Countering the Bush Counter-Revolution

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Identifying our Assumptions

In raising the question of North America’s centre-periphery dynamic, this conference session’s problematic presents us with an empirical affirmation (the United States has precipitated a revolution in foreign policy), a normative interrogation (what should Canada -- and Mexico -- do about it?), and an epistemological assumption (the United States is the independent variable, Canada and Mexico the dependent variables). But enough time has elapsed since early 2001, when George Bush was sworn in as president, and since September, 2001, when the United States was struck by Al Qaeda, for us to undertake three preliminary tasks.

- First, we must interrogate the affirmation by putting it in the context of what in the previous régime the Bush administration wanted to change and what it wanted to continue.

- Second, in order to consider what Canada should do, we need to review what it has already done in the intervening for years.

- Third, we should reflect on how Canada (as the dependent variable in this problematic) has itself become, along with Mexico and other powers, an independent variable, impacting the United States (as the independent variable) to blunt its radicalism.

The Bush Counter-Revolution

It was not obvious from his evasive presidential election campaign in 2000 that George Bush had much of a revolution in mind.

A. The International Economic Order

Continuity was certainly the subtext as far as the United States’ global economic dominance was concerned. Indeed, his father had presided over the opening years of the Uruguay Round which climaxd in the Clinton administration’s triumphal signing of the Marrakesh agreement that
created the World Trade Organization in 1995 and signaled that American economic norms had been universalized in a muscular hegemonic order that would open many other economies’ doors to the further expansion of US transnational capital.

While these norms had already been dramatically challenged in late 1999 in the streets of Seattle by non-governmental organizations from the North and in the WTO’s ministerial meetings by many states from the South, Governor Bush remained as committed to global trade and investment liberalization as the man wanted to oust from the presidency. Fostering a trade liberalization that imposed US norms on its economic partners remained prominent in the Bush vision for the world, whether globally (in the WTO’s Doha round of trade talks), continentally (in the Free Trade Area of the Americas or FTAA), or bilaterally (with Chile and Singapore).\(^1\)

**B. The Non-economic Global Order**

It was in Bill Clinton’s internationalism that Governor Bush was calling for change. In the light of the US-led NATO offensive against Serbia in Kosovo, Bush’s admonition that the United States should be humble in its foreign policy suggested a less interventionist, more withdrawn global stance. Once ensconced in the White House, he gave conflicting signals, appointing the moderate Colin Powell to the Department of State and putting the aggressive Donald Rumsfeld in Defense. His own position on matters international was telegraphed by Condoleeza Rice whom he installed as National Security Advisor. Pupil and professor interacted constantly, whether in the White House gym or the Camp David woods. *She* talked about proceeding “from the firm ground of the national interest and not from the interest of an illusory international community” (Hirsh 2002: 32). *He* described his foreign policy as a “new realism” in which America’s efforts should steer clear of what he disparaged as “international social work.”

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Instead, it should return to cultivating great power relations and rebuilding the military (Ikenberry 2002: 46).

In sharp contradistinction to Clinton’s foreign policy, the Rice Doctrine’s implementation delivered a series of body blows to the international order. In rapid succession, the Bush administration announced its opposition to the Kyoto Accord, the small arms convention, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and the International Criminal Court.

Obviously, such a counter-revolution, which moved American foreign policy towards a mix of behavioural unilateralism, ecological isolationism, and military triumphalism disconnected the Bush administration from the evolving multilateral order and placed it at odds with Canada’s traditional penchant for multilateralism. In the short term, neither Canada nor the rest of the international community could do much beyond wringing their hands in collective dismay.

