Lilliputians and Gulliver: Security With or Against the United States?

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Now that George W. Bush has been reelected thanks to the fervent support of fundamentalists, the Roman Catholic hierarchy, middle America, and the once Dixiecrat south; now that radical Republican control has been tightened in both the Senate and the House of Representatives; now that the Supreme Court is poised to be rejuvenated with constitutionality correct judges; now that Bush intimates will run both the National Security Council and the Department of State: we can envisage what kind of security challenges to Canada will have to deal with for the next four years.

Given that George Bush's understanding of the world was formed by his tutor Condoleeza Rice, American foreign policy under her watch can be expected to remain locked in its messianic, manicheistic, and resolute fixation on imposing US-defined freedom on the Arab world. Even if it manages to withdraw its troops from Baghdad and claim its mission finally to be accomplished, Washington will be hard pressed to regain the legitimacy around the world on which its recent and unprecedentedly successful hegemony depended. The global consensus which supported that universalization of American neoconservative norms -- most triumphantly in the World Trade Organization (WTO, 1995) – has been broken by the application in the Middle East of the Bush doctrine's proclamation of the United States' right to determine régime change preemptively.

With Bush at her back, Secretary of State Rice can be expected to be tough when pressing other countries for support. But her association with the disinformation, faulty analysis, and unilateralism which precipitated the present disaster will not afford her that benefit-of-the-doubt honeymoon which John Kerry could have expected had he now been setting out to generate multilateral support for the pacification of Iraq and the resolution of the hostilities in Palestine. The US as *hegemon*[1] may have morphed into the "*new American Empire*," but the former's impressive success contrasts with the latter's shocking failure, its prize in Mesopotamia reduced to rubble and blood in the name of a democratic revolution that has no demos.

With Donald Rumsfeld still in control of the Pentagon, the United States will push ahead as fast as it can manage with "National Missile Defense", the next stage of its program militarily

[1] For these purposes I understand a "hegemon" as the dominant leader of a system it has constructed with the support of its other members whose consensus and participation is required to sustain this régime. In an "empire" the dominant leader exercises control through its military and/or economic power, without necessarily enjoying the consent of those within its imperium.

to affirm its imperial bona fides by dominating the stratosphere. Although "security" will remain a mantra within the Beltway, the President's determination to deepen tax cuts for the rich and privatize Social Security accounts for the rest will leave him little cash with which to implement the extremely costly measures required to achieve the "homeland's" invulnerability to terrorist attacks that current discourse demands. As Prime Minister Paul Martin prepares to welcome the American president to Ottawa, how he handles his discussion of security matters with his US counterpart will be his second greatest challenge as host after handling his political security problem otherwise known as Carolyn Parrish, MP.

We need to review the background to Canada's bilateral and multilateral security problems before passing briefly to look at the key issues on the present agenda and its flash points that Martin, fronts.

Background

Ever since the first European settlement, Canadians have had to strive for peace, order, and good government in the shadow of an economically nourishing, politically controlling imperial power whose security needs they have had to accommodate in order to receive its military protection.

In the nineteenth century, London's military strategy for British North America amounted to defending the colonies, later the Dominion of Canada, from the constantly looming possibility of an American invasion. By the 1930s, when the United States had displaced the United Kingdom as its effective centre of political and economic gravity, Ottawa's strategic position experienced a sea change. In return for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's assurance that Washington would not "stand idly by" if his northern neighbour were attacked by enemy forces, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King realized he had to promise that Canada would not allow enemy troops to use its territory to attack the United States.

During World War II, when they agreed on the danger coming from Germany and Japan, the two countries formally committed themselves to adopting a continental approach (through the Permanent Joint Board of Defence) to their regional strategic planning against a possible invasion of their own soil and to integrating their military-industrial capacity for pursuing hostilities in Europe and Asia.

