Canadian Strategic Culture from Confederation to Trump

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Every nation has one or more strategic cultures that shape its defence strategy as well as its defence practices. Canada, since Confederation, has had three: imperialism, continentalism, and Atlanticism. Analysis of their content, co-existence and competition, we argue, can shed light on the evolution of Canadian defence policy and also on its putative peculiarities—low defence spending or participation in every NATO operation in history, for example.²

To make this argument, we place primary emphasis on the changing status of the United States (U.S.) in Canadian strategic culture—that is, on how Canadian policy makers went from obsessing about the threat of American annexation to accepting the notion that Canada’s defence is inextricably tied to America’s. This U-turn is even more remarkable from the perspective of the current historical moment; indeed, even during the “radical” administration of America’s 45th president, Donald Trump, Canadian and the U.S. find it impossible (“unthinkable”) to conceive their defence—and national security more broadly—apart from that of the other.

We begin with a brief conceptual discussion. We then dedicate a section to each of the three strategic cultures, explaining how they shaped Canadian defence policy at different times and in different places. By the end of the chapter, we also look ahead. Two caveats are in order: first, for the sake of brevity, we do not engage in a number of otherwise important conceptual, theoretical and methodological discussions, namely: how the concept of strategic culture differs from ideology, foreign policy traditions and orientations, political culture, security culture, national identity; how strategic cultures change; and how to best access and code strategic culture. Second, we do not dwell on what we think are historically minor Canadian strategic cultures—isolationism in the interwar period, for example.³

Wherein Lie the Threats?

Canada’s very existence—its territorial sovereignty—is a puzzle if we assume, like some realists International Relations (IR) scholars do, that the international system is anarchic and comprised of great powers and various also-rans—second-tier powers, middle powers, small states, satellites, vassals and others. With the latter always at the mercy of the former, the United States, that most

¹ We thank David Haglund, Thomas Juneau, Philippe Lagassé, Peggy Mason and Lindsay Rodman for their input. All errors remain ours.

² We draw on Justin Massie, “Making Sense of Canada’s “Irrational” International Security Policy: A Tale of Three Strategic Cultures,” *International Journal* 64:3 (2009): 625-645.

³ For further readings, see Appendix. Available at <https://srdjanvucetic.files.wordpress.com/2018/01/appendix-massie-vucetic-2018.pdf>

powerful state actor in modern history, should have swallowed up its defenceless neighbour to the north sometime in the nineteenth century.⁴

In reality, however, patterns of international cooperation and conflict follow different principles. To begin with, who or what we fear crucially depends not on a combination of anarchy and material capabilities, but on social relations. For example, even a quick perusal of Canada's white papers on defence shows that the main threats to Canada have always been a function of ideology, not of straightforward material power differentials: USSR (1964, 1971, 1987, 1989, 1992), Yugoslavia (1994), Afghanistan (2005, 2008), and Russia (2017).⁵

Another example: at the time of this writing, North Korea was estimated to have enough plutonium for approximately ten to twenty nuclear warheads. Whether it also possessed a workable delivery system to threaten North America with them was subject to some debate. The U.S., in contrast, maintained a stockpile of several thousand nuclear warheads, 1,800 of them actively deployed either on ballistic missiles or at bomber bases on both sides of the Atlantic. The reason why Canadians were infinitely more threatened by North Korea's puny nuclear arsenal than the large one wielded by the U.S. is because the Americans are friends and the North Koreans are not—a rather basic social and relational explanation. Similarly, when in August 2017 the increasingly erratic Trump pledged to rain down “fire and fury” on North Korea, at least some Canadians felt they the main threat to world peace was the U.S. President, not (just) the North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un.⁶

The concept of strategic culture emerged in the 1970s out of dissatisfaction with structural realism and similar purely material accounts of world politics. For the purposes of this chapter, we draw on a more contemporary definition of strategic culture as the dynamic interaction between national political-military strategy discourses on the one hand and practices of national defence on the other. Other definitions certainly exist, but we prefer this one as it eschews a misleading dichotomy between the ideal and the material and instead configures the object of analysis as shaped by social and material relations at once.⁷

Conceptually and theoretically, this approach rests on five tenets. First, *discourse* implies that strategy is about intersubjective (i.e., collective and impersonal) meanings, commonplace symbols and semiotic codes. *Practice* refers to socially recognized “ways of doing things” that are to different degrees institutionalized and performed, every day, by the relevant community. Both concepts invite us to think about how those who make or implement policy automatically perceive, feel, and act, not just about their deliberate, means-ends plans and planning.

