matched by their actual or potential contributions to collective security. However, given persistent demands on Canadian forces for NATO and assorted peacekeeping operations during the 1990s, senior military officers in both countries viewed with concern the effects of the reduced number of regular forces personnel and reservists, smaller budgets, and aging equipment on the Canadian Forces' capacity to "deploy or sustain in significant numbers outside Canada for more than a few months." (Mason 2004: 2)

The events of 9/11 triggered a re-evaluation of defense and collective security policies in the United States and Britain. But despite the invocation of NATO's collective security clause against Afghanistan's Taliban government and the formation of NATO's International Stabilization Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan under UN auspices, this re-evaluation was much less in evidence among other NATO members, including Canada.

These differences, symbolized in the political conflicts leading up to the 2003 Iraq War, left Canada in a highly ambivalent position

in its relations with the United States. On one hand, it supported NATO intervention in Afghanistan, and collaborated extensively with American officials on a wide range of security and counter-terrorism measures involving police and intelligence cooperation, close cooperation on border security, and the internationalization of new cargo and air travel security standards. On the other hand, the Chretien government opposed American intervention in Iraq and the Bush administration's claims to a preemptive right of self-defense. This position evoked considerable resentment in Washington. The result was a series of awkward and often equivocating Canadian policies and operational military commitments.

Stein and Lang (2007:78-90) have noted at length the political straddle involved in Canadian command of a multinational naval task force in the Arabian Sea providing cover for both the Afghan and Iraq missions, as well as the continued service of Canadian liaison officers with US forces in the Persian Gulf.⁴ Similar calculations contributed to Canada's initial decision to accept command of the ISAF Task Force in Kabul, Afghanistan, and later to take on reconstruction functions with a higher risk of combat in the Taliban heartland around Kandahar. (Stein and Lang 2007: 62-72, 91-108) Indeed, former Liberal Defence and Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham asserts that "there was no question; every time we talked about the Afghan mission (in cabinet), it gave us cover for not going into Iraq." (Stein and Lang 2007: 65)

These obligations led Prime Minister Paul Martin to commit to substantial budgetary increases for the Canadian armed forces over several years on taking office in 2004. The Harper government accelerated and expanded these commitments after its election in January 2006. Arguably, American expectations of support in Afghanistan combined with the Liberal government's calculations of national interest, the long-deferred replacement of obsolete equipment, senior military leaders' openness to taking on combat responsibilities, and the resulting operational requirements of the Canadian Forces, to effect these policy changes.

There is little doubt that Canada's participation in Afghanistan has provided a significant political benefit to Canada's relations with the United States since 2004, particularly as the Bush Administration has sought to rebuild diplomatic relationships damaged by earlier conflicts over the Iraq War. Growing American awareness of Canadian engagement and casualties in Afghanistan has been a sig-

nificant factor in strengthening American public goodwill towards Canada. (See Table 1.) Canadian diplomats across the United States have sought to nurture this goodwill through the strategic use of public relations – such as the CanadianAlly.com website, the “Boots on the Ground” advertising campaign in the Washington, DC Metro system in 2005-06, courtesy visits to members of Congress by Canadian military officials posted in Washington, and other forms of public diplomacy. (Hale and Huckabay 2007)

Sands (2006) argues that third country issues have become increasingly important to Canadian diplomacy, not only to “demonstrate independence from Washington” as in the past, but also to show Canada’s “value as a strategic US ally.” (126) The Martin government’s international policy statement of 2005 highlighted four major sets of international priorities – diplomacy, trade, development, and defense – in ways that complemented a wide range of American policy goals, carefully obscured by “made-in-Canada” packaging. Sands has pointed to the complementarity of policy goals and methods between the two countries used in promoting development, democratization, and trade in Afghanistan, Haiti, Latin America and other parts of the world.