By the time of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, nuclear weapons had been integrated in intercontinental missiles and the United States had become the liberal-capitalist countries' champion against an expanding socialist bloc. During this stand-off, Canada was the buffer zone, the principal route over which Soviet and American weapons would be directed and, possibly, shot down. In this situation, security policy north of the 49th parallel was expressed by the doctrine of "Defence against Help" – which maintained that, if Canadians did not defend themselves against the Soviet threat to the satisfaction of the Americans, the Pentagon would defend them anyway, but according to its own lights. Paradoxically, in order to have something they could claim was an autonomous defence capacity, Canadians had to accept the strategic doctrines and adopt the military technology of the formidable US war machine. Thus security for Canadians has a double edge: on the one hand it addresses the external enemy they share with their American neighbour; on the other, it involves protecting themselves against the consequences of what it may consider inadequate about these policies.

Canada has dealt with this latent security risk – control, if not take over, by Washington – by both bilateral and multilateral means.

- Bilaterally, the most notable institution in what one could call the country's "external constitution" – that is, the transnational structures in which its system participates – is the North American Air Defence Command (NORAD, 1957), a joint operation in which Canada's's air forces were integrated under the US Strategic Air Command. Symbolically, a Canadian officer was made second-in-command, Though noone doubted that the Pentagon remained in absolute control, participation in NORAD gave the Canadian military some involvement in US military planning and access to some US intelligence.
- Multilaterally, Ottawa tried to mitigate the deep asymmetry of this military relationship with Washington by taking an active part in the deliberations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, 1948) where it could voice such doubts about American strategic thinking as the doctrine of nuclear first strike. In other fora such as the annual Economic Summit, the two countries' formal equality permitted some debate about the Americans' military posture. A famous example of this occurred at the 1982 Summit in Williamsburg when Pierre Trudeau provoked a heated argument with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and President Ronald Reagan about what he considered Great Britain and the United States' dangerously hawkish approach to Soviet relations.

Thus for the last five decades of the twentieth century, the "constitutionalization" of Canada's military orientation was more externally than internally determined. Its norms were frankly to support the US strategic vision, whatever that might be. Its transnational institutions legitimated US dominance through a largely symbolic Canadian participation that was supplemented by membership in other, multilateral institutions. Its administration remained binational, and conflict resolution stayed in the gray zone of inter-governmental relations where muscle and intelligence vie for mastery.

Key Issues

Although the peace dividend resulting from the end of the Cold War allowed for a weakening of this continental military constitution, a decline in Canadian defense capabilities, and a distancing from Washington's strategic thinking, the US catastrophe of September 11, 2001 forced Ottawa to confront a profound dilemma. If it was to keep the Canadian-American economic border open to the trade, investment, and labour flows necessary to sustain the continental economy constitutionalized by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA, 1994), it had to dust off the "Defence against Help" doctrine in order to assure Uncle Sam that terrorists could not use Canada as a base from which to mount another attack on the United States.

Although global terrorism is generally understood as a threat from non-state actors, the administration of George W. Bush constructed its war on terror less as a matter for counter intelligence than as a conventional military attack on two states which it identified as hosts to terrorists, Afghanistan and Iraq. As part of its remilitarization, the US administration also reorganized its territorial defences into a new Northern Command and pushed ahead with the Pentagon's long-gestating plans to provide for land- and then space-based National Missile Defence (NMD).

Invited to join both initiatives, Canada faces a dilemma. To endorse NMD is to break with its long-standing opposition to the weaponization of space and to accept a military doctrine in which few place much credit. But to reject participation in this new American high-tech Maginot Line would entail losing its chair at the NORAD table and so what little access it has to

the Pentagon's planning processes. For, if Canada does not embrace NMD, the Pentagon will remove operational control of missile defence from NORAD, thus dooming Canadians to the role of dishonourably discharged cadets.