⁴ For more, see Justin Massie, “Canada's (In)dependence in the North American Security Community: The Asymmetrical Norm of Common Fate,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 37:4 (2007): 493-516; and Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011, pp. 121-5.

⁵ We defined “main threats” as the most frequently occurring place name appearing in sections on contemporary threats (“challenges”) to Canada's security. We are aware that the Mulroney government's 1989 and 1992 documents do not technically count as white papers. For more, see Appendix, Table 1.

⁶ Various participants. Group of 78's Policy Conference “Getting to Nuclear Zero,” September 22-23, 2017, Ottawa.

⁷ Here we build on Iver B. Neumann and Henrikki Heikka, “Grand Strategy, Strategic Culture, Practice. The Social Roots of Nordic Defence,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 40:1 (2005), 5-23 and on David G. Haglund, “Let's Call the Whole Thing Off? Security Culture as Strategic Culture,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 32:3 (2011): 494-516. See Appendix for further readings.

Second, discourses and practices are understood to co-constitute each other. A good example is defence procurement. When the professionals in the defence establishments stick to their ways of doing procurement, and the politicians who make authoritative decisions about it to theirs, the predictable result is persistent dysfunction (See Dempster's and Stone and Solomon's chapters). Each procurement "mess," as Nossal calls it, impacts not only Canada's military capabilities, but also elite understandings of the country's international ambitions— the Canadian "security imaginary".⁸ This feedback loop, one might add, helps explain a number of peculiar patterns in Canadian defence policy, namely the recurring pledge to maintain a multi-role, combat-capable, full-spectrum military equipped with state-of-the-art equipment—all without the appropriate level of defence spending.⁹

Third, strategic culture is defined by relations of struggle. Consider the requirements of a "field analysis" of Canadian defence policy.¹⁰ To examine how different actors vie to define "threats to Canada" in accordance to their own particular worldviews and positions, one would have to analyze at least three fields: the political field centered on cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister's Office, the bureaucratic field of officials working for National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, the Treasury Board Secretariat and the Department of Finance, Global Affairs Canada, Public Services and Procurement, and the Privy Council Office, and the military field, with its inter-service rivalries and other internal divisions in tow.

Fourth, all of these fields of practice are conditioned by "trans-local" circulations, as per an oft-heard assertion that U.S. officials and the Canadian military share similar threat perceptions, with Canadian politicians being the ones apart. This means that strategic culture scholars are in principle equipped to examine not only the making of Canada's defence priorities, but also of "Canada" as such.

Crucially for many, if not most strategic culture approaches, fields of practice are not reducible to a predefined substance, as in the rationalist principal-agent model (Saideman's chapter), the Westminster system (Lagassé's chapter) or that pet variable of realist IR theory, the international system (Nossal's chapter). This is the fifth and final theoretical point: strategic culture is not simply "there" but is rather constantly "becoming." It is this mantra that compels strategic culture researchers to map how strategy discourses and defence practices co-evolve in mutual interaction and in interaction with a wide range of other environments, from gender relations (see Lane's chapter) to new sociotechnical settings (Carvin's chapter) to, as in assemblage theory, all of the above plus material artefacts and natural elements.¹¹

⁸ Kim Richard Nossal, *Charlie Foxtrot: Fixing Defence Procurement in Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2016), pp. 27-30, 143, 176, and 107-8.

⁹ When Nossal chides Canadians for being "cheap on defence", he refers to the Canadian voters too. Ibid., 109.

¹⁰ Frédéric Mérand and Vincent Pouliot, "Le monde de Pierre Bourdieu : Éléments pour une théorie sociale des relations internationales," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 41:3 (2008), 603-25.

¹¹ For formal institutions, policies, discourses, material objects, bodies, and performances that this scholarship covers or could cover, see the chapters in Heather A. Smith and Claire Turenne Sjolander (eds.), *Canada in the World: Internationalism in Canadian Foreign Policy* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2013); J. Marshall Beier and Lana Wylie (eds.), *Canadian Foreign Policy in Critical Perspective* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press Canada, 2010); Bruno Charbonneau and Wayne S. Cox (eds.), *Locating Global Order: American Power and Canadian Security after 9/11* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010) and Claire Turenne Sjolander, Heather A. Smith, and Deborah Sienstra (eds.), *Feminist Perspectives on Canadian Foreign Policy* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2003).