C. The Anti-terrorist Security Order

Having been evolving confusedly for a decade in the more anarchic regions of the Balkans and Africa when concerns for human security had involved the international community in new dilemmas of intervention in failed or failing states, the security environment was turned on its head in the course of two hours on the morning of September 11, 2001. The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington proved to be both a cataclysmic wake-up call and a political opportunity that allowed for the implementation of what was later formally articulated as the Bush Doctrine. The catastrophe dramatically brought to light how the same means responsible for generating America’s growing wealth and prosperity – open economies and global communications systems – could be used by groups intent on bringing down the world’s hegemon (Flynn in Lachapelle 2001: 18). After the dust settled from the twin towers of the
World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the president’s handlers reinvented George W. Bush as the wartime president. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, the United States actually acted as the world’s only remaining superpower, eschewing its traditional leadership role as architect of a rules-based multilateral international system for a noticeably more imperial role as unilateral global enforcer (Nye 2002).

The United States’ homeland-security response to the spectre of global terrorist networks flew in the face of the principles of the world order based on trade and investment liberalization that it had constructed after World War II. As a result, the hegemon came into conflict with its client states, which had accepted this U.S.-led global economic order and helped to operate it by endorsing its free-market norms. A paradigm shift from economic border opening to military border closing was also out of sync with the policy agendas of Uncle Sam’s two territorial neighbours whose economic fortunes depended more than ever on maintaining an open frontier with the United States.

The Bush administration elevated the war on terrorism to the top of its policy agenda in three stages. It first redefined its territorial borders in an effort to secure homeland defence. This caused Canada to fuse its economic interests in an open border with the need to support Washington’s project of securing the continent. Next, Bush’s linking of his “war on terror” to the Taliban in Afghanistan caused Canada to revert to Cold War patterns in coordinating its military policies with the Americans to whom it offered practical support. But when Washington engaged in pre-emptive regime change dubiously rationalized by the Bush Doctrine and misleadingly supported by questionable intelligence, the limits to Jean Chrétien’s commitment to bilateral friendship became apparent.
Whereas September 11’s attacks were understood abroad as sabotage requiring transnational cooperation amongst intelligence agencies, the Bush administration quickly constructed them as acts of war requiring not just defence through intelligence but offence through military retribution and interdiction. The Bush administration managed to restore the defence budget to Cold-War levels\(^2\) in order to fund its ballistic missile defense program (BMD) and pursue its war on terror at the same time. In his speech to Congress on September 20, 2001, Bush made it clear that he would not let any allies or international institutions stand in the way of the use of force when American security interests were perceived to be threatened. He also demanded full support from every other country by issuing a blunt ultimatum to world leaders, “Either you’re with us or you’re with the terrorists” (Hillmer et al. 2003: 3). Within a month, he tested the fidelity of his allies by turning the “war on terrorism” into actual war.

i) Afghanistan and the Powell Doctrine

Secretary of State Colin Powell began successful diplomatic efforts to assemble a “coalition of the willing” by promising a clear mission to topple the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and by credibly tying it to Al Qaeda.

In a clear reactivation of Cold-War patterns, Ottawa signed on to the Powell Doctrine, concurring with the international consensus that attacking the Taliban and al-Qaeda was justified. Jean Chrétien committed 750 Canadian soldiers from the Princess Patricia’s Light Infantry Regiment to be deployed around Kandahar as part of a U.S. Army task force and under U.S. command. This decision to go to war soon became embroiled in controversy. Some Canadians were alarmed by the implications of their soldiers fighting for rather than with the Americans. More were shocked to learn that these troops were handing over captured Taliban soldiers.

\(^2\) At US$390 billion in 2001, US defence spending exceeded the combined budgets of the next fourteen largest spenders. See Hirsh (2002). By 2004, this figure ballooned to US$455 billion, surpassing the combined total of the next thirty-two most powerful nations, accounting for 47 per cent of the world total. See Starck (2005).
fighters to their American superiors, who insisted that the Geneva Convention forbidding the use of torture in the treatment of prisoners of war did not apply to them. The dismay generated by this violation of Canada’s treaty obligations was compounded by the loss of five Canadian soldiers killed by American fighter pilots in a “friendly fire” incident, for which President Bush issued an offensively belated apology.

