

## Anti-Canadianism: Explaining the Deep Roots of a Shallow Phenomenon

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Résumé de l'article

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**Trevor W. Harrison**

***Anti-Canadianism:  
Explaining the Deep Roots of a Shallow Phenomenon<sup>1</sup>***

**Abstract**

*Anti-Americanism is often said to be a central element of Canadian identity. Recently, however, its counterpart – anti-Canadianism – emerged in the United States. This article examines these expressions of anti-Canadianism, situating the phenomenon within the two countries' historical, ideological-discursive, and political relationships. The paper suggests anti-Canadianism in the United States stems from a mix of anti-French sentiment, a refusal to accept the distinctiveness of English-speaking Canada, and a growing divergence of value orientations between the two countries. The paper argues further that anti-Canadianism must be viewed (like its counterpart) according to its political uses on both sides of the border.*

**Résumé**

*On dit souvent que l'anti-américanisme constitue un élément central de l'identité canadienne. Récemment, toutefois, sa contrepartie, l'anticanadianisme, est apparue aux États-Unis. Cet article examine ces expressions de l'anticanadianisme en situant le phénomène dans les relations historiques et politiques et le débat idéologique entre les deux pays. Selon le document, l'anticanadianisme aux États-unis résulte d'un mélange de sentiment antifrançais, d'un refus d'accepter le caractère distinct du Canada anglais et d'une divergence croissante des valeurs entre les deux pays. L'auteur du document soutient également que l'anticanadianisme doit être examiné (comme sa contrepartie) d'après ses utilisations politiques des deux côtés de la frontière.*

We are witnessing something new in the [Canadian–American] relationship: the emergence on the American right of a troubling anti-Canadianism, albeit confined to strident voices in the media. It is not yet widespread, but it is not uncommon among some commentators, who regularly contrast American values with those of a soft and self-indulgent Canada.

—The 105<sup>th</sup> American Assembly, February 2005<sup>2</sup>

It is a cliché that Canadians—in the words of the late American sociologist Seymour M. Lipset (1990, 53)—“are the world’s oldest and most continuing anti-Americans.” Until France abandoned them in 1763, the people of New France, with their Indian allies, successfully fought off invasions from the south long before there was an America. Wariness of “the Yankee” gained further support from fleeing United Empire Loyalists during the American Revolution. Appropriating the history of New France as their own (see Dufour 1990), the Loyalists subsequently became even more obdurately anti-American, while ignoring the many initial similarities between them and their American cousins (see Grabb et al. 2000). Since that time, anti-Americanism has remained a central element of Canadian identity (Granatstein 1996), waxing and waning with events. This history is well known and requires little elaboration.

Not acknowledged until recently, however, is the phenomenon of anti-Canadianism. Its often virulent re-emergence among some elements of America’s political and chattering classes since the attacks of September 11, 2001, requires examination. This article attempts just that, situating the recent re-emergence of anti-Canadianism in its socio-political and historical contexts. The paper begins with an examination of the concept of “anti-Canadianism.”

### **What is Anti-Canadianism?**

The term “anti-Canadianism” defies easy definition. According to Webster’s Dictionary, the prefix “anti” refers to “one who is opposed to some course, measure, policy, or party.” Common sense, however, tells us “anti-Canadianism” goes beyond mere opposition to involve active hostility, but active hostility to what? And, under what circumstances does it arise?

Some help in answering these questions is provided by looking to anti-Canadianism’s counterpart, anti-Americanism. Most analysts of anti-Americanism agree it is 1) old, even dating to America’s founding;<sup>3</sup> 2) geographically and socially widespread;<sup>4</sup> 3) amorphous, hence difficult to define;<sup>5</sup> 4) grounded in opposition to the notion or idea of America itself, including its culture, values, and institutions;<sup>6</sup> and 5) generally set off by proximate causes (e.g., the decision of President George W. Bush to invade Iraq in 2003) (Hollander 1992, 2004, Crockatt 2003, Gibson 2004, Ross and Ross 2004, Sweig 2006, Kohut and Stokes 2006).