The Age of Empires

The European settlement of North America, a.k.a. Turtle Island, caused many polities to rise and fall. By the middle years of the nineteenth century, however, two empires came to dominate the continent: Britain and the United States. They were neither friends nor friendly. The British move in 1867 to create the Dominion of Canada was fundamentally an anti-American act.

Contrary to their revolutionary counterparts to the south, those ruling the territory we now call Canada neither feared nor resented the British Empire; rather, they wanted more of it.¹² But, as one of them observed at the time, this meant that North American British colonies faced an existential security dilemma: “obtain British North American Confederation or be absorbed in an American Confederation.”¹³ Certainly, the American Civil War (1861-1865) deeply troubled Canadian elites, to say nothing of those in London. Fearing a too-powerful American Union, Britain had given tacit support to the Confederacy; it dispatched thousands of troops to Canada, and prepared to mobilize the Canadian Militia should the need to defend its North American colonies arise. But even the rapid demobilization of the victorious Union army in 1865 did not eliminate Canada’s fear of annexation by the new American Republic. The American doctrine of Manifest Destiny, after all, legitimized the annexation of both Texas (1845) and Alaska (1867).

Yet while the threat of annexation drove some North American British colonies to unite to ensure their survival, unification did not result in creating anything resembling a strong independent state. Rather, Confederation defined itself as a self-governing dominion uninterested in raising a regular army to ensure its territorial defence. Confident in the Empire’s ability and willingness to defend Canada, the prevailing strategic thinking centered on the power of the Royal Navy—and did so despite demonstrable evidence that London regarded Canada as “indefensible.”¹⁴ This meant that Canada’s “foundational” strategic culture, although British *imperialist* at its core, was also premised on agreeing to U.S. military preponderance in North America. This was a way out of Canada’s security dilemma: Ottawa deliberately decided against building any significant national military capability, an army or a navy, because it came to a conclusion that Washington would inevitably interpret this as a hostile gesture, thus further instigating calls for an invasion of Canada.¹⁵ Thus, already at its proverbial birth, Canada came up with a simple policy: whatever you do, do not threaten the United States. Accordingly, the role of the Canadian forces was oriented towards other goals—assistance to white settlers, for one (see Lightfoot’s chapter).

The Washington Treaty of 1871 was a keystone in the normalization of Canada-United States relations. The United States recognized Canada’s borders, following which Britain withdrew its regular forces from Canada (except naval forces in Halifax), and ceased further border fortifications. The result was a de-militarization of the Canadian-American border and the “long peace” in North America. Of course, Canadians remained wary of their neighbour. The election of Robert Borden as prime minister in 1911, for instance, was in significant part due to voters’ fear

¹² Samuel E. Moffett, *The Americanization of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972): 8.

¹³ Quoted in Samuel E. Moffett, *The Americanization of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972): 23.

¹⁴ Desmond Morton, “Defending the Indefensible: Some Historical Perspectives on Canadian Defence, 1867-1987,” *International Journal* 42:4 (1987): 627-644.

¹⁵ William T. R. Fox, *A Continent Apart: The United States and Canada in World Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985): 45-46.

that the “commercial union” with the United States proposed by his political rival, Wilfrid Laurier, would lead to Canada’s annexation. Also note that U.S. military options and plans for the invasion of Canada were abandoned only in the late 1930s.¹⁶

Beyond North America, Canada’s defence was inextricably linked to the British Empire. The prevailing idea at the time was that in exchange for London’s protection of its Dominion in North America, Canada had to contribute to the defence of the Empire overseas. After all, British “race patriotism” ran strong in English Canada. Imperialism reached its height during the Boer War (1899-1902), when Canada contributed more than 8,000 soldiers to a counter-insurgency campaign in South Africa. The rationale, according to Laurier:

what would be the condition of this country to-day if we had refused to obey the voice of public opinion? It is only too true, Sir, that if we had refused at that time to do what was in my judgment our imperative duty, a most dangerous agitation would have arisen – an agitation which according to all human probability would have ended in a cleavage in the population of this country upon racial lines. A greater calamity could never take place in Canada.¹⁷

