Canadian Foreign Policy Journal
. 18, . 1, 2012, 9 25

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Keywords: security; US-Canada; polarity; borders; unilateralism; multilateralism

Much has been written about "unipolarity", the systemic ordering principle that serves as the conceptual and theoretical focus of so many of the articles in this special theme issue, my own included. In what follows, that ordering principle will be linked to contemporary discussions regarding homeland security, especially as the latter appertains to the management of the Canada–United States border. Now, for many people, the topic of unipolarity can be a "hot-button" issue, and the next two sections will comment upon the controversy attending this topic. Subsequent to that commentary, the article will suggest the manner in which international systemic "structure" comes to bear upon the management of the Canada–United States border. Although the focus of the analysis will largely be on America's northern border, there will also be some discussion of management of its border to the south, with Mexico.

What's in a word? Geostrategic U and non-U[1]

In the mid-1950s, English writer Nancy Mitford gave wide circulation to a linguistic coin that had only a short while earlier been minted by a British linguist named Alan S.C. Ross, who argued that in the United Kingdom clear class distinctions could best, perhaps only, be identified by differences in the way the classes used the English language – differences that Ross dichotomized (and Mitford popularized) as "U" for upper-class usages and "non-U" for non-upper-class usages (Ross 1954; Mitford 1956). With apologies to the two Britons, their categories will be appropriated with the objective of making a point about the controversy that has swirled (and indeed continues to swirl) around our organizing concept, unipolarity.

That controversy was touched off by the phenomenon of "systemic change",[2] pursuant to the collapse of the Soviet Union. It flared over a matter of appropriateness: should we be encouraged (some held, allowed) to characterize the new era as one whose dominant structural feature was

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ISSN 1192-6422 print/ISSN 2157-0817 online

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2012.674383
http://www.tandfonline.com

unipolarity? In this debate, the geopolitical enthusiasts of U and non-U split over both how we should comprehend the new structural arrangement, and what it implied for the foreign policy of the United States. For many in the U fold, what was on offer was not simply unipolarity, but also the prospect of a new American "unilateralism" in foreign policy. For their non-U counterparts, the new era's ominous prospects needed to be combated by stressing the virtues of "multipolarity", which was often (and sloppily) associated with another non-U term, "multilateralism". Not surprisingly, since few could be found (outside of the United States, at least) to express favorable views on unilateralism in foreign policy, the U category in general took on a bad odor, with that foreign-policy dispensation becoming dependent upon, or so it was said, the structural ordering principle. Thus it seemed to follow that if one wanted multilateralism, one must plump for multipolarity. Hence the controversy over how we should label the international systemic structure following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Somehow, if you reckoned that the system could be conceptualized as "unipolar", you came to be regarded as acquiescing in (or possibly even celebrating) the misuse of American power, not to say endorsing a "triumphalism" bound to result in "empire" and its handmaiden, unilateralism.

In so many ways, the debate was an artificial one, fuelled by paired sets of category error, discussed later in this article. After all, the international systemic structure that had been in place between 1945 and 1991, so easily styled back then as a "bipolar" on, had engendered few quantitative quibbles, in the sense that while analysts of IR might have differed regarding the consequences of bipolarity, few bothered to challenge the arithmetic: after 1945 there were two, and only two, superpowers. But once the events associated with the Soviet implosion ran their course, a surprising divergence appeared over the arithmetic, with many not wishing to acknowledge that $2 - 1 = 1$. Where there had once been two superpowers, the collapse of one should have led to the deduction that only one superpower remained, and that the system had to be regarded, structurally and by definition, as a unipolar one. But because of the above-mentioned conflation of two unrelated categories into geostrategic U, the equally unrelated properties lumped together into geostrategic non-U loomed as a more appealing vision of international politics, to those who insisted on doing the lumping.