On other points, however, there is disagreement. Hollander (1992, 334–35) and Gibson (2004) define (and therefore explain) anti-Americanism as largely irrational, resulting from envy and weakness. By contrast, Crockatt (2003), Ross and Ross (2004), and Sweig (2006)

eschew definitions of irrationality, instead grounding (but not justifying) anti-Americanism in historical relations and specific policy decisions and actions. Likewise, while Hollander (1992, 2004) and Gibson (2004) suggest anti-Americanism does not differentiate between the American state *and* its people, and Kohut and Stokes (2006) suggest a more recent fusion of the two, Crockatt (2003) and Sweig (2006) contend anti-Americanism is not directed at the American people *per se*. Finally, in an important consideration, Crockatt (2003, 46) notes the uses of the label “anti-American as a political weapon to discredit an opponent.”

These efforts at defining anti-Americanism provide some clues to how we might conceptualize anti-Canadianism. Like its counterpart, anti-Canadianism is amorphous in its expression and often uninformed (perhaps even irrational). Similarly, anti-Canadianism often fails to differentiate between the government of Canada and the people and is set off by immediate and specific catalysts—most recently Canada’s refusal to be part of the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. And, finally, as this article shows, it has a long pedigree.

Yet, the two phenomena also display clear differences. Most particularly, while anti-Americanism is a worldwide phenomenon, anti-Canadianism is confined to the United States and some segments within Canada itself. Since both these mutual “anti’s” exist on each side and across the same border, it seems reasonable therefore to investigate anti-Canadianism in the specific context of the historical, ideological-discursive, and political relationships between the two countries. This article begins with a recitation of recent examples of anti-Canadianism in the United States.

### **Recent Expressions of Anti-Canadianism**

No doubt, the term, “anti-Canadianism” sounds peculiar to Canadian ears. In fairness, the term must also sound unusual to most American ears. As Rice (2004, 124) notes, “most Americans see Canada as benign, kind and irrelevant” views largely substantiated in recent surveys (Pew Research Center 2004, *Globe and Mail* 2005).<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, the term actually appeared in a report released by the American Assembly in February 2005 (quoted above). If anti-Canadianism exists, who are its chief purveyors?

A search of Internet blogs will turn up a number of anti-Canadian rants from “ordinary” Americans.<sup>8</sup> Still, anti-Canadianism, in general, does not seem a widespread phenomenon within the American populace.

Anti-Canadianism can also be found among a few American politicians. In recent years, some of the more hawkish members of the American right-wing political establishment, such as Patrick Buchanan, have thrown fastballs at Canada. Buchanan's 2002 depiction of Canada as "Soviet Canuckistan" (based on such "socialized" things as Medicare) is now a permanent fixture within American right-wing discourse.<sup>9</sup> But these examples also are few and far between. Even when American politicians, both Republican and Democrat, take verbal swipes at Canada, it is usually over policy issues—border security, missile defence, and trade policy, for example—and fall within the ambit of "normal" disagreement (see Handelman 2005, 28–29). In Buchanan's case, moreover, it should be noted he made his famous quip not as a politician but as a media pundit.

Indeed, the primary carrier of anti-Canadianism in the United States is the American media, especially a few right-wing political commentators who have regularly attacked and disparaged Canada. Their main broadcast vehicles are Fox News and, to a lesser degree, Sinclair Broadcasting. While anti-Canadianism in the American media goes back intermittently over several years, it has intensified in recent years, occurring in two waves. The first wave began in the spring of 2003 following Canada's refusal to join the American-led invasion of Iraq. It took off especially the following year, however, as a Canadian federal election got underway and as things began going particularly badly for the American war in Iraq, and continued into early the next year. The second wave was coincident with the onset of another Canadian election in the fall of 2005.

### *The First Wave*

Fox News host Bill O'Reilly was a major figure in the initial outpourings of anti-Canadian rhetoric. On April 19, 2003, he warned, "Canadians should understand that storm clouds are gathering to the south." Almost a year later, in April 2004, O'Reilly termed the Canadian press "rabidly anti-American," warned that "Canada is totally dependent on the U.S.A. for its economic well-being," and called upon Americans to boycott Canadian goods and services if it granted political asylum to two U.S. Army deserters (*Boycott Watch* 2004).

Several months later, on November 30, 2004, Tucker Carlson on CNN's *Wolf Blitzer Reports*, said, "Without the U.S., Canada is essentially Honduras, but colder and much less interesting." He also said anyone with ambition went to the United States, adding "Doesn't that tell you something about the sort of limpid, flaccid nature of Canadian society?" (MediaMatters 2005a).