When Canada’s support for the American war in Afghanistan was rewarded with a crippling duty on British Columbia lumber and Prairie wheat, Canadians learned that, no matter how much their country proved itself an unconditional ally -- even at the cost of breaking international law, violating its principles, and losing its soldiers -- such efforts did not produce good will that could yield benefits in other areas of Canada-U.S. relations, as had been anticipated in public by International Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew.

ii) Iraq and the Bush Doctrine

A year after the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration released its National Security Strategy (NSS), which proceeded from the proposition that the “United States possesses unprecedented – and unequalled – strength and influence in the world,” economically, politically, and militarily (White House 2002: 1). The document demonstrated that the unilateralist, Straussean (Atlas 2003), neo-conservative, anti-détente policy network from the old Reagan administration -- Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy-Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Vice-President Dick Cheney, and the arch-hawk Richard Perle -- had won the struggle to define American foreign policy. The moderately multilateralist Powell doctrine, with its preference for deterrence and containment, had been shredded. In a blunt assertion of hard power, the NSS legitimized America’s right to strike pre-emptively in anticipation of a perceived threat to its interests.
Whereas the Bush administration elevated the threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to the top of its security agenda, it became apparent that Canadians did not feel threatened by Iraq. The notion of forced disarmament through pre-emptive regime change that the Bush Doctrine promulgated was at odds with Canadian non-interventionist views of non-proliferation. As the debate over whether to attack Iraq proceeded, it became evident that there were limits to how far Jean Chrétien could be pushed by Washington. Owing to a lack of convincing evidence, the Bush administration had trouble developing rationales for war based either on Iraq’s possession of WMD or on its links with al-Qaeda. It was no more persuasive when shifting the argument to the human rights purpose of liberating the Iraqi people.\(^3\) When the Bush administration announced it would enforce regime change despite Iraq’s voluntary disarmament under UN scrutiny and regardless of the United Nations Security Council’s position, the rift widened with Canada whose foreign policy was still firmly rooted in respect for international organizations and the primacy of international law (Lyon 1989).

As the Pentagon moved its military machine to Iraq’s borders, Jean Chrétien repeatedly stressed that war with Iraq was “not justified” (McCarthy and Koring 2003). His new minister of foreign affairs, Bill Graham, warned that regime change threatened to destroy “the world order as we presently know it,” adding “we do not believe we have a right to invade” (Trickey and Naumetz 2002). Deftly defying Washington’s desire for unquestioning support, Canada reverted to its traditional role of helpful fixer. Canadian diplomats made heroic efforts in partnership with Mexico to bridge a bitter transatlantic divide with a compromise resolution at the UN. Ultimately, Canadian attempts to avert war with Iraq failed, and Jean Chrétien was forced to decide whether to join Bush’s campaign.

\(^3\) Quite unlike the crisis in Kosovo, Iraq was not, at the time, engaged in brutal civil war.
After much muddying of the waters, his decision not to participate in a U.S.-led invasion of Iraq infuriated critics at home and in the U.S. Despite being consistent with Canada’s role in building the post-war international order and its long-standing penchant for multilateralism, Chrétien’s view that Saddam Hussain must be disarmed – but only with UN approval -- was far from coherent and far from universally popular. Pro-war leaders in Canada’s western provinces feared reprisals for not supporting Canada’s most important ally, while staunch opposition to the war in Québec and an upcoming provincial election in that province pulled the Liberals’ foreign policy in the opposite direction (Parkin 2003: 7).