The Harper government has continued this pattern, adopting the rhetoric of liberal internationalism and cooperation through international institutions, while pursuing a number of policy initiatives parallel to those of the United States. (Harper 2006) These initiatives include taking substantial domestic political risks to extend Canada’s combat role in Afghanistan through 2011, promoting trade liberalization and democratic stabilization in Latin America, supporting Israel and moderate Arab governments willing to engage it, and expanding NATO to include Ukraine and Georgia.

In effect, these initiatives reflect on a much broader scale the goal of Canadian diplomacy in the United States as described by former Ambassador Allan Gotlieb (2006: 399) as “the art of penetrating concentric, intersecting circles of influence.” Rather than an explicit strategy, they suggest the tactical adaptation of Canadian policies to complementary political objectives, particularly given the political constraints facing recent minority governments in Canada, the shifting priorities of Canadian foreign ministers and their senior officials, and the practical need to adapt to changing external policy circumstances – not least the prospect of a wholesale turnover of policymakers in Washington after the 2008 Presidential election.

As such, these considerations demonstrate the potential ability of Canadian officials to engage their U.S. counterparts in targeted ways that balance national interests, domestic political considerations, and the pursuit of complementary policy goals while retaining a reasonable degree of discretion on specific policy choices and the instruments used to attain them.

IV. BILATERAL AND BI-NATIONAL COOPERATION – NORTH AMERICAN POLITICAL, SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATIONS

The segmentation of US policies towards Canada may be clearly seen in the context of North American policies, whether those relating to the coordination of the political relationship by national leaders and foreign ministers, or to bilateral and binational cooperation on security and defense issues within North America. These two issue sets are complicated by three different sets of asymmetries, each of which has its own institutional architecture.

Trilateralism, Dual Bilateralism and Political Relations in North America

The Security and Prosperity Partnership process, initiated in 2005, provides for biannual meetings of the Secretary of State with Canadian and Mexican Foreign Ministers and annual summits of national leaders. Each cabinet officer has nominal domestic responsibilities for the coordination of highly decentralized processes for bilateral and trilateral intergovernmental relations.

However, the absence of formal institutions for trilateral coordination (Belanger 2006, Studer 2007) and the very different political priorities of each government in relation to the others tend to privilege a dual bilateral approach in which both Canada and Mexico seek to maximize the benefits of their particular relationships with the United States. A 2003 Canadian Foreign Affairs department report to Parliament notes that “the Government’s overall strategy on North America has been, and continues to be, to work bilaterally with the United States and Mexico and to complement these separate, proactive agendas through the exploration of possible trilateral initiatives in areas of mutual interest.” (Canada. DFAIT 2003: 3)

Interviews with senior Canadian government officials under both the Martin and Harper governments also suggest deep con-

cerns over the possibility that US-Mexico disputes over immigration, drugs and border management could prejudice Canadian interests in maximizing market access, trade and travel facilitation with the United States. (Confidential interviews, Government of Canada) This position has been echoed by both Canadian and US economic interests in response to US presidential debates over NAFTA. (Austin, Dezenski and Affolter-Caine 2008; Burney 2008; Manley 2008) These concerns also reflect the constraints which domestic politics imposes on all three governments. Congressional and societal perspectives in the United States limit the terms and extent of US participation in international institutions and its effect on national sovereignty. Political constraints emanating from societal fears, nationalist rhetoric, the assertion of institutional prerogatives by major political actors, and related issues of interest group politics also impose significant political and legal disciplines on the further institutionalization of North American integration in both Canada and Mexico. (Studer 2007: 63-71)

Another institutional incentive for dual bilateralism arises when sectoral or micro-issues of domestic political significance which cannot be resolved through conventional bureaucratic channels are referred regularly to cabinet officers. These issues may assume a political-strategic character, as with the Meridà Initiative between the United States and Mexico intended to reinforce the latter's internal efforts to combat domestic narco-terrorism and related issues of corruption. Alternately, they may address economic and human security concerns such as those associated with large-scale Mexican migration to the United States and related American domestic policies. (Davidow 2005, Roig-Franzia 2007) While strategic and security concerns are often on the agenda of US-Canada relations, bilateral irritants relate more often to aspects of the trade-commercial relationship or to the integration of security issues with trade and travel facilitation.