That same day, right-wing pundit and author Ann Coulter on Fox News' *Hannity and Colmes*, took on Canada. The following excerpts are taken from *MediaMatters* (2005a):

**COULTER:** Conservatives, as a general matter, take the position that you should not punish your friends and reward your enemies. And Canada has become trouble recently.

It's I suppose it's always, I might add, the worst Americans who end up going there [to Canada]. The Tories after the Revolutionary War, the Vietnam draft dodgers after Vietnam. And now after this election, you have the blue-state people moving up there. [...]

**COULTER:** There is also something called, when you're allowed to exist on the same continent of the United States, protecting you with a nuclear shield around you, you're polite and you support us when we've been attacked on your soil. They [Canada] violated the protocol. [...]

**COULTER:** They better hope the United States doesn't roll over one night and crush them. They are lucky we allow them to exist on the same continent. [...]

**COULTER:** We could have taken them [Canada] over so easily.

**ALAN COLMES:** We could have taken them over? Is that what you want?

**COULTER:** Yes, but no. All I want is the western portion, the ski areas, the cowboys, and the right-wingers.

**ELLIS HENICAN (Newsday Columnist):** We share a lot of culture and a lot of interests. Why do we want to have to ridicule them and be deeply offended if they disagree with us?

**COULTER:** Because they speak French.

**COLMES:** There's something else I want to point out about the French. Is it's fashionable again on your side to denounce the French.

**COULTER:** We like the English-speaking Canadians.

Carlson's and Coulter's comments (to which I will return) were followed, in February 2005, by Fox's Bill O'Reilly complaining publicly about a story on the CBC public affairs program, *The Fifth Estate*, dealing with the Fox Network (Zerbisias 2005). A few days later, another Fox personality, John Gibson—whose 2004 book, *Hating America*, contains an entire chapter denouncing Canada and labelling it part of an "Axis of Envy"<sup>10</sup>—used a closing television segment to attack Canada's support for America's the War on Terrorism (quoted in *News Hounds* 2005):

Osama bin Laden can get on a plane in Lahore, Pakistan, disembark in Quebec, declare himself persecuted back home and get asylum quicker than he can say, "Kill the Infidel!" But an American running north, lured by the anti-Americanism and anti-Bushism of the Canadian people and the Canadian government has to wait years.

The statement, of course, is not only false and derogatory; it is absurd. It is also somewhat contradictory of what the author intended, as Gibson clearly does not mean to give support to the notion that fleeing Americans—O'Reilly's deserters—should get faster immigration treatment. But literal meaning is not important here. What is important is a general depiction of Canada as a left-leaning site of anti-Americanism and a potential jumping off point for terrorists entering the United States.

While attacks by the right-wing media such as Fox News are predominant, they are not the only source of anti-Canadian rhetoric in the media. In the spring of 2005, for example, the *Wall Street Journal* took a swipe at Canada for its refusal to join in the Ballistic Missile Defence program, complaining of the "one-sided" nature of Canadian-U.S. continental defence (*National Post* 2005). The implication was that Canada is a generally poor ally that doesn't pull its weight.

The *Wall Street Journal's* editorial was followed three weeks later by a *New York Times* article, headlined "Canada May be a Close Neighbour, but it Proudly Keeps Its Distance." The article went on to note that, "with the possible exception of France, no traditional ally has been more consistently at odds with the United States than has Canada" (story in the *Edmonton Journal* 2005). Then, in quick succession, the *Weekly Standard*, a neo-conservative Washington-based magazine, ran an article by senior writer Matt Labash (2005), titled "Welcome to Canada: The Great White Waste of Time." I quote the article at length for two reasons. First, Labash's comments are illustrative of the general contempt with which much of the American right holds Canada. Second, because I am Canadian, I also have a sense of humour and find some of the remarks absurdly funny:

WHENEVER I THINK OF CANADA... strike that. I'm an American, therefore I tend not to think of Canada. On the rare occasion when I have considered the country that Fleet Streeters call "The Great White Waste of Time," I've regarded it, as most Americans do, as North America's attic, a mildewy recess that adds little value to the house, but serves as an excellent dead space for stashing Nazi war criminals, drawing-room socialists, and hockey goons.