This was a popular decision, particularly as quick military victory turned into a long disaster on the ground for the United States. But Canadians’ smugness about their government’s abstention from the American war was ill founded. Their air force’s participation in the North American Aerospace Command made them junior partners in the space-based command-and-control system that directed the US war effort in the Middle East. Canadian naval units had been dispatched to the Persian Gulf where they constituted an interoperating component of the American fleet patrolling Iraq’s coastal waters. Ambiguity, not say hypocrisy, also characterized the Canadian response to the United States’ continental application of its renewed war doctrine.

iii) North America and the Rumsfeld Doctrine

The US war on terrorism may have increase the distance between the political leadership of United States and Canada, but it accelerated cooperation between Canadian and American military personnel. At NORAD’s (North American Aerospace Defence Command) continental headquarters in Colorado Springs, the Canadian second-in-command had been in charge of North America’s airspace on September 11th. This close intermeshing of the two armed services led to a joint North American Planning Group, which was set up to be responsible for preparing
contingency plans for maritime and land threats, and for military assistance to civilian authorities in emergencies. The opaque nature of negotiating Canada-U.S. military integration and cooperation meant that discussions took place with little controversy and still less public deliberation about the content and consequences of the Pentagon’s new Northern Command. Similar opacity enveloped issues involving the technological feasibility and military rationale for Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD), which was a repackaged version of the Reagan regime’s ill-fated and satirically dubbed Star Wars project to shoot down missiles. Offsetting the Canadian government’s reluctance about accepting its armed forces’ integration within Northcom and the weaponization of space that BMD would entail was the enthusiasm of Canada’s military industry. Already integrated under such institutional arrangements as the Defence Production Sharing Arrangements, it stood to benefit from BMD as it had from building components of the Pentagon’s weapons systems in the Cold War.

The Canadian Response

The internal feuding that divided Canada over Iraq reflected and was followed by a break from three norms that have characterized Ottawa’s political relationship with Washington. The first deviation was seen when provincial premiers, who were concerned that Chrétien was damaging Canada-U.S. relations and that his policy on Iraq would spill over into commercial areas of crucial importance to them, took matters into their own hands (Foot 2003). Led by Ralph Klein and Gordon Campbell from Alberta and B.C., the premiers toyed with the idea of establishing parallel summit relationships of their own. Campbell and Klein actually did travel to Washington in June of 2003 to discuss with Vice President Dick Cheney U.S. tariffs on B.C. lumber and the ban on importing Canadian beef following the discovery of “mad cow” disease in
a Canadian bovine. Despite having been hit with trade sanctions following Canada’s
collection in Afghanistan and despite J.L. Granatstein (2003) insisting “There will be no
favour for Canada from the White House,” the two premiers, the right-wing Alliance Party, and
Canadian big business clung to the belief that unconditional Canadian support for the Bush
administration’s military operations would spill over as goodwill that would help resolve
bilateral trade conflicts.

The second departure from earlier patterns was the abandonment of ‘quiet diplomacy,’
the practice of keeping Canada-U.S. disputes over each other’s policy out of the public eye.
During the debate over Iraq, Jean Chrétien allowed minor incidents to become major irritants in
Washington. After belatedly asking his communication director, Françoise Ducros, to resign for
referring to President Bush as a “moron,” Chrétien failed to discipline MP Carolyn Parrish’s
comment, “damn Americans… I hate the bastards.” He let his minister of natural resources Herb
Dhaliwal’s questioning of Bush’s leadership as a statesman go unrebuked while upbraiding
Ralph Klein for publicly backing U.S. action (Brean and Alberts 2003). These brouhahas made
the front pages throughout Canada and the United States and registered in the White House.

Even Chrétien appeared to be practising public diplomacy when he questioned the U.S.
government’s analysis of terrorism by linking the attacks to “root causes” of poverty and the
“arrogance” of the West (Blatchford 2003). As if to emphasize he was in no way George Bush’s
poodle, Chrétien went out of his way, before attending his final G7/G8 Summit at Evian in
France, to criticize the United States government for its budgetary deficit (McCarthy and Laghi
Rice, hinted strongly that there would be serious consequences for Canada’s refusal to support
the U.S. in Iraq (Brean and Alberts 2003; Appleby 2003).
In threatening reprisals, the Bush administration itself explicitly broke a third unwritten law in Canada-U.S. relations, the practice of non-linkage. Because of Bush’s with-us-or-against-us position, many in Canada took Cellucci’s “disappointment” with Canada as a thinly veiled threat to impose costs on Canadian exporters. Yet, despite doomsday forecasts made by the Canadian right who warned that “there will be no favours for Canada from Washington or anywhere its reach extends” (Granatstein 2003) and that there would be a “serious economic fallout,” the only visible riposte was the cancellation of President Bush’s first official visit to Canada scheduled in May 2003. As the bilateral summit’s agenda was about securing U.S. guarantees for Canadian energy supplies, some Canadians saw the snub as more caritas than curse (McQuaig 2003).

