



Canada and the New American Empire:
Implications for Security Policy

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Introduction

This briefing note addresses the challenges and choices facing Canadians in the area of security. The analysis begins by introducing three working assumptions (and related predictions) about the domestic and systemic imperatives that will compel American leaders to become increasingly addicted to security and public safety. Section two explores the consequences for Canadian choices, with specific emphasis on Ottawa's evolving addiction to security by proxy and the rising economic and political risks (and costs) of adopting either one of two competing approaches to Canada-U.S. integration – proximity vs. distance.

1. Working Assumptions and Predictions

1.1. Inevitability of High Impact Terrorism

The first and arguably most important assumption underpinning the analysis to follow is that the United States will suffer the physical and psychological trauma of additional (and potentially more disturbing) terrorist attacks in the future. To assume instead that the U.S. has the capacity (or the international and domestic political support) to implement policies that are robust enough to solve the terrorism problem is excessively optimistic and dangerously short-sited. The capacity to inflict unacceptable levels of pain and suffering on larger numbers of targets and people is spreading to more groups and individuals with an unlimited number of grievances they want resolved. War is becoming privatized (Nye 2004)¹ as a result of the democratization of technology and knowledge (Friedman, 2001),² miniaturization of weaponry and lethality, increased accessibility and transferability of weapons of mass destruction, and a rising number of prospective terrorists with religiously entrenched motivations to terrorize. In addition to these trends, political power is becoming privatized -- the train bombings in Madrid in March, 2004, transformed the outcome of a democratic election and led to the immediate withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq. The Philippine government withdrew their troops in July, 2004, in response to the kidnapping of a single truck driver. These successes were initiated by a relatively small group of terrorists but they reveal a measure of political power and influence that exceeds that of hundreds of thousands of anti-war protesters in Spain and the Phillipines who demanded the same outcome, but failed. These successes (and others to follow) virtually guarantee more kidnappings and bombings will occur in the future as insurgents and terrorists attempt to build on these victories.

1.2. Systems Determine Foreign and Security Policies, not Leaders

Structural features of the international system determine the security priorities and strategies of major powers; leaders do not. By way of illustration consider the following excerpts from the Centre for Global Studies' Project Rationale for this conference:

The election in November 2004 amounts to a referendum on one of the most radical Administrations of recent history.... (Canadians) will be directly affected by the results, especially if an activist Bush administration is re-elected. ***Even if a Democrat wins***, however, the ***disparities in power*** between the United States and other countries will still exist. The rhetoric from Washington may soften, but the ***commitment to underlying national interest is unlikely to lesson***....Canada's need to develop a creative response to

1 Joseph S. Nye "Divided We War". Globe and Mail (March 24, 2003). See also Joseph Nye "Before War". Washington Post (March 14, 2003).

2 Thomas Friedman (2002) Lexus and the Olive Tree

this broad assertion of American power will be heightened if George Bush is re-elected, ***but given American's current sense of vulnerability, even a Democratic President*** will be difficult to deal with (emphasis added).

Included in these assertions are two competing assumptions about the origins of national interests and the foreign and security policies they engender, but the underlying arguments and related implications are rarely pushed to their logical conclusions. This is not an insignificant debate; in fact, it should be the point of departure for any discussion of the future of Canadian security. Ottawa's choices in a post-9/11 world are directly related to whether ***systems*** or ***leaders*** are more or less relevant in a Canadian, American and/or Canada-U.S. context.

My own view begins with a very strong conviction that security and public safety are the overarching (indeed primordial) national interests of any liberal democratic leader. This is not to suggest that democratic principles are secondary to these interests. It is to suggest that

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billions to achieve

patterned responses (e.g., border closures) that will seriously jeopardized Canada-U.S. economic activity. Regardless of the mutual benefits of two-way trade, these and other economic interests will be sacrificed at the altar of homeland security every time. The *economics of security* (the negative economic impact of security failures) will invariably trump the *security of economics* (the positive impact of sound economic policies) for at least two reasons: “First, any terrorist attack on U.S. soil will inevitably have a major, immediate and uniformly negative impact on the American (and international) economy anyway. Second, in a security-conscious society faced with the challenge of perfection in the war on terror, the loss of 3,000 lives will invariably be perceived by the American public as a far more significant tragedy than the loss of 300,000 jobs. Conversely, the potential to save 3,000 lives will be perceived as far more important than the potential to create 300,000 new jobs.”⁸

2.2. Vanishing Choices: Canada’s Addiction to Security by Proxy

If economic security is far more important to Canada than it is to the U.S., then Canadian officials will need to find ways to influence the standard operating procedures the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is currently developing to deal with various contingencies and scenarios. The key challenge for Canada will be to prevent Washington from relying exclusively on a set of patterned, unilateral responses after each attack that are likely to run counter to our interests. In order to acquire at least some indirect input into Washington’s post-attack crisis management techniques, Ottawa will become increasingly dependent on policies that make our commitment to American security