.... For the most part, Canadians occupy little disk space on our collective hard drive. Not for nothing did MTV have a game show that made contestants identify washed-up celebrities under the category "Dead or Canadian?"

If we have bothered forming opinions at all about Canadians, they've tended toward easy-pickings: that they are a docile, Zamboni-driving people who subsist on seal casserole and Molson. Their hobbies include wearing flannel, obsessing over American hegemony, exporting deadly Mad Cow disease and even deadlier Gordon Lightfoot and Nickelback albums. You can tell a lot about a nation's mediocrity index by learning that they invented synchronized swimming. Even more, by the fact that they're proud of it.

But ever since George W. Bush's reelection, news accounts have been rolling in that disillusioned Americans are running for the border in protest. This prompts the thought that it may be time to stop treating Our Canadian Problem with such cavalier disregard. In fact, largely as a result of Bush and his foreign policy, what was once a polite rivalry has become a poisoned well of hurt feelings and recriminations.

### *The Second Wave*

The second wave of anti-Canadianism began in the fall of 2005 in partial response to comments made on December 7 by then Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin criticizing the United States at an environmental conference held in Montreal for its reluctance to sign on to the Kyoto Accord. It is important to note the incident began in the context of a Canadian election that had recently begun. On December 9, American Ambassador Wilkins in a speech stated, "It may be smart election-year politics to thump your chest and constantly criticize your friend and your number one trading partner. But it is a slippery slope, and all of us should hope that it doesn't have a long-term impact on the relationship."

Martin then responded, in a manner clearly calculated for its political mileage, that it was his job as Canada's leader to tackle tough issues such



as those that arose occasionally between Canada and the United States. He also suggested Conservative leader Stephen Harper would always give in to Washington, while he would “defend Canada—period.” Not to be outdone by Martin’s rhetorical defence of Canadian independence, Harper and Canada’s other political leaders quickly chimed in with statements suggesting the American ambassador had been out of line in getting involved in the Canadian election. American Wilkins quickly then responded in a salutary fashion, and the political tit-for-tat soon fizzled—except in the American media.

On December 14, Fox News host Neal Cavuto asked, “[H]ave the Canadians gotten a little bit too big for their britches?” and “[C]ould our neighbors to the north soon be our enemies?” (MediaMatters 2005b). The following day, MSNBC’s *The Situation with Tucker Carlson*, Carlson renewed his attacks on Canada (MediaMatters 2005b):

Here’s the problem... Here’s the problem with telling Canada to stop criticizing the United States: It only eggs them on. Canada is essentially a stalker, stalking the United States, right? Canada has little pictures of us in its bedroom, right? Canada spends all of its time thinking about the United States, obsessing over the United States. It’s unrequited love between Canada and the United States. We, meanwhile, don’t even know Canada’s name. We pay no attention at all.

Carlson added:

First of all, anybody with any ambition at all, or intelligence, has left Canada and is now living in New York. Second, anybody who sides with Canada internationally in a debate between the U.S. and Canada, say, Belgium, is somebody whose opinion we shouldn’t care about in the first place. Third, Canada is a sweet country. It is like your retarded cousin you see at Thanksgiving and sort of pat him on the head. You know, he’s nice, but you don’t take him seriously. That’s Canada.

The next day, December 16, Douglas MacKinnon, former press secretary to Senator Bob Dole, made the following comments dealing with Ambassador Wilkins’ comments (above) (MediaMatters 2005b):

Insulting and verbally attacking the United States has become such a national sport among liberal Canadian politicians that one conservative member of parliament said they displayed “a consistent attitude of anti-Americanism.” ...

The ambassador's point raises a larger question: Can Canada really be considered a "friend" anymore? ... [I]t pains me to ask the question. That said, what other question can be asked when the Canadian government not only willingly allows Islamic terrorists into their country, but does nothing to stop them from entering our nation.

While anti-Canadianism in the United States remains a marginal and evanescent phenomenon, spurred by several immediate issues (in particular, Canada's refusal to join the U.S. in its invasion of Iraq in 2003) (see Gibson 2004), there is sufficient evidence of its existence to make it worthy of study. At the very least, terming Canadian society "limpid" and "flaccid," disparaging a large number of Canadians because they are of French origin, depicting Canada as pro-terrorist and Canadians as "stalkers," and suggesting they are envious, uppity, retarded failures is clearly beyond the pale and connotes a deep vein of anti-Canadianism. This rest of this article attempts an archeology of the roots of this phenomenon, beginning with a time before either country even existed.