The very different histories of coexistence and conflict in the United States' relations with its neighbors have entrenched dual bilateral approaches to security and defense issues. Canada's history of security integration with the United States, dating to the Ogdensburg Declaration of 1940, includes a bilateral commitment to ensuring that Canada never becomes a platform for attacks against the continental United States. Mexico's long, unhappy relationship with the United States evokes historical memories that strictly limit

formal collaboration on military and security issues. Similarly, the development and implementation of the US-Canada Smart Border Accord of December 2001 demonstrate a far more collaborative relationship than the political tensions over the management of US-Mexico borderlands suggest.

Security and Defense Relations: Binationalism and Bilateralism

Of all issues surveyed in this paper, the US-Canada defense relationship in North America probably comes closest to Mahant and Mount's category of "exceptionalism." That is, whether through cooperation or neglect, the US pursues distinctive policies towards Canada as an independent ally capable of affecting US interests significantly. This distinctiveness is derived from the fact that Canada's enormous geographic size and its physical proximity to the United States ensure that the maintenance or expansion of Canadian defense capacities against third countries contributes directly to US national defense.

A wide array of bilateral and bi-national institutions comes into play. The Permanent Joint Board on Defense (PJBD), formed in 1940, provides a sounding board for a broad range of bilateral defense and security issues. The PJBD reports directly to the President and Prime Minister as well as to cabinet officers responsible for defense and foreign affairs in each country. The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), formed in 1957 to create an integrated air defense capacity at the height of the Cold War, has a binational command structure. Senior US and Canadian officers share command while reporting to their respective national governments. The 2006 renewal of the NORAD Treaty expanded its mandate to include maritime defense. Since 9/11, both countries have formed integrated domestic command structures for "homeland defense", namely Canada Command and the US Northern Command (NORTHCOM). The latter, while formally independent of NORAD, shares both senior commander and command structures. (Renuart 2008)

A major priority of both military commands is to combine operational interoperability – the ability to function together in a wide range of defense and security tasks – with the capacity for independent action. The Canadian navy has the greatest capacity for combined operations with its American counterparts. For example,

Canadian ships provided a command and support function in the Arabian Gulf during the 2003 Gulf War. When the US Coast Guard diverted much of its normal patrol capacity to the Gulf coast to assist in recovery from Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Canadian Coast Guard units assumed responsibility for patrols along much of the US east coast. Also, when 37 percent of US Air Force F-15 fighters were grounded with airframe cracks in 2007, Canada's F-18 fighters assumed air defense responsibilities for parts of US airspace. (Renuart 2008: 12; Interview, Government of Canada)

Canadian defense industries and contractors, many of them owned by US-based firms, enjoy access to significant levels of U.S. defense and aerospace contracts. Canada lacks the economic or defense spending base to make such industries viable in the absence of such access. Ek and Fergusson (2007: 9-10) observe that Canada's participation in the US Joint Strike Fighter program, which is also open to other NATO allies, has generated substantial benefits for Canada's aerospace industries.

Mason (2004) suggests that, forced to make the choice, US defense officials would probably prefer that if budgetary and equipment constraints forced Canadian defense planners to choose between North American defense and support to US-led alliances in other theatres, they would encourage Canada to choose the former. Successive governments' expansion of Canadian defense capacities has been explicitly geared to avoid such a choice. However, the costs of maintaining a capacity for interoperability with constantly evolving American military, naval and aerospace technologies, and the long lead times for designing, purchasing, and acquiring new naval and aircraft systems, are difficult to accommodate within federal budgetary constraints driven primarily by economic policy priorities and domestic political considerations. (For examples, see Pugliese 2008a, 2008b.)