Although it is becoming commonplace to assert that the events of 9/11 changed fundamentally the "path" along which international security policies would henceforth be conducted by the United States and its allies, it was really the events of a decade or so earlier, commencing with the unraveling of the Soviet Union in late December 1991, that would be of greater structural importance for our purposes here. Throughout the 1990s, a period of time some recall nostalgically as being the "post-Cold War era", tension was building over the relative virtues of geostrategic U and non-U. The malaise was widespread, touching the very heart of America's network of allies, NATO. It reflected a structural anxiety within the international system. While it probably had no single identifiable source in terms of actual policies adopted by the United States, the anxiety spawned myriad declarations, notions, and even theories about the contemporary global balance of power, or lack thereof. In a word, even before the presidency of George W. Bush, America was being regarded by many, friend and foe alike, as "hegemonic". And hegemony, said many (though by no means all) analysts and policy-makers, was inconsistent with, and fundamentally corrosive of, the norms and institutions associated with post-Second World War geostrategic non-U, especially if by the latter one evoked "multilateralism". As William Pfaff put it more than a decade ago, in respect of an otherwise obscure dispute over the use of depleted-uranium ordnance during the recently concluded Kosovo war, the:

> . . . emotional charge of the controversy reflects a certain European anti-Americanism. . . The United States is unwilling to yield the economic and commercial advantages that can be drawn from its political-military preponderance. The Europeans resent that advantage and have an interest in overcoming or reversing it. (Pfaff 2001, p. 6)

Those Europeans (and others) who thought this way had a point. That non-U dispensation

most serious challenge to America was going to issue, improbable as it might seem today, from the very heart of the transatlantic alliance, and would do so because of French instigation; this is what so worried Samuel Huntington, for instance, as the 1990s were drawing to a close (Huntington 1999). We now realize how overstated those concerns were, for not only has there been no "counter-hegemonic balancing" of America stemming from Europe, but the very weight of the latter in the international system has been so diminished that even if "Europe" wanted to, it would be very incapable of initiating a return to multipolarity.

More interestingly, and again with the French in mind, one might ask why anyone in that country should have been cheerleading a return to multipolarity. After all, if any structural alternative to unipolarity could be said to have showered benefits upon France it was rather more bipolarity than multipolarity that qualified as a "benefactor". It is apparent from the historical record that France did not derive net benefit from its centuries'-long experience with multipolarity. To be sure, things started promisingly enough for it; within a decade of the ending of the Thirty Years' War in 1648, which effectively ushered in the international (Westphalian) order we know today, France had supplanted Spain as the world's ranking power. But as time went on during that long multipolar era stretching from the Peace of Westphalia to the Second World War, things went downhill for France, with decline being glimpsed as early as its naval defeat by the British and Dutch at La Hogue, in 1692 (Thompson 1992; Luard 1992).

A series of global contests in the eighteenth century would leave Britain as the dominant world power by 1763, though France continued to be the preeminent land power in Europe (Dorn 1940). As bad as the eighteenth century was for France, the nineteenth would be worse, for following a short-lived uptick in its status in 1805, the rot once more set in, symbolized early in the century by Waterloo and later in the century by Sedan. But this was nothing as compared with the curse multipolarity would lay on France in the twentieth century, culminating in June 1940 (Adamthwaite 1995; Wolfers 1966). So depressing had that secular experience been that by the midpoint of the twentieth century a "rational" analyst could have been forgiven for drawing the conclusion that this country in particular should never again wish to be so unfortunate as to live in a multipolar world.

In contrast, the four decades of bipolarity were beneficial ones for France, even though this does not receive the attention it should from that country's analysts and policy-makers, who seem taken with the myth of "Yalta", which holds that France was betrayed and diminished by the division of Europe into a Soviet sphere of influence and an American one back in February 1945.[7] As for the current structure of international power, whatever else might be claimed about the impact of the Soviet Union's demise upon French status and interests, it is hardehsc200m6(stap-219.7(it)5)aeen

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et al. 2002). Prior to that period, eschewing the "entanglements" of multilateralism became the closest thing to an iron law of American diplomatic wisdom as it is possible to imagine.