Canada’s strategic culture remained embedded in British imperialism during the two world wars, even as Canada was progressively becoming a formally sovereign state. Neutrality akin America’s until April 1917 during the First World War and until December 1941 during the Second World War was inconceivable north of the border. As Laurier put it in August 1914 in support of the declaration of war against Germany issued by King George V: “When the call comes, our answer goes at once, and it goes in the classical language of the British answer to the call to duty: ‘Ready, aye, ready.’”¹⁸ Twenty years later, Canada’s newly obtained status of *de facto* sovereign state meant that Canada was now “merely” morally and politically obligated to support Britain. “Canadian autonomy once achieved turned out to be like free will: it existed to enhance the righteous choice.”¹⁹ Few examples better capture the concept of strategic culture as a dynamic interaction of discourse and formal institutions on the one hand and of practices, including their apparently affective power, on the other.

Cold War Continentalism

Canadian-American defence cooperation began in the late 1930s in the face of the threat posed by Nazi Germany. In what has been dubbed the “Kingston Dispensation,”²⁰ the United States and Canada exchanged mutual assurances of military support. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in an address at Queen’s University in August 1938, declared that an attack against Canadian territory would be considered an attack against the territory of the United States. Hence, the United States would defend Canada in the case of foreign attack. “I give you assurance that the

¹⁶ Vucetic, *Anglosphere*, p. 137-8.

¹⁷ Quoted from <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/premiersministres/h4-4060-e.html>

¹⁸ Nossal et al, *Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, p. 145.

¹⁹ Jack L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, “A self-evident national duty’: Canadian foreign policy, 1935-1939,” in Jack L. Granatstein (ed.), *Canadian Foreign Policy: Historical Readings*, rev. ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1993): 158-180. Also see Phillip Bruckner (ed.), *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), especially Chapters 5 and 6.

²⁰ Michel Fortmann and David G. Haglund, “Canada and the issue of homeland security: Does the ‘Kingston Dispensation’ still hold?,” *Canadian Military Journal* 3:1 (2002): 17-22.

people of the United States will not stand idly by if the domination of Canadian soil is threatened by another Empire.” Prime Minister Mackenzie King replied thus:

We, too, have our obligations as a good and friendly neighbour, and one of these is to see that, at our own instance, our country is made as immune from attack or possible invasion as we can reasonably be expected to make it, and that, should the occasion ever arise, enemy forces should not be able to pursue their way either by land, sea or air, to the United States across Canadian territory.²¹

These speech acts highlight two key developments that paved the way for the rise of *continentalist* strategic culture during the Cold War. One is the dramatic transformation of the United States from Canada’s arch-foe to Canada’s guardian. The other is the emerging asymmetry of North America’s security interdependence. It was indeed obvious even then that the United States was committing to defending Canada from outside aggression in exchange for a promise that Canada would not become a strategic liability to the United States.²²

The 1940 Ogdensburg Declaration, the Permanent Joint Board on Defense which it established, and the 1947 Joint Declaration on North American Defense Cooperation all formalized Canada-United States alliance, while also stipulating the equality and sovereignty of the two sides. Yet, Canadian anxieties about American infringement upon Canada’s sovereignty remained high. As Morton put it: “The Soviet Union was the ultimate threat but the United States was the imminent danger.”²³ The reason for this tension is that Canada’s continentalist strategic culture remained conflicted between two seemingly dichotomous identities: Canada as a sovereign state and Canada as a reliable ally of the United States. The former valued safeguarding Canada’s control over its foreign and defence policy, while the latter emphasized the need to reassure the US that Canada would not become a liability to US security. In practice, this meant that Canada’s defence policymakers faced an unpleasant dilemma: accept U.S. threat constructions and contribute to its defence policy in hope to reassure of Canada’s reliability, or decline and risk being penalized by U.S. unilateral policy choices.

The creation of the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) illustrates the result of these conflicting identities on Canadian defence policy. From one point of view, by accepting to cooperate with the United States in the defence of the common aerospace, the Canadian government managed to safeguard its national sovereignty. Although the United States contributes far more personnel, money, and equipment to NORAD than Canada it is still Canadian rather than American fighter jets patrol the Canadian airspace in times of peace. This means that Canada actually succeeded in defending itself against help (see Charron and Ferguson’s chapter for more on this tired and occasionally tiresome trope).