### **The French Connection**

Many will remember the "Freedom Fries" nonsense that seized parts of the United States during the Second Iraq War. When France, along with Germany, blocked American efforts at the United Nations to go to war in Iraq, the United States experienced one of those moments when "the other" was turned into a subject of vilification and abuse. French fries were marketed by some fast food restaurants as "Freedom Fries," suggesting America—unlike "the French"—were standing up for freedom.<sup>11</sup> Talk shows were suddenly filled with callers repeating the old canard that "the French" were a bunch of cowards who—again frequently restated—had been saved in two world wars by beefy and brave American soldiers.<sup>12</sup> Television commentators and late-night comics joined in this racist and historically inaccurate falsehood. Some conservative pundits and Republican politicians in the United States robustly adopted from a much earlier 1995 Simpson's cartoon show the phrase "cheese-eating surrender monkeys" to insult the French people.<sup>13</sup>

The cultural history of this racist depiction of the French goes back to the two "Great Wars" of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has, I would interject here, a strong following in English-speaking Canada as well, feeding off (in part) the Conscription Crises that beset Canada during both wars. But American hatred of "the French" also draws from a deeper, historical well; a time before there even was a United States.

During the more than a hundred years before Britain defeated France in the Seven Years War (a.k.a., in North America, the French and Indian

Wars), there had developed between New France and the American colonists a profound and deep dislike. There were numerous wars and smaller skirmishes before France's final defeat. As in all conflicts, there were many causes. Certainly, one cause was a power struggle between two great mercantilist states. It was also an economic conflict in the sense of a growing battle between modes of economic development (fur trading vs. agriculture), in much the same way that the American Civil War would, in part, become a battle between industrial and plantation economies. Finally, however, the conflict between the English colonists and the French colonists was also cultural, based both on linguistic and—to a degree we do not always appreciate today—religious differences.

One measure of the importance of this cultural divide is to note that the American Revolution began shortly after the Quebec Act of 1774 came into effect (Dufour 1990, 42–43). Though the Act, which restored the previous borders of New France, and which the American colonists also saw as re-imposing “the Papacy,” did not launch the revolt, it was a significant provocation; a last straw, as it were.

The people of New France viewed the New England colonists as uncultured and barbaric. Out-manned and out-gunned, they also feared them; the Bostonians were known to be almost fanatical in their hatred of Catholicism. For their part, the New England colonists had no reason to fear “the French,” but did hate them with a passion surpassed only by their dislike of the Indian “savages.” This cultural conflict continued after the American Revolution, transposed onto interstate relations between France and the United States (over France's continued involvement in the “Americas”), and lasted until after the American Civil War.

Yet, to be accurate, this mutual antagonism has not always dominated. France provided support for the Americans during both the Revolution and the later War of 1812, proving the old adage that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” as both peoples viewed the English as the enemy. And a kind of mutual admiration society arose in both countries that viewed themselves as shining beacons to subjugated peoples everywhere (hence the gift of the Statue of Liberty from the French to the American people). Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson spent considerable time in France; the latter is said to have envied the French for “their advances in science and in the arts of sculpture, painting and music” (Rayner 1834). On the other side, Alexis de Tocqueville's rhapsody to American democracy and society is famous. One can point to even more recent instances when mutual antagonism has given way to respect and sympathy. No one will forget, for example, the *Le Monde* editorial after 9/11 proclaiming, “We are all Americans.”

Nonetheless, there remains an historical and cultural rift just beneath the surface of French–American relations. Many French citizens still view Americans as uncultured (though fascinated with Jerry Lewis; indeed, the French, like Europeans in general “continue to like American pop culture and admire U.S. technology”) (Pew Research Center 2004, 2). And many Americans still dislike France and view the French (in general) as weak and affected. The term “Old Europe,” used by the current Bush administration to describe (in particular) France and Germany is an epithet as historic as it is condescending.

More importantly—as Ann Coulter’s quote “Because they’re French” shows—this French–American rift also explains some of the deeper roots of anti-Canadianism in the United States. Culturally and politically, Canada is very much the heir to New France. Twenty-five percent of Canada’s population is French-speaking, the vast majority of Quebec’s francophones being, in fact, direct descendants of the original settlers of New France (see Dufour 1990). And it is this French element within Canada that contributes to it being a North American—but not an *American*—country; indeed, in many ways a *European* country (Resnick 2005) in its values, sensibilities, and general view of the world.