The most politically significant issues in bilateral defense relations have involved Canadian participation in the siting, testing, or development of American missile systems. The Diefenbaker government's refusal to accept US Bomarc missiles in the early 1960s created a cabinet crisis which led to the resignation of its defense minister and contributed to Diefenbaker's defeat in the 1963 general election. The Trudeau government agreed to test the first generation of cruise missiles in Canada despite significant domestic opposition, while the Mulroney government deferred requests for

further missile tests during the late 1980s in response to internal divisions and domestic political vulnerability. (Gotlieb 2006: 130, 400, 535) The Martin government's handling of US requests to support Ballistic Missile Defense tests in 2004-05 followed a similar pattern, except that its mixed messages to Washington – initially signaling cooperation, and subsequently announcing its negative decision without prior warning – probably did more to erode its credibility with US policymakers than a straightforward refusal would have done.

These events point to the growing importance of domestic political considerations, regardless of the party in power, in the management of appearances related to formal defense relations and the development or testing of new weapons systems. In the absence of an actual emergency, Canadian governments are far likelier to accede to American requests for cooperation that can be managed under the political radar, particularly if conducted under existing bilateral agreements. The greater the political novelty or visibility of such requests, whether or not they involve substantive or merely symbolic cooperation or the commitment of significant fiscal resources, the more likely that Canadian governments will avoid measures that require significant investments of political capital, particularly if an election looms.

Decisions to conserve domestic political capital in this way correspondingly prevent Canada from accumulating much political capital on defense issues with Washington, or to be considered a “trusted ally” on broader issues of foreign policy. Still, the absence of overt issue linkages allows Canadian governments to compensate by pursuing parallel policies with the United States in other areas. The Harper government's decision in early 2008 to extend Canada's military commitment in Afghanistan is a rare exception to this rule on both fronts. It has led to extensive behind-the-scenes collaboration to secure reinforcements and additional equipment from European allies (and the United States) necessary to maintain the military viability of Canadian forces in the region.

Homeland and Border Security Relations: Smarter or Thicker Borders?

"The most important thing is not if there is a terrorist attack in the United States, but a terrorist act that could have been prevented by you."

Interview, US Department of State

Borderland security and management have supplied one aspect of the political-security dimension of bilateral relations in which the Canadian government has made a systematic and consistent effort to influence American policies. The border closures that followed 9/11 struck at a fundamental Canadian interest: secure access to US markets for much of its export trade, tourist business, and market for business travel. Taking the steps necessary to maintain trust in Canadian border management and security measures while facilitating low-risk trade and travel between the two countries has been a top priority of Canada-US relations ever since.

Ottawa's first step to engage Washington after 9/11 was to assemble a committee of senior officials to develop a comprehensive bilateral agreement on border management and security to present as the basis for a bi-national agreement on border management. Following extensive bureaucratic contacts and negotiations under the "Shared Border" process of the late 1990s, the initial outcome of this process was the Smart Border Accord, signed three months after the initial attacks, detailing a thirty-point plan for cooperative border management and complementary security arrangements. (Canada 2001, Cellucci 2005: 95-99, Sloan 2005: 62-65)

However, the formalities of consultation and implementation also masked a complex and highly segmented series of processes relating to intelligence and information sharing, coordination of law-enforcement activities along and across the border through the Cross-Border Crime Forum and working-level cooperation through a series of Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBETs), and the development of "trusted traveler" programs such as FAST⁵ and NEXUS,⁶ among other initiatives. Canadian officials actively supported the development of the US Container Security Initiative (CSI), which later became the basis for international cargo screening policies through the World Customs Organization. (Bonner 2006) Canada also became a party to new electronic passport rules developed through the International Civil Aviation Organization in response to US pressures for more extensive security measures cov-

ering international air travel. (ICAO 2006: 8) In return, Canadian officials persuaded their initially reluctant US counterparts to accept the Safe Third Country Accord enabling greater cooperation in managing refugee flows, and reducing the potential for “asylum shopping” by imposing stricter eligibility conditions on applications for refugee status. (Ek and Fergusson 2007: 15; Interview, DFAIT, March 2006)

These processes sought to engage US security initiatives in different settings to establish Canada’s credentials as a reliable security partner for the United States while maintaining varying levels of discretion on a program-by-program basis. Conversations with security officials in both countries suggest that intelligence sharing was curtailed for a time following the rendition of a Canadian dual-national, Maher Arar, to Syria by US agencies in 2002.