Indeed, to those who want to believe that multipolarity must rein in America's unilateralist instincts, the diplomatic record of the interwar period is particularly sobering. For American policies during those two decades demonstrated not only that unilateralism in its most extreme form of "isolationism" could flourish during a period of multipolarity, but that unilateralism might itself have been a required response

the summer of 1941, movie audiences in North America were being treated to a stirring depiction of what was billed as the most remarkable frontier in the world – and perhaps one of the most remarkable ever to have existed in the history of the world, the famous (if unfortunately misnamed)[8] 49th parallel separating so peacefully and gently two cognate peoples, the Canadians and the Americans.

In the American market, the film was released under the title *The invaders*, in reference to a plot featuring the efforts of surviving crewmembers of a Nazi U-boat sunk in Hudson Bay to make their way south to a still-neutral America, and from there back into combat. But in the United Kingdom and Canada, the film was called *The 49th parallel*, and its prologue, narrated by Vincent Massey, Canada's high commissioner in London, eloquently summed up the exceptional nature of the border between the North American neighbors:

> I see a long, straight line athwart a continent.
> No chain of forts, or deep flowing river, or mountain range,
> but a line drawn by men upon a map, nearly a century ago,
> accepted with a handshake, and kept ever since.
> A boundary which divides two nations, yet marks their friendly meeting ground.
> The 49th parallel: the only undefended frontier in the world.

The line whose praises were being sung by the Canadian diplomat hardly seemed a border at all, certainly not when contrasted with the contemporary version of the Canada–United States boundary – or the potential future version, if one can take seriously declarations of officials such as Janet Napolitano, who heads America's Department of Homeland Security, and who in a speech in Washington in late March 2009 called for a "real" border to be constructed between the United States and its two continental neighbors, Canada and Mexico (Ibbitson 2009; Gotlieb 2009). Instead of today's rigidifying symbol of distrust, the border eulogized in the film was more like a connecting tissue between two like-minded peoples, facilitating rather than hindering easy passage through their "friendly meeting ground".

What has changed, and in particular how can we say that the new reality is related to this special issue's *problématique*, of unipolarity? To begin with, it is not accurate to imagine that the Canada–United States border was never a "real" border, if by that term we mean a boundary possessed of geopolitical significance – i.e., not simply that "mere tariff" of Frank Scott's imagining. "Real," or geopolitical, borders are hardly a new phenomenon in North America, not even in the northernmost reaches of the continent. Instead, as between today's Canada and United States, a geopolitical, if indeterminate, border had existed that was nearly as old as the Europeans' presence on the continent itself, as demonstrated by the waging between 1689 and 1763 of four intercolonial wars along and across it, pitting English against French (each side backed by its aboriginal allies).[9] Threat assessment and policy responses thereto do not get any more differentiated than when on either side of a border, no matter how ambiguous its contours, there is a widespread sense that the "enemy" is the neighbor, and the neighbor, the enemy – a sense that reflected the North American status quo for close to a century, with French and English battling for supremacy over the continent during most of the time from the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth.

Nor did America's winning its independence change things much, at least not at the outset. There was another war, this time pitting it against Britain (and Canada) between 1812 and 1814 (Taylor 2011), as well as a few infamous cross-border raids during mid-century, first on the part of Confederate bank robbers striking northern Vermont from Québec during the American Civil War, and shortly thereafter by United States-based Irish radicals (the "Fenians") utilizing American soil as a launching pad from which they hoped to seize Canada, holding it hostage until such

time as the British would be prepared to grant Ireland its independence (Neidhardt 1975). Apart from adding to a preexisting store of Anglo-American ill-will that had been amply replenished by tensions related to the Civil War (Foreman 2010; W.D. Jones 1974; Bourne 1961; H. Jones 1992; Jenkins 1974), something else came of these mid-century cross-border incursions, as the Fenians willy-nilly helped to promote the unification of most of Britain's remaining North American colonies, starting in 1867 (Jenkins 1969). And the large Irish-American ethnic diaspora would try its best by "lobbying", then and later, to keep Washington and London (and by extension, Ottawa) from developing closer strategic relations – an endeavor in which they were able, by the early years of the twentieth century, to count upon the support of America's even larger German diaspora (App 1967; Child 1939; Haglund and McNeil-Hay 2011).