It is perhaps also worth noting the relationship between Canada and the United States in recent decades has been particularly difficult during the tenure of “Quebec” prime ministers (Pierre Trudeau and Jean Chrétien). This coincidence should not be overstated: both were Liberal prime ministers governing during periods of aggressive Republican presidents. Nonetheless, the historical and cultural background is not entirely incidental. Many in the American administration and media, for example, noted the decision to not join in the Second Iraq War was made by Prime Minister Chrétien and that, while the decision had wide support throughout Canada, it was a decision particularly popular with the people of Quebec.

But anti-Canadianism in the United States is not solely a product of old French–American tensions. It also is the result of English-speaking Canada’s misidentification in the minds of many Americans.

### **The “Taken-for-Granted Other” in the American Mind**

After he left office, former American Ambassador to Canada Paul Cellucci in both interviews and a book (Cellucci 2005) attempted to explain some causes of American “disappointment” with Canada in recent years. Beyond any pique resulting from some rather stupid and undiplomatic comments made by a few Canadian officials—not worth repeating here—Cellucci identified two main causes. First, there was the *process* by

which Canada made its decisions on such things as the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) program. Second, there were the *decisions* themselves.

It is true the Martin government was slow in its decision regarding BMD; indeed, that it appeared to “flip flop.” But, had the Martin government been slow, yet come on board with the American decision, the issue of process would not be paramount. It is then Canada’s actual decisions surrounding both the War on Terrorism and the Missile Defence Program that appear central to recent American anger or, to again use Cellucci’s low-key phrase, “disappointment.” As previously stated, this paper is not intended to deal with the particular policy disputes, as important as they are. Rather, the point is to examine the broader question of why the Canadian refusal to join the United States in both instances engendered the reactions they did.

One looming explanation is the terrorist attacks of September 2001. One should not minimize the loss of life, but the more long-term impact of the attacks has been their psychological harm to the American psyche. For most of its history, the United States has escaped the consequences of wars fought elsewhere, even those in which the American military has been (often significantly) involved. The 9/11 attacks brought home—tragically—to America the reality of living with an increasingly complex, interrelated, and smaller world. The attacks—and some administrative responses, such as the alert system—have made many Americans feel unsafe, and they have sought reassurance from the rest of the world.

In the early days after 9/11, many Americans found support coming from much of the world, including France (again, *Le Monde*) and—of course—Canada. Many people will remember Newfoundland’s assistance to stranded travelers, the going to New York of Canadian paramedics and firefighters to help out, and the memorial to the dead held on Parliament Hill shortly after the attacks.

What is worth noting, however, is that while many Americans viewed with pleasant surprise the support received from other countries, that received from Canada was not so similarly viewed. Indeed, it was taken for granted. And perhaps this is how it should be between “friends.” But I think this lack of surprise—this taken for granted-ness—also points us in the direction of something deeper in the way many Americans view Canada and Canadians.

The fact is, for many Americans, Canada is merely a northern extension of the United States. American “disappointment” is the result of a failure to see Canada as *distinct*. Whenever Canada actually “appears,” the result is that at least some Americans are perplexed. And a few, often

members of the political and media establishment, react with anger that Canada should even dare be different.

Once again, history provides a promontory for understanding this psychological predisposition to “not see” Canada. Let’s begin with Article 11 of the American Articles of Confederation, written in 1777:

Canada, according to this confederation, and joining in the measures of the United States, shall be admitted into, and entitled to all the advantages of this Union; but no other colony shall be admitted into the same unless such admission be agreed to by nine states.

Canada’s easy terms of admittance into the United States were based upon a belief held by many framers of the American Constitution that Canada would inevitably—and soon—join the new country. After all, who would not want to become part of a country clearly “destined” to do great things? But when they didn’t immediately join, American politicians and journalists took to disparaging Canadian character. It was alleged, for example, that Canadians did not love liberty, preferring instead to remain subjects to the tyrannous rule of the British Empire (Bowsfield 1967–1968: 1). Many of the media quotes previously reported express similar characterizations of Canadians today. Such depictions are not limited to the media, however. Lipset (1990, 1968), for example, wrote numerous books and articles comparing deferent and conformist Canadians to their more freedom-loving and individualistic American counterparts.