The Smart Border Accord became the model for continuing negotiations on border management – as well as efforts by senior Canadian officials to ensure ongoing high level contacts with the White House and cabinet officers in the State, Homeland Security and Commerce departments. (Interviews, Privy Council Office, December 2005) Subsequent proposals for a “North American Initiative” to extend processes for shared border management, security and trade facilitation ran afoul of the political chill that followed Canada’s refusal to provide formal support to the Iraq War, as well as White House preoccupation with preparations for the 2004 Presidential election campaign. The new Martin government made a series of efforts to mend relations in 2004, formalizing a “made in Canada” National Security Policy with many parallels to US policies, but also with enough nuanced distinctions to maintain the appearance of both independence and an “all-hazards” rather than terrorism-focused emphasis. (Canada 2004, Whitaker 2005)

Canada also expanded the resources available for public diplomacy and the cultivation of US domestic interest networks, at least in part to ensure that Canadian diplomats would be able to challenge media reports or politicians questioning the security of the US-Canada border. When police arrested eighteen people suspected of planning terrorist attacks in Canada in June 2006, triggering substantial US media attention, Canadian embassy officials rapidly organized briefings on Capitol Hill by Canadian police and security officials in response to criticisms of Canadian security measures by some members of Congress. (Hale and Huckabay 2007)

After the 2004 elections, the Bush White House reciprocated these gestures as part of a broader set of initiatives to restore relations with allied states and international organizations damaged by the events leading to the Iraq War. The March 2005 summit of the three North American leaders initiated a process for broader security and economic coordination. The resulting Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) absorbed or paralleled a series of sectoral policy negotiations incorporating security issues, trade and travel facilitation, and cooperation on assorted energy and environment policies. However, the diffuse and often highly technical character of the SPP agenda, while perhaps contributing to incremental progress on a variety of micro-policy issues, failed to sustain high-level political interest in Washington while it raised intense suspicions of a hidden agenda on North American integration from rejectionist interests in both countries. (Patterson 2007a, 2007b; Anderson and Sands 2007) Despite extensive working-level cooperation, the Martin government dissipated much of its limited political capital in Washington in 2005 by its clumsy handling of the BMD issue amidst the high volume disputes over the endemic softwood lumber issue and Martin's overt appeal to domestic anti-American sentiments in his unsuccessful bid to secure re-election in early 2006. (Hale 2007a)

Much as Martin had sought to improve the tone of high-level relations with Washington upon taking office in December 2003, Harper also sought to lower the political temperature by defusing the two biggest political irritants on bilateral relations. A managed trade agreement on softwood lumber was signed in July 2006, despite lingering opposition in Canada. And Harper sought President Bush's support on securing greater flexibility in the implementation of Homeland Security's Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), which would have required both countries' citizens to produce passports or "alternative secure documents" when (re-) entering the United States, beginning in 2007 for air travelers and 2008 for persons crossing the land border. As with previous such initiatives, Canadian diplomats worked closely with US domestic interests to persuade Congress first to defer WHTI implementation, and then to accept "enhanced drivers' licenses" issued by certain states and provinces and complying with DHS technical criteria. (Hale 2007b, Hale 2008)