There is another interpretation, however. With its binational (as opposed to bilateral) character, NORAD effectively puts Canadian military personnel under American operational control, thus institutionalizing the asymmetrical nature of Canadian-American defence

²¹ Respectively quoted in James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Appeasement and Rearmament* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967): 183; and William L. Mackenzie King, *Debates in the House of Commons 3* (Ottawa: Parliament of Canada, 30 March 1939): 2459.

²² Donald Barry and Duane Bratt, “Defense against Help: Explaining Canada-US Security Relations,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 38, no. 1 (2008): 65.

²³ Desmond Morton, “Defending the Indefensible,” p. 639.

cooperation. For Canadian diplomats (as opposed to the Canadian military brass), the creation of NORAD was “a decision for which there is no precedent in Canadian history in that it grants in peace-time to a foreign representative operational control of an element of Canadian forces *in Canada*.”²⁴ Ever since, as Denholm Crosby argues, North America’s defence “has been rooted in US definitions of the exigencies of continental air/aerospace defense, and has taken place within military forums largely uncondusive to Canadian political input or monitoring.”²⁵

This logic led to the indivisibility of the security of the North American continent from both Canadian and American perspectives. This focused Canadian strategic thinking further: how to contribute to continental defence in a way that satisfies U.S. demands and prevents American infringement upon Canadian sovereignty. This strategic culture outlasted the Cold War. Long after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the potential consequences of diverging significantly from America’s security expectations are still understood as too great for any Canadian government to contemplate the idea of any radical alteration to the status quo.²⁶ Indeed, many of the “new” threats identified by the Canadian governments since the 1990s coincide with the threats defined by the United States. Furthermore, following the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 9/11, much of Canada’s strategic thinking has focused on avoiding another “9/12”—code for the pain of severely tightened Canada-United States border on which the Canadian economy vastly depends. Looking back at history, however, it is in fact safe to say that “U.S. paranoia about the border” has *always* kept Canadian elites awake at night, influencing *every* Canadian policy.²⁷ From this perspective, the trope that best captures Canada-US relations is “defence against the lock-down,” not defence against help.²⁸

Contestations over continentalist strategic culture are on full display in Canada’s ballistic missile defence system (BMD) debate—a half century-long saga that gained fresh headlines during the aforementioned Trump-Kim dance in 2017. Proponents argue that Canada should take part in missile defence to prevent Washington from unilaterally “helping” Canada from incoming ballistic missiles on North America. For Canada to have a say in the defence of its territory, it should therefore endorse BMD and contribute assets to its operation. As one parliamentary committee puts it, under the status quo

decisions on when, where and whether to intercept an incoming ballistic missile would be made not under the auspices of the binational NORAD structure but, rather, by the U.S.

²⁴ Quoted in Joseph T. Jockel, *Canada in NORAD, 1957-2007: A History* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007): 4.

²⁵ Ann Denholm Crosby, “A Middle-Power Military in Alliance: Canada and NORAD,” *Journal of Peace Research* 34 (1997): 49. The extent and amplitude of the threat posed during the Cold War by Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) went a long way in justifying this decision, however. Fox, *A Continent Apart*, p. 97.

²⁶ Alex Macleod, Stéphane Roussel, and Andri Van Mens, “Hobson’s Choice? Does Canada Have Any Options in Its Defence and Security Relations with the United States?” *International Journal* 55:3 (2000): 342.

²⁷ John Manley, President and CEO of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives and former Deputy Prime Minister of Canada; from an interview he gave hours after the 2014 Ottawa attack. Srdjan Vucetic, “American Images of Canada: Canadian Muslims in U.S. Newspapers, 1999-2014,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 46:2 (2016): 16-32, at p. 16.

²⁸ Adam Chapnick, at the authors’ workshop for this volume, University of Ottawa, 8 December 2017.

alone under its domestic defence command, United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM).²⁹

Opponents, in contrast, see participation in BMD as irrevocably reducing Canada's freedom of maneuver in diplomacy, not least with respect to efforts to counter nuclear proliferation. The response of successive Canadian governments was a convoluted policy compromise: supporting *both* offensively oriented U.S. nuclear strategies *and* strategic arms control.³⁰ It remains to be seen just how long this compromise can hold.

Atlanticism in the Asia-Pacific Century?