The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw Canada and the United States fight several border skirmishes. The end of the American Civil War also saw the U.S. demand Canada be “given” to them as reparation for British actions during the war. For the most part, however, American thoughts of conquering Canada by military force had all but dissipated by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though plans for invasion remained on the books until the mid-1930s at least (Rudmin 1993).<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, the idea of eventually absorbing Canada has remained part of the American psyche, again in part because—in American eyes—Canadians are not really different from Americans, the country itself being a kind of polite fiction “allowed”—Coulter’s expression (above)—by the United States. Three quotes from American presidents in the 20<sup>th</sup> century make the point:

... when I have been in Canada, I have never heard a Canadian refer to an American as a “foreigner.” He is just an “American.” And, in the same way, in the United States, Canadians are not “foreigners,” they are “Canadians.” That

simple little distinction illustrates to me better than anything else the relationship between our two countries.

—President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1936.

Canada and the United States have reached the point where we no longer think of each other as “foreign” countries.

—President Harry S. Truman, 1947.

You know, it seems ridiculous. We both speak the same language. We think alike. We behave the same. Don't you think you would be better off as the 49th state?

—President Dwight D. Eisenhower to  
Canadian diplomat Lionel Chevrier, 1956.

On occasion, this sense of familiarity has given way to open contempt. Thus, Presidents Kennedy and Nixon felt it their prerogative to lecture Canadians in their own House on their foreign policy. President Johnston even took to physically assaulting Prime Minister Pearson.<sup>15</sup> And the Reagan administration sent letters warning Canada of retaliatory action if it pursued its National Energy Policy (see Martin 1983, Clarkson 1985). Paul Cellucci's regular hectoring of Canada during his time as ambassador to Canada was in keeping with this pattern.

The point is, American disappointment and anger arises whenever Canada and Canadians do something unexpected. Whether trade with Communist China and Cuba in the 1960s, or more recently in refusing to join the “coalition of the willing” in invading Iraq, the American reaction to Canada taking a different road is always expressed in terms of a betrayal. And the only way this can be understood is that Canada is not sufficiently viewed as distinct from the United States; in other words, the assumption too often made by people south of the border is that Canadians are “just like us.”<sup>16</sup> As recent studies show, this is an increasingly dangerous assumption, one that contains the potential for future American–Canadian misunderstandings and a deepening of anti-Canadianism among Americans.

### **A Question of Values**

Recent years have seen heated debate regarding whether or not Canadian and American values are converging or diverging. In the oldest version of these debates, Lipset (1968, 1990) argued the early histories of both countries had established political traditions and institutions that, while similar, marked out Canada and the United States as having fundamentally different value orientations. More recent research has suggested some tantalizing variations on this question of values. Nevitte (1996), for exam-

ple, suggests that Canadians and Americans are both converging and diverging. Adams (2003) suggests Canadians and Americans are diverging, but that also the two countries have switched positions: Canadians are now the liberal individualists while Americans are the conservative conformists (mixed with a growing tinge of nihilism). Meanwhile, Grabb and Curtis (2005) argue that there are emerging four distinct cultural communities in North America led by a liberal Quebec and a conservative American south that are “pulling” the rest of their respective countries in their directions. In effect, there is a growing divide not merely between North America’s “extremes”—Quebec and the southern states—but also between “the rest of Canada” and “the rest of the United States.”

It is easy to make too much of some differences, and Grabb and Curtis note that some of the differences they measured were small. At the level of individual Canadians and Americans, similarities often outweigh differences. Nonetheless, the opus of recent survey data suggests some broad national differences. Religion, for example, plays a far greater role in the lives of Americans than it does in the lives of Canadians (Pew Research Center 2002). Americans, in general, are more traditional on moral matters, being less supportive of homosexuality and the right of women to abortion. They are also more supportive of traditional family roles; i.e., that fathers should head households (Pew Research Center 2004, Adams 2003). And Americans, *contra* Lipset (1968, 1990), tend increasingly to be more conformist and deferent to authority than Canadians (Nevitte 1996, Grabb and Curtis 2005). Taken as a whole, the evidence supports Adams’ (2003) claims that Canadians are today more “liberal” and “individualistic” than Americans; or, as Mickelthwait and Wooldridge (2004) argue, that America has undergone a recent transition from a liberal to a conservative nation.