Interviews with Canadian officials suggest that these initiatives reflect a highly segmented approach to security initiatives. At one end of the continuum of coordination, one may observe close cooperation on shared border measures involving full Canadian participation, such as the Safe Third Party Accord and the trusted traveler and shipper programs. On issues of greater sensitivity, Ottawa may choose to introduce parallel policies to address legal, institutional, or technical policy differences in the two countries. The Martin government's development of a Canadian "no fly" list for air travelers reflects this approach. American requests for cooperation may also evoke polite demurrals when compliance could seriously undermine Canadian policy discretion on major domestic policy issues. Examples include the alignment of immigration and "visa waiver" policies and sharing the names of persons entering from the United States. Canada has supported US efforts to create a comprehensive "entry-exit" data base of persons crossing American borders, and allows the extraterritorial application of US immigration laws to persons turned back from the border, under one approach to "land pre-clearance" proposals for the development of shared border infrastructure at a distance from the physical border. These micro-level or program specific agreements demonstrate the variety and complexity of security issues involved in effective border management. They also show the challenges of implementing "risk management" approaches conducive to facilitating low-risk trade and travel while at the same time accommodating each country's distinctive political and legal sensitivities.

The Canadian government has attempted to avoid politicizing most of these issues. Canada seeks to develop effective technical responses that balance effective cooperation, respect legal and procedural differences in each country, and increase operational effectiveness in reducing risks of terrorism and cross-border criminal activity while facilitating legitimate trade and travel.

The most notable exception to this rule under the Harper government – its very public assertion of Canadian sovereignty over the Northwest Passage and offshore resource development in the Canadian Arctic – tends to reaffirm the principle noted in earlier discussions of high profile Canadian disagreements with the US government over broader foreign policy issues. The assertion of Arctic sovereignty is important to Canadian interests. But it is largely peripheral to US interests, which in this case focus on the preserva-

tion of “freedom of the seas” as a means of securing its own trade routes and fulfilling international security commitments to various allies. Without conceding Canada’s broader claims to sovereignty over the waters surrounding its Arctic islands, a 1988 agreement commits the US government to advising Canada when its warships intend to pass through these waters, with such permission not to be denied unreasonably.

These commitments, essentially an agreement to disagree without prejudice to the interests of the other, respect the formalities of alliance diplomacy while recognizing each country’s shared interest in preventing the possible exploitation of their Arctic waters by third parties. Canada’s planned investment in a greater naval, military and administrative presence in the Arctic effectively expands its capacity for the defense of North America, particularly in the event that other Arctic powers – notably Russia – pursue a more assertive foreign policy in the region. As such, they are consistent with broader US defense policies within North America, and facilitate tacit diplomatic cooperation on other Arctic-related issues. (Byers 2008)

V. CONCLUSION

Canada’s management of the political-strategic dimension of its relations with the United States in recent years suggests four different approaches used in different circumstances. These approaches have been driven by domestic political considerations, perceived national interests, and the effective workings of the international system, in that order of importance.

Canadian politicians and diplomats may seek to position Canada as a cooperative ally, generally in the context of multilateral commitments such as NATO. Canada’s participation in NATO’s Kosovo intervention in the late 1990s and its Afghanistan commitments under the Chretien, Martin and Harper governments have reflected that role. Canada’s pursuit of its own security priorities generally reinforces US interests, if not necessarily to the extent desired in Washington.

Alternately, Canada may pursue policies that complement those of the United States, positioning it to serve as a broker that seeks ways to accommodate American interests and those of allied or friendly nations. Examples of this approach include Canada’s efforts in the late 1990s to secure the indefinite extension of the Nu-

clear Non-Proliferation Treaty (Mowle 2004: 41), and more recent efforts by the Harper government to promote trade liberalization, human rights, and varied approaches to democratization within Latin America. Disparities of power ensure that Canada does not constrain US priorities, while Canada may choose how its policies facilitate or parallel US interests so that they do not become the subjects of serious domestic political controversy. In return, senior American officials tend to recognize that Canadian governments have greater freedom to cooperate with the United States when such issues do not attract significant publicity. (Interview, DoS 2006)

In some cases, Canada may function as a reluctant ally, seeking to avoid antagonizing the United States while attempting to limit its cooperation with US actions. The Martin government's response on participation in the US Ballistic Missile Defense program, and Canada's acceptance of operational leadership of the NATO task force in the Arabian Sea just before the 2003 Iraq war while formally opposing US military action in Iraq, provide examples of this approach. In such cases, the salience of domestic political considerations is likely to take priority over the public accommodation of US policy goals. It does not preclude technical cooperation on issues away from the public spotlight.