Atlanticism, Canada's third strategic culture, emphasizes Canada's Euro-Atlantic identity and, in turn, its commitment to NATO, the world's most functional military alliance. In 1948, Secretary of State for External Affairs Louis St. Laurent outlined the core principles of this orientation:

The best guarantee of peace today is the creation and preservation by the nations of the Free World, under the leadership of Great Britain, the United States and France, of an overwhelming preponderance of force over any adversary or possible combination of adversaries. This force must not be only military, it must be economic; it must be moral.³¹

In other words, Canada pursued the transatlantic alliance with three strategic goals in mind: promoting and protecting liberal democracy, strengthening political and economic ties with its most trusted allies, and offsetting Anglo-American unilateralism by bringing France in, Canada's other "mother country." In some ways, these three goals still inform Canada's NATO policy. Supporting NATO missions and operations is perceived in Canada as a means of buttressing multilateralism while also elevating Canada's status in the world—keeping a seat at the table, as it were.³² This one reason why Canada partook in *every* NATO operation since the alliance's creation, from the 1951 deployment of the 27th Canadian Infantry Brigade for service in Hanover to the recent counter-insurgency in Afghanistan, the toppling of Libya's Muammar Khadhafi regime, and the deterrent force in Eastern Europe.

This perspective goes a long way in helping us understanding Canada's commitment to the United Nations (UN), UN peacekeeping, and the rest of the post-1945 international institutional architecture as well. These commitments were never "merely" rhetorical: Canadian military personnel took part in *every* U.N. peacekeeping mission between 1948 and 1988 and contributed 10% of all Blue Helmets during that period. Crucially, most of these missions were motivated by an Atlanticist desire to prevent a conflict between Canada's "traditional allies and friends" (Suez,

²⁹ Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence, *Canada and Ballistic Missile Defence: Responding to the Evolving Threat* (Ottawa, June 2014): v.

³⁰ Philippe Lagassé, "Canada, Strategic Defence, and Strategic Stability: A Retrospective and Look Ahead," *International Journal* 63:4 (2008): 918. Also see Eugene Lang, "Why Canada misfired on ballistic missile defence," *Globe and Mail*, 26 September 2017.

³¹ St. Laurent, address at the Canadian international trade fair, 11 June 1948, quoted in R.A. Mackay, ed., *Canadian Foreign Policy 1945-1954: Selected Speeches and Documents* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971), 184-85.

³² Justin Massie, *Francosphère : L'importance de la France dans la culture stratégique du Canada* (Québec, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2013).

Cyprus), between the West and the Soviets (Egypt, Congo), or simply to help the Europeans out (Yugoslavia, in the 1990s). A less obvious example is Canada's refusal to take part in the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in 2003. If we accept that multilateralism is an irreducible aspect of Atlanticism, then we can interpret the run-up to the Iraq War as a clash of strategic cultures—one in which Atlanticism overpowered continentalism.³³

Extending on the same point, we think that Atlanticism also helps explain Canada's strange relationship with BMD. What, indeed, are we to make of Canada's move to formally support NATO's endorsement of BMD in its 2010 Strategic Concept? As Harvey observes, this sends a signal that "Canada officially endorses the logic, strategic utility and security imperatives underpinning BMD," despite Canada's refusal to participate in the North American program.³⁴ Prime facie, this is an outstanding example of inconsistent policy-making. From our perspective, however, this outcome is a function of the relative strength of Atlanticism versus continentalism.

Atlanticism and continentalism can work in tandem as well. Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, for example, the Chrétien government was the first to invoke NATO's collective defence clause (Article 5), that most sacred political gesture of alliance solidarity. Furthermore, the transatlantic consensus on the necessity to confront militarily a by-product of the invasion of Iraq—the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant—paved the way for a significant Canadian combat mission in the Middle East from 2014 to 2016. Prime Minister Harper's explanation for committing Canadian troops to the military coalition against this threat carefully referenced Canada "major allies," not just the United States:

The position the government of Canada has generally taken in those kinds of situations is where there is a common threat to ourselves and our allies, and where particularly our major allies – the United States and also the United Kingdom, France – are willing to act, the general position of the government of Canada is that we're also willing to act and prepared to play our full part.³⁵

All these examples indicate that a bipartisan, Conservative-Liberal consensus undergirds Canada's Atlanticism. Whatever the ruling strategic culture, party consensus has in fact been the historical norm. Recent increases in political polarization and the growing politicization of national defence may cause this consensus to dissipate, but this unlikely in the short term.

