

Roundtable Report

January 25th, 2006

Introduction

This roundtable took place Wednesday January 25, 2006 at the Vivian and David Campbell Conference Facility at the University of Toronto. It was co-hosted by The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and The Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, as part of The Munk Centre's *Debating the Headlines* Forum Series.

The roundtable was convened to focus on the current state of Canadian foreign policy and the consequences the results of the federal election will have on its future direction and implementation. Some of the themes discussed in the 2005 volume of *Canada Among Nations: Split Images*, such as Canada-US relations, the balancing of interests versus values and the machinery of Canadian foreign policy were highlighted.

Andrew F. Cooper

The 2005 edition of *Canada Among Nations* encompasses the differing perspectives reflected in the roundtable here today and the "split images" of the former and current government especially in the realm of foreign policy. The volume's theme of "Split Images" was played out in different ways. Post-election, one of the "splits" that really stands out is on the promises of the Martin Liberals in foreign policy versus actual delivery. For example, the promotion of the responsibility to protect doctrine versus

the actual experience in dealing with the atrocities in Darfur. Criticism from the Calgary, Queens, and Dalhousie (interest perspective) schools often focus on the imperfections of the Prime Minister and describe him as "seduced by values." More importantly, the focus is often on the bureaucratic efficiency of foreign policy and the imbalance between the PMO, PCO and tactical offices versus the strategic delivery of foreign policy directives. There tended to be an over emphasis on focus groups rather than a disciplined strategy of foreign policy. And accountability is an issue. The split between Foreign Affairs and Trade was reasonable, but not defended in any coherent fashion.

The question which emerges is: Can the Conservatives do better? Harper's focus is on Canada-US relations. Many of the current irritations in the relationship though, such as softwood lumber and mad cow, will continue to fester and are western-oriented. Harper will also focus on the emerging BRICS countries. What will be the foreign policy tone, especially on issues such as missile defense? And also what will be the North America of the future? Will it be expansive enough to include Mexico, this is questionable. It is not clear if Harper has any expertise on Mexican affairs. Who will be the face of foreign policy in Canada? Expertise and values transmission are important issues. While the Conservatives do have seasoned people like Derek Burney and Hugh Segal to help keep things running smoothly behind the scenes, the actual caucus is much thinner in terms of foreign policy experience. Will it be Stockwell Day? And if so, will he be able to balance values and interests? Or will his support for values perhaps get us into difficult situations, for instance in trying to balance Canada's economic interests in China with our

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- Andrew F. Cooper

Chair: Dr. Robert Bothwell
Director of Trinity College / University of Toronto's
International Relations Program

Panelists:

Dr. Andrew F. Cooper, University of Waterloo/CIGI
Dr. Joseph T. Jockel, St. Lawrence University
Daniel Drache, York University



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stance on human rights. In terms of personality, even someone like Peter McKay could be a good candidate. Who is best poised to tackle difficult issues such as the Middle East peace process and Quebec's role on the international stage?

Joseph T. Jockel

There are two central issues for me: Canada-US relations and the actual election of the Conservatives. First, the election felt like I'd been there before. It was similar to the recent US election especially in terms of the cleavages which emerged. The panic/shock/dismay felt in the largest and most important urban areas of Canada at the up and coming conservative right-wing forces is very similar to the response of the blue states to Bush's 2004 election. In these up and coming regions (in terms of their favourable demographic and economic conditions), there was a resentment and suspicion of the Toronto media and its election coverage and a fixation on rooting out bias. The difference is that there is no minority president and the Republicans clearly have the upper hand in the US – the right does not enjoy the same kind of status here.