In short, some of the rise of anti-Canadianism may reflect growing value differences between the two countries that have made Canada increasingly stand out in the American mind. But, I also think something else is going on that perhaps transcends national borders: an ideological battle in which anti-Canadianism is a political weapon of choice used today by right-wing elements on both sides of the border for slightly different purposes.

### **Canada’s “Anti-Canadians” and the Other North American Divide**

Few recent remarks appear as derogatory—as anti-Canadian—as the following:



(1) Canada is a Northern European welfare state in the worst sense of the term, and very proud of it.

(2) Canada appears content to become a second-tier socialistic country, boasting ever more loudly about its economy and social services to mask its second-rate status, led by a second-world strongman [Prime Minister Jean Chrétien] appropriately suited for the task.

Current Prime Minister Stephen Harper made both of these statements, during times when he was not an elected official. The first statement was made in June 1997 at a Montreal meeting of the Council for National Policy, an American think tank. The second statement appeared in an article published in the *National Post* on December 8, 2000 following a federal election—an election that Harper (and many other conservatives) viewed as a “rejection” of the Alberta-based Canadian Alliance party by Canadians at large.<sup>17</sup>

These statements are not quoted in order to question Harper's patriotism, something done by the Liberal party to little effect during the 2006 federal election; Crockatt's (2003, 46) warning that labels are often used as political weapons applies here. Harper's negative comments about Canada do point to a broader phenomenon within Canada's recent political discourse, however. The fact is, Harper's comments are not singular. As Anastakis (2003) notes, many of the nastiest things written about and against Canada in recent years have come from its own politicians and various media pundits in the *National Post* and the *Western Standard*. The comments of partisan (generally right-wing) talk show hosts who fill Canada's airwaves are often even more negative. The Harper quotes are heuristic as a means to exploring how ideological differences play into disparaging commentary even within nations.

Especially valuable is the ideological lineage underlying Harper's negative depiction of Canada. In his biography of Harper, William Johnson (2005) notes the importance of a single book in forging Harper's political views. That book was *The Patriot Game*, written by Peter Brimelow (1986), published just as the Reform party (of which Harper was a key member) was in its formative stages (see Harrison 1995). Brimelow is a former British citizen who settled in Canada for a time, but now lives in the United States and has continued to write books and magazine articles about that country. His thesis in *The Patriot Game* is fairly simple: Canada is a state, but not a real nation. English-speaking Canada, in particular, lacks an identity because it has spent too much time 1) pacifying Quebec; and 2) denying its cultural similarity to the United States. In time, Brimelow argues, Quebec will separate—something that

many on Canada's extreme right would welcome—and the rest of Canada will (likely) join the United States.

While Brimelow's argument may have seemed original to Harper and other western conservatives in the 1980s, it was actually quite old. In fact, as Brimelow himself acknowledged, *The Patriot Game* was fashioned in style and argument upon a much earlier book written in 1891 by Goldwin Smith, *Canada and the Canadian Question*. Like Brimelow, Smith also was British and a journalist. He was also a typical 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal who believed in free trade, continentalism, and republicanism. He saw Canada's destiny as being one with the greater Anglo-American community and felt, like Brimelow, that Quebec was a hindrance to English Canada discovering its "true" future, which Smith—even more openly than Brimelow—argued was to join the United States.

Note that, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the most virulent things written about Canada were those written by liberals like Smith. Liberal "anti-Canadianism" of the day was forged around identification with the United States. Their continentalist economic policy was directed at Canada's dominant party, the Conservative party of Sir John A. Macdonald, its prevailing National Policy, and Canada's continuing ties to the British monarchy.

Today, the tables have turned. The Liberals have long been Canada's "natural governing party," while the Tory party, as George Grant (1965) lamented years ago, is no more. In this context, it is the newly-renovated Conservative party that today identifies most with the United States—think of that party's overwhelming support for joining the "Coalition of the Willing" in Iraq—and argues against the prevailing ideology of the Liberal party. Some years ago this author wrote that, for many supporters of the then Reform party—precursor to the current Conservative party—"Canada in its present form constitutes ... a kind of failed experiment relative to