The so-called rise of the rest—one phrase for describing the shift in materially defined global power towards the Asia-Pacific and specifically China—is *not* displacing Atlanticism from Canada's "official mind." At the time of this writing, rather than looking for new allies and new alignments in the ear of Trump-induced U.S. decline, Ottawa is primarily seeking to strengthen established ties. Thus, the Trudeau government's defence policy statement talks about "fostering

³³ Massie, "Making Sense of Canada's 'Irrational' International Security Policy." Also see Srdjan Vucetic, "Why did Canada sit out the Iraq War? One Constructivist Analysis," *Canadian Foreign Policy* 13:1 (2006): 133–153 and Justin Massie and Stéfanie von Hlatky, "From Reluctant Warrior to Warmonger? Canada and the Decision to Use Force in Iraq," paper presented at the University of Hawaii, Mānoa, 25 February 2016.

³⁴ Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence, *Canada and Ballistic Missile Defence*, p. 11.

³⁵ Campbell Clark and Steven Chase, "Canada is 'willing to act'," *The Globe and Mail*, September 4, 2014, A6.

new partnerships [and] engaging with emerging powers,” its overall message is that “Canada has a strong interest in supporting the international system it helped to build.”³⁶

Not all Atlanticist policies are status quo-oriented. A good example is Canada’s support for geographical and functional expansion of NATO beyond Europe and beyond collective defence.³⁷ Some might say that a variant of “global NATO” already exists in the form of the Five Eyes. Once mostly a mysterious intelligence partnership between Canada, the U.S., the UK, Australia and New Zealand, the Five Eyes now appears in defence policy documents as a manifestation of “multilateralism in action” that, like the UN or NATO, is “central to protecting Canada’s interests”: “The Five-Eyes community is an increasingly important forum for consultation and coordination on a wider range of key policy and operational matters, including the military use of space and collaboration on research and development.”³⁸

What is even more interesting is that some politicians in Canada and elsewhere think that “Brexit” and new technologies have now opened an opportunity to build this community further.³⁹ From the perspective of the preceding analysis, this idea is not entirely madcap. The Five Eyes reflects and reinforces aspects of all three strategic cultures we discussed, while also advancing two out of three Atlanticist pillars identified by St. Laurent in 1948. Should Five Eyes ties strengthen in the future, we can thus expect to see more Canadian appeals for bringing France into this club, in one form or another.⁴⁰

Conclusion

The concept of strategic culture can be mobilized to address a number of themes covered in this volume, from civil-military relations to the politics of military doctrines—think of the past and current Canadian debates on the constitutionally mandated role of the armed forces, on military transparency and openness, on recruitment and retention, on budgetary allocations, on military education, or on operational and tactical ideas. Adopting a different scale, we have used it to examine the content, contestation and evolution of Canadian defence policy from Confederation to this day. Imperialism was the foundational strategic culture; it influenced how the nation was created and how it defended itself until the 1940s. The subsequent period was characterized by a struggle between continentalist and Atlanticist strategic cultures, with the latter dominating most of the time and outside North America. On current trends, and whatever the changes wrought by the Asia-Pacific century, Atlanticism is likely to remain dominant. We invite the reader to test this claim by looking at the next iteration of Canadian military doctrines, defence policy statements, major military acquisitions, and foreign military interventions.

³⁶ National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s New Defence policy* (2017): 50.

³⁷ Tobias Bunde and Timo Noetzel, “Unavoidable tensions: the liberal path to global NATO,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 31:2 (2010): 295-318.

³⁸ *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s New Defence policy*: 91. Also see Srdjan Vucetic, “Bound to Follow? The Anglosphere and U.S.-led Coalitions of the Willing, 1950-2001,” *European Journal of International Relations* 17: 1 (2011): 27-49.

³⁹ Srdjan Vucetic, “CANZUK, Conservatives and Canada: Marching backward to empire,” iPolitics, February 24, 2017. <https://ipolitics.ca/2017/02/24/canzuk-conservatives-and-canada-marching-backward-to-empire/>

⁴⁰ Ferry de Kerckhove, ‘The Strategic Outlook for Canada 2016,’ CDA Institute Vimy Paper Vol. 27 (2016): 36, 41.