As the twentieth century progressed, much of the earlier geopolitical significance of the Canada–United States border would dissipate, but it would never vanish completely, "The

and infrastructure as tangible, material entities, not simply as carriers or expressions of ideals and values. By extension, an agenda dominated by concerns about physical security must be one replete with suggestions for deterring and defending against the use of violence against one's own territory and all contained therein, and a logical – albeit not necessarily the most logical – place at which to mount the defense is a country's international frontiers. Either variant of security concern, societal or physical, can and does give rise to a rather sweeping panoply of perceived threats, but it is important to make the distinction, if we are going to understand how and why the management of America's northern border differs from that of its southern border.

The crux of the societal security challenge of today is to be found in the nightmare scenario of the nativists – to wit, of the United States becoming, in effect, the Disunited States, and doing so as a result of the replacement of a unifying assimilationist ethic by a divisive multiculturalist one. This vision has been adumbrated in fairly recent statements about the impact of ethnic politics upon America's future. In this fissiparous perspective, shared inter alios by the late Samuel Huntington and the very extant Patrick Buchanan, it is the country's large and growing Mexican diaspora that proves particularly troublesome (Huntington 2004). Whatever the basis of the concern about America's future ability to assimilate immigrants, it bears emphasizing

period since 9/11 must fundamentally be understood as a preemptive measure not so much against terrorists as against the United States – and he is far from the only analyst to have made the claim that Canada acts against terrorism largely if not entirely because it fears the wrath of its powerful neighbor if it fails "to do so"?. Canada's own values, and its own political interests, are almost beside the point; what counts is that Ottawa do what is necessary to avoid the danger of severe American reprisals against it. As Lennox declares, Canada:

> . . . was compelled to take on the new security state form as defined and specified by its superordinate partner, the United States. Not mimicking the American response to the new transnational security threat in this way jeopardized Canada's economic and sovereign survival. (Lennox 2007, p. 1019; see also Lennox 2009)

Without wishing to trivialize the very real problems associated with Islamists' attacks on the United States from a Canadian base, we would do well to ask whether the concerns of a decade ago remain dominant today. In other words, is it possible to overstate the peril, and if so, might there be any way to connect unipolarity to today's discussion, in a second sense? To say again, unipolarity can certainly be implicated in the onset stage of the challenge, and therefore can be said to have generated the changes in border management discussed above. But can we also invoke unipolarity as a means of resolving the problem? The conclusion will revisit that second question, about resolution; for the moment, let us take a closer look at the contemporary "dilemma" (if that is what it is) of homeland security.

A decade ago, American security anxieties were focused much more on the United States northern border, with Canada, than upon its southern border, with Mexico, and those anxieties were primarily about physical security. This is because American officials were giving serious consideration to the implications for United States security of Canada's Islamic diaspora. Canadian officials in the immediate wake of 9/11 expended no little effort trying to debunk the rumor that some of the attackers had infiltrated the United States from Canada, and though this effort was rewarded with much success, it was not total success, for there still exists in the United States, more than a decade after 9/11, a group of diehards who believe Canada must, willy-nilly, have played a part in the catastrophic events of the day. The group probably is not as large as the number of Americans (the "birthers") who suspect their own president is not an American by birth, but it is hardly a negligible quantity. On the Canadian side, there are equally those who

simplifying the job of slipping into Canada, and once there, to avoid either detection or deportation.

Added to the hypothetico-deductive case for anxiety was a widely publicized empirical reality, the saga of the so-called "Millennium bomber", Ahmed Ressam, whose own New Year's eve plans for 2000 called for the detonation of a powerful explosive at the Los Angeles airport. He never did get to wreak this havoc, as he was apprehended by the INS on 14 December 1999 trying to enter the state of Washington from the province of British Columbia, by ferry from Vancouver Island – with materials to make a bomb hidden in the trunk of his rented car. On the assumption that Canadian and American intelligence had not been trailing him all along, it was a very close call. Almost as disturbing as the mayhem he was intending to unleash were the circumstances surrounding his presence in North America. Details came out during Ressam's trial in the spring of 2000, and were recounted in a very hard-hitting documentary produced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, called "Trail of a Terrorist", which was aired both in Canada and the United States in the late summer and early autumn of 2001. To put it mildly, the details were alarming, and revealed a shockingly easy manner in which North American security could be breached.