The obvious alternative is for Canada to spend its relatively small military resources not as a supplement, symbolically supporting the space arm of the "new American Empire" but as a complement to the US military machine in the form of highly trained and well equipped peacekeepers and peace makers who could work in the post-hostilities disaster areas which the United States so often leaves behind it. Investing their defence dollars in constructive, multilateral action could make Canadians feel they were playing a more legitimate role in trying to achieve peace in and increasingly troubled world.

Potential Flash-points

The Canadian security debate remains framed in theory by the unresolvable argument between Realists who argue that Canada should look after its continental economic interests, which means currying favour in Washington, and Internationalists who fear the consequences of America's counterproductive behaviour and believe that Canada should play a balancing role overseas, offsetting Washington's worst mistakes. This polarization in Canada sets the business community, particularly the Canadian Council of Chief Executives -- which represents the big branch plants of American corporations and the big Canadian companies with investments in the United States -- against the non-governmental organizations, intellectuals, and concerned citizens who consider that Washington's present course increases human <u>in</u>security in the world and so believe Canada should proceed along a more prudent course.

The costs of adopting the Realpolitik position is the damage it would do to Canadians' identity, but the benefits might be a more secure economic relationship, engendering even higher levels of continental integration. The costs of proclaiming an Internationalist stance might be some nervousness at the Canada-U. S. border, but the benefits could be felt in Canadians' sense of self respect both at home and abroad.

Recommendations

The problem with giving Paul Martin advice is that he will accept it – as he does the advice he receives from everyone else. Compulsively trying to be all things to all people, he will doubtless do what he can to mollify the White House while taking every chance he gets to support multilateralist ventures. When it comes to the military dossier, however, he has three big problems. First, his vulnerability in Parliament makes him unable to deliver to the Pentagon the continentalist military policy that his original appointment of David Pratt as Minister of National Defence suggested was his first choice when he became prime minister one year ago.

Second, his pockets are too shallow. He will have trouble signing onto NMD, endorsing NORAD-plus, and integrating his forces within Northern Command while at the same time persuading the world and his electors that Canada has an independent military role to play in failed states.

Third, he has no grounds for expecting that there will be any economic payoff for military Bushification. Despite the former governor of Texas's knowledge of and friendship with Vicente Fox, Mexico has languished along with the rest of Latin America as the Administration's neglected child. With even less interest in Canada, the Bush team cannot be

expected to lavish rewards on what after all is still a "liberal" government in Ottawa.

As long as an ideologically extreme neoconservative administration runs Washington, Canada will continue to face a difficult military choice. It can accept the logic of belonging within the perimeter of a Fortress America and return to the comfortable dependence of its Cold-War continental constitution. But it could choose the alternative of pursuing its post-terrorist involvement in a globally constituted network of non-hegemonic states trying to establish human security around the world. A multilateral approach which incorporated US concerns about terrorism within a primarily non-military paradigm would continue to be as hard a sell in a second Bush administration as it was in the first.

Dealing with a Kerry administration might have given Ottawa greater room for manoeuvre, particularly in making the case that a serious defence against Islamic terrorism requires an information-technology based, international cooperation at the level of intelligence services, immigration officers, and police work, rather than the unilateral installation of a Star-Wars technology aimed at countering a negligible military risk. Four years is too long a period for Canadians to hold their breath and wish things were not as they are. They have no grounds for moral superiority, since they are already involved as a key component of the new Empire, providing it both significant resources and a substantial market which bolsters its economic heft.

Nevertheless, they still can choose. The easiest option, of course, is to go with the flow and support what Washington will in any case continue to do, while minimizing the size of Ottawa's bill. Far more demanding would be to articulate a comprehensive, well-reasoned strategy that would join other countries in constraining a dangerously weakened United States from pursuing a course that could do more harm to the world than good. It would be demanding because it is much more difficult to re-create conditions for social stability and effective governance than it is to blow up armed enemies and interrogate prisoners. It would be demanding because Washington's scorns such girly approaches to world order. But it will not happen unless like-minded, non-imperial Lilliputians join forces to constrain the imperial Gulliver.