On the issue of Canada-US relations, Harper knows what to do and what not to do. The foreign policy tone under Harper will instantly improve, but Harper knows that he has to be cautious and there won't be a Quebec City love-in with the United States. This improved tone unfortunately, won't really help things—and actually, this isn't a bad time in the bilateral agenda. Recent tensions are the result of the unpopularity of the Bush camp in Canada and Martin running on two campaigns that were essentially anti-Bush. The kinds of tensions emanating from trade disputes, like that over softwood lumber, won't be affected by improved Harper-Bush relations as these issues are beyond the limits of presidential powers. Our military relationship is key: NORAD expires in May and will need to be renewed. We have a few options. The precedent was set by Trudeau in 1980 for a one year renewal and missile defense would require both Liberal and Conservative support. Another option would be to take the most recent efforts negotiated with the state department and proceed with those.

Or the third option would be a free vote on BMD. This may not be wise given the current numbers in Parliament.

The Conservatives may also choose to employ “salami tactics”, like those used by Martin.

In the summer of 2004, the Liberals quietly sliced off warning and assessment capabilities and agreed to continue Canada's participation in this area. Canada is, in fact, already a part of missile defense in a sense. For me, questions remain on the use of force in world affairs and the Conservative standpoint. We're already in Afghanistan and Iraq and I can't make any further predictions on military engagement at this point.

Daniel Drache

There are two central questions which I will address, and this is whether there will be a “course correction” in foreign policy or just a “fine-tuning” under the Conservatives. Canadians worry that Harper will not be independent of US influence. I personally don't think it will be course correction under this new government. Changes in foreign policy are low priority on the Conservative agenda. Foreign policy really didn't figure in the recent election, there was no discussion of the WTO, NAFTA, poverty eradication, bilateral relations, global governance, international law, and human rights, the UN or the Middle East. These omissions are huge. The Harper government resulted from a “vote against” the Liberals. Conservatives got 10 seats fewer than the Liberals when they were last elected and Harper has no natural opposition allies. Strategic electoral voting changed the map this time and there were no endorsements, rather there were strategic attempts at retribution against the Liberals and to send a message through voting. This limits Harper's options and especially so in regards to his social agenda. It should be noted that many Canadians also consulted non-traditional media for their information and we witnessed the rise of alternative polling sites, like SES, outside of CBC reporting. This election has left very deep divisions and is significant because people were voting against Martin and not necessarily in favour of the Conservatives.

The election also had a very domestic flavour and localized issues were the focus, there was no globalization of the issues. So where do the Conservatives stand on softwood lumber, homeland security, and NAFTA? On softwood lumber, there is no deal possible; on

“Fortunate is the nation that need not talk about foreign policy.”

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homeland security, there's no common definition on what's a security risk; and on NAFTA, Mexico is barely on the radar. Given that Obrador is now leading the race in Mexico and this "leftist" wave seems to be continuing to sweep through South America, fostering closer economic integration within the hemisphere appears more difficult than ever. On issues like the Middle East, Harper's instinct is to back Israel. In a post-Sharon era, this complicates approaches to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, where Canadians want balance on this issue. There is both the Jewish vote and the fact that there are 1 million Muslims in Canada of which to be mindful. On the WTO, will there be course correction? Canada is a tier-2 player; we've been involved in negotiations on subsidies, agriculture and the developmental round. Not much will change and the protection of the Wheat Board and agricultural subsidies will continue. On Afghanistan, will Harper continue the Martin policy? This was first slated as peacekeeping, and in fact it's a combat mission. Harper will echo Bush that we should stay in Afghanistan despite the rising costs and mounting casualties. For Harper, the best course is to keep the US a friend, but at a distance.

Panelists then took questions from the audience. A selection is summarized below.

Questions

Where is the leadership today in terms of foreign policy, as it's perceived to be lacking?

JOSEPH JOCKEL: Fortunate is the nation that need not talk about foreign policy. Foreign policy is very important in certain countries like Israel, for example, as it affects all policy decisions and vice versa. We get to decide what international issues to engage in – what we want to contribute to international peace and security – and not necessarily because it is in our national interest to do so. The question for Canadians is often if they want to contribute forces to a mission. We've been very active in the world since the end of the Cold War and the Canadian Forces' presence should not be underestimated.