But a great deal has changed in the decade since Ressam was tried and convicted, and today a different aspect of the Islamist threat has been occupying minds on both sides of the Canada–United States border, the phenomenon of "homegrown" terrorism. It is not that the older fear of terrorists slipping into North America via Canada and then crossing the border to strike at the United States has disappeared; to the contrary, as an example of how persistent the suspicion of Canadian laxity can be, American security officials on the eve of Barack Obama's inauguration in January 2009 were alarmed about reports (later proved baseless) that "a group of Somali extremists was. . . coming across the border from Canada to detonate explosives as the new president took the oath of office" (Baker 2010). It is rather that the older fear has been eclipsed by the prospect that Islamists born and raised in North America might choose to perpetrate terrorist attacks on their native soil.

Such was the case in the autumn of 2009 when a United States Army psychiatrist, Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, a Virginia-born Muslim, went on a murderous shooting spree at Fort Hood, Texas, killing a dozen of his army comrades and wounding another 30 – and this, apparently, because he dreaded being deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, where he might have to be involved, if only in a support capacity, in combat against fellow Muslims (McFadden 2009). The following month, the arrest in Pakistan of five Islamic-Americans suspected of having gone to that country "seeking jihad" against American forces in Afghanistan, caused many in the United States to begin to question what had hitherto been a widespread assumption – namely that compared with Europe's Islamic diaspora, America's was too well-assimilated to serve as any breeding ground for radicalization.[10] Those two incidents, occurring so closely together, brought about a re-examination of the "notion that the United States has some immunity against homegrown terrorists" (Shane 2009). This re-examination would continue subsequent to the failed Times Square bombing in May 2010, and carries on today, as evidenced by the congressional hearings launched in March 2011 by the chairman of the house committee on homeland security, Rep. Peter King, into the mooted radicalization of America's Islamic community (Shane 2011).

Canada, as well, has had its experience with "homegrowns", albeit not on the same bloody scale as the United States. The most notorious such episode was the foiled bid, during the summer of 2006, to detonate bombs in the downtown core of the country's largest city, Toronto, as well as at an undisclosed Canadian Forces base located along the Highway 401 corridor, the major east–west axis in the southern part of Ontario (Freeze 2009). The scheme included the detonation by cell phones of powerful fertilizer bombs packed into U-Haul trucks, with the intent being to kill and maim at a high enough level so as to generate sufficient

public outrage to lead the Canadian government to end its military involvement in Afghanistan,

"diasporic"-related instances of security pressures upon the Canada–United States border are of any relevance to the contemporary setting, then we might observe that problem-solving depended much more upon developments beyond the border than it did upon initiatives focused at the border. Consider the earlier Irish–American challenge, taken in its broadest sense to mean not just the threat of incursions into Canadian territory from the United States but also the decades'-long political agitation ("lobbying") within the American domestic political system on behalf of policy agendas bound to redound negatively – at least for as long as Canada's fate was intertwined with that of Great Britain – upon Canadian strategic interests (to say nothing of the shorter-lived agitation to similar effect on the part of German-Americans). Both problems in Canada–United States relations ended up being "solved" far from North

8. Misnamed, because of course most of Canada's population back then lived, just as it does today, south of the fabled 49th, so that whatever else this parallel of latitude is supposed to conjure up, it should never be taken to represent the most accurate line of demographic division between Canadians and their southern neighbors.
9. Those were the War of the League of Augsburg (1689–1697), brought to a close with the treaty of Ryswick, and known in North America as King William's War; the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713), ending with the treaty of Utrecht, called in North America Queen Anne's War; the War of the Austrian Succession (1744–1748), ending with the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, known in North America as King George's War; and the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), better remembered in North America as the French and Indian War, and terminated with the treaty of Paris, ceding Canada to England. See Duroselle (1976, pp. 11–12).
10. For alarmist perspectives on the threat of Europe-based Islamists, see Lebl (2010), Bawer (2006), Broder (2006) and Laqueur (2007).

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