Other punishment was said to include the difficulty that the prime minister experienced in getting phone time with Bush to resolve the U.S. embargo on Canadian beef exports, although Ottawa’s ambassador to Washington reported having encountered no difficulty in pressing the Canadian government’s case. 4 J.L. Granatstein (2003) argued that, having upset the Bush administration over Iraq, Canada could no longer count on the White House to temper the excesses of Congress. Unremarked, the supraconstitutional norms enshrined in both NAFTA and WTO trade rules (Clarkson 2002) – two pillars of Chrétien’s economic legacy (Clarkson and Lachapelle 2004) – provided Canada with some protection against finger twisting by an unhappy hegemon wanting to crimp Canada’s diplomatic autonomy through trade retaliation.

Despite doomsday forecasts from the Canadian right that Canada would be punished for its opposition to the war with Iraq, no tangible punishment was ever received. Indeed, only a few weeks after his rebuke, the U.S. ambassador to Canada confirmed that Canada-U.S. relations were essentially “back to normal” (Cattaneo, 2003), while his Canadian counterpart, Michael

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4 Michael Kergin, University of Toronto, September 27, 2005.
Kergin, publicly stated his view that Canada-U.S. disputes concerning mad cow disease and Softwood lumber are unrelated to Canada’s refusal to sign on to the war in Iraq and missile defence (Kergin, 2005). These views suggest that the temperature of Ottawa-Washington’s diplomatic relations were not an accurate gauge of the actual Canada-US relationship. For his part, Chrétien toyed with the idea of using energy exports as leverage in the dispute over softwood lumber. Ultimately, he never did link energy to lumber, presumably because, in the words of a former Canadian Ambassador to Washington, the United States “could easily outlink Canada” (Gotlieb 2003: 25).

In the context of conflictual relations between the two capitals, the Canadian prime minister’s efforts at rapprochement were negligible. The gulf between Canadian and American policy paradigms was given fiscal support in the 2003 federal budget, which confirmed that Chrétien’s spending priorities leaned more towards socio-economic than military objectives (Government of Canada 2003). He pushed ahead with plans to decriminalize the possession of small amounts of marijuana despite repeated warnings of reprisals at the border. He also signaled the federal government would not try to overturn an Ontario court’s ruling that sanctioned the marriage of same-sex couples, a development that was deeply offensive to social conservatives in Washington, notably the chief justice of the Supreme Court and the president himself.

Militarily, Chrétien astutely deflected immediate US pressures for troops to help secure and rebuild Iraq following hostilities there. In its February 2003 decision to deploy 1,200 troops as peace builders in Afghanistan, Ottawa sought a European partner to make sure that Canadian soldiers in the International Security Assistance Force would not be in Kabul under U.S. command. On the medium-term issues involving integration in continental and space defence,
the government tried to remain non-committal toward the American proposals and actions. Ottawa resisted the idea of folding NORAD into Northern Command, which would integrate all Canadian forces under a single structure with the U.S. army, navy, marines, and air force. This defence mega-structure would be responsible for the territory stretching from the North Pole to Guatemala and parts of the Caribbean including Cuba. Ottawa continued to show discomfort with the idea of responding by military means to a terrorism which it defined as essentially a non-military threat.