While recent Canadian governments have occasionally opposed specific American policies outright – for example, the Chretien government's opposition to American action against Iraq without direct authorization from the United Nations – they have generally done so in a way associated with multilateral approaches to conflict resolution. However, senior Canadian policymakers tend to recognize, with periodic exceptions, that the more or less systematic expression of political sentiments hostile to the United States, or challenges to its leadership and vital interests within the international system, are likely to result in reduced political influence and the marginalization of Canadian interests in Washington. The greater the gap between rhetorical activism and the strategic, diplomatic, and humanitarian resources necessary to translate rhetoric into reality, the greater the likelihood that Canada's international policies will lack credibility not only in Washington, but with other major powers as well.

Under the Martin and Harper governments, Canada has generally supported US initiatives which are broadly consistent with concepts of a liberal international order based on cooperation

among states, rather than the creation of authoritative international institutions. Harper, in particular, has demonstrated a capacity to appeal to Canadian interests and values, sometimes across partisan lines, in ways that strike the politically necessary balance between bilateral cooperation in foreign and security policies and maintenance of a degree of independence or policy discretion.

Canada's effectiveness in engaging the United States, whether in North American or bilateral settings or in the broader international arena, depends in large measure on the capacity of its government to set clear priorities and invest in what Thomas Axworthy (2007) has described as "power assets that (can) make Canada a player." It also depends on the capacity of senior Canadian policymakers to maintain and strengthen their institutional access to American leaders by engaging their counterparts in the executive branch of the US government with confidence, consistency, civility and respect.⁷

However, Canadian governments' domestic political capacity to meet these objectives depends in large measure on the degree to which Canadians perceive American leadership within the international system as based on cooperation rather than unilateral action. It also depends on the US's own capacity for self-restraint and the cultivation of shared objectives when engaging the overlapping and often competing interests both of major powers and smaller states.

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NOTES

¹ For example, centrist foreign policy journalist Anne Applebaum (2005:34) responds caustically to Canadian criticisms of US policies, stating that “it is hard to see what Canadians, from their position of global near-irrelevance, have to look down on.”

² Mowle (2004: 12) notes that the land mine treaty represents the first occasion since the Second World War “that the United States made non-negotiable demands at an international security conference – and saw its demands set aside.”

³ Some US academics and policy-makers have suggested that countries that “shirk their fair burden” in the provision of collective security should face losing “lucrative, American tax-funded defense contracts.” (Sapolsky 2005, Carter 2008)

⁴ The senior liaison officer, General Walt Natynczyk, served as Deputy Commander of the U.S. III Corps, including multinational forces in Iraq. General Natynczyk became Chief of Canada’s Defence Staff in July 2008.

⁵ FAST – Free and Secure Trade – is a binational program for establishing security control processes for cross-border shippers, warehousemen, and truckers. FAST covered 70,000 people in both countries by March 2008.

⁶ NEXUS is a binational screening and biometric identification program to expedite border passage for low-risk land and air travelers to and from the United States. NEXUS covered 180,000 people in both countries by March 2008.

⁷ Frank Carlucci, Ronald Reagan’s last national security advisor, suggests that Reagan’s decision to accommodate Canadian policy goals in the Arctic was the direct result of his close relationship with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. The result was the 1988 Arctic waters agreement noted above. (Knott, Oberdorfer and Zelikow 2001: 45-46) However, such instances are not frequent or prominent enough to suggest any broader pattern in bilateral relations.