DANIEL DRACHE: There are reasons for pessimism especially in terms of the present government. Foreign policy may

take a backseat. The Conservative instinct is to want to draw closer to Washington despite the widespread distaste for the Bush government and it is foolhardy to align ourselves. Harper will play it safe—stay domestic on issues. There is no political capital to be gained by associating with Bush and Harper will want to save all his political capital for addressing domestic issues and for coalition-building in Ottawa. Afghanistan will be the only real international issue at stake.

ANDREW COOPER: I believe we will see a niche-driven foreign policy with a focus on small arms, landmines etc. Canadians are still focused on these initiatives versus grand schemes. It is still very coalition-driven. The question which remains is one of the composition, direction, and goals of these coalitions.

Contemporary foreign policy is a messier foreign policy because of the increase in the participation of non-state actors and bottom-up, issue-based coalitions.

The focus of the panelists today highlights the record of Liberal underperformance; on what should the Harper government instead be focused?

ANDREW COOPER: I think homeland security was a hotbed issue with the Chrétien government. The Chrétien government was able to avoid the perimeter notion and the smart border initiative played to the Canadian instincts about doing things technically and instrumentally. A classic example of a disappointment was the time it took to construct the International Policy Statement. There were 30 plus versions of the IPS and it seemed to show that the government doesn't have a sense as to what to do in some areas. There seemed to be a lack of discipline within the Martin government. There was, however, a good start made at CIDA in terms of policy review.

JOSEPH JOCKEL: Two good things that the Liberals did: homeland security and their recent defense policy. These are two areas that should remain the focus for the Harper government. The Liberals worked well with the US on border co-operation but Martin did not want to run on that success during the election as it put him close to the Bush administration. The Liberals gave a lot of support to General Hillier's transformative agenda and they made substantial increases in the defense budget. Graham should be recognized for his honesty on Afghanistan – he was upfront about the fact that it was a low-level conflict. Missile defense is an important issue on which Harper should concentrate.

DANIEL DRACHE: We need an open and public discussion on several foreign policy issues. In the post-NAFTA era, there needs to be recognition by the government that there are no more gains to be made from the current institutional-economic integration. Canadians have as much access to the US and Mexico markets as they'll get. We need to review our industrial policies especially in light of recent job losses and changes in production at automakers like Ford and GM. We need to ask, what's the future of this industry? There is also the issue of hemispheric relations, and changes due to Brazil and Venezuela and possible linkages between the North and South to encourage new development strategies that address trade and poverty reduction. And finally, on the UN Commission on Human Rights, Harper should continue the Pearson-Axworthy human security tradition and stand up for a human rights agenda. Canada should also be playing a role in the reform of international governance institutions.

Who will be the new Canadian Ambassadors to the US and UN?

ANDREW COOPER: The choices must be balanced. Harper is good with US relations but the question remains of an international counterbalance. We need to also ask, what about Quebec?

JOSEPH JOCKEL: Frank McKenna is not an option because he was under Martin.

DANIEL DRACHE: The new Conservative government is thin on public service and this is hard to pinpoint. There are not many visionaries I can think of.

Will there be an injection of resources into Foreign Affairs under Harper?

JOSEPH JOCKEL: Harper's redefinition of Canadian values could be interesting to witness. We currently have some "culture wars". What exactly are Canadian values? The Liberals claimed to represent Canadian values but there are many people in this country with a different value set – what makes their values any less Canadian? And the promotion of these values abroad could be problematic.

DANIEL DRACHE: Canada versus US values can't be easily changed. Martin's best line of the campaign was when he said: "The US is our neighbour, it is not our nation". We are sharply divided on issues of diversity, equality, gun control, immigration etc. He can't adopt right-leaning rhetoric if he wants to build a government coalition. You can't adopt rhetoric of the centre and rule from the right.

ANDREW COOPER: There's a division which exists also within the Conservatives in terms of ideologues versus pragmatists. Solidarity politics may be seen in relation to international development and assistance projects focused on certain parts of the world. However, there may be fewer resources to off-load onto other countries and a very different bureaucracy than at present.

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