Canada also resisted giving its full support for BMD, on the grounds of its principled opposition to the weaponization of space. But while Ottawa officially opposed any measure that would render the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty obsolete and raise the spectre of a renewed arms race, the joint forces of economic integration and Canadian-American cooperation in the defence of the continent ultimately led Ottawa to move toward endorsing both proposals. While he shelved the decision on missile defence on May 8, 2003 (Leblanc and McCarthy 2003), within a matter of weeks, Chrétien gave the signal to go ahead with talks to discuss Canada’s “potential” participation (Sallot 2003).

Paul Martin took over the reins of government in December 2003 as if the Leader of the Opposition, having long criticized the Chrétien government’s excessively anti-American stance, had finally won power. He appointed as defence minister David Pratt, a Liberal who was overtly committed to Canadian support for BMD. He regrouped the Canadian armed forces in a “Canada Command” that mirrored the Pentagon’s Northern Command and restructured the government’s security bureaucracy to mirror the US Department of Homeland Defense. He reorganized his cabinet structure to give priority to his personal management of Canadian-American relations. He strengthened the political capacity of Canada’s US embassy. He visited the White House in
order to express a new cordiality for the US president, who was receptive to this overture, relieved that Chrétien had departed, and friendly.

Two years later, it was as if Martin had taken his CanAm cues from his predecessor. He had rebuffed President Bush’s request that Canada’s support United States’ Ballistic Missile Defense program. He had gone out of his way during the 2004 election campaign to criticize US social programs. He had endorsed legislation to permit same-sex marriage and decriminalize the possession of marijuana – two measures deeply offensive to the Republican right.

With the United States government refusing to comply with the NAFTA-based arbitral decisions on the two countries’ long-standing dispute over US softwood lumber imports from Canada, Martin has even become more confrontational than Chrétien.

**What To Do?**

One year into his second term, George Bush’s “transformational diplomacy” has come under considerable pressure. Its rhetoric still a perverse mix of missionary Wilsonianism and aggressive manicheism, the US government remains committed to securing global military dominance. Nevertheless, George Bush is trying to withdraw from an Iraq now widely seen throughout the United States to have been a disaster in statesmanship. His emissary, John Bolton, has managed to hamstring United Nations reform, but the president had to acknowledge at the Gleneagles Summit the reality of global warming, its human causation, and the need for multilateral action to contain it. American troops remain engaged in fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, but reconstruction in this country has been taken over by NATO. Even the US war on terror is widely acknowledged to have aggravated rather than mitigated the threat of non-state actors to the United States. In short, the Bush administration’s ideologically driven foreign
policy has failed successfully to deploy its massive hard power while managing to undermine its precious soft power.

Canada has played an ambivalent role in these five years, both resisting part of the Bush foreign policy in words while supporting it in deeds. In these circumstances, it would appear that Canada should become clearer about resisting US empire (the forcible imposition of American leadership) while participating in US hegemony (the consensual working out of a US-led economic and multilateral order). Where the United States persists in world-destabilizing policies such as extending its nuclear arsenal, Canada must, in Robert McNamara’s words, “go around” it, collaborating with those who share a deep concern about the threat to global survival of nuclear proliferation. When the United States becomes delinquent, not complying with norms it has itself insisted on – as with NAFTA’s Chapter 19 dispute settlement system’s extraordinary challenge committee -- Canada must expend its own power resources, whether alone or in collaboration with Mexico, in order to bring the Bush counterrevolution to an end and encourage the United States to return to the more productive practice of liberal internationalism.

Advice is easy to give but difficult to implement. Even retaliating against the United States on softwood lumber is difficult for Canada, because oil-rich Alberta is unwilling to accept the idea of using limits on petroleum exports as a bargaining counter in the larger Canadian-American relationship.

A greater problem for Canadians when contemplating how to respond to the Bush administration’s delinquency in its declining years is how to comprehend their own complicity as an ecological and economic threat to global survival. Canada’s energy wastefulness is entrenched in business and citizen behaviour alike. Its stinginess towards Third World poverty is
deeply rooted. While its political rhetoric remains noble, it is in a poor moral position to combat the rogue state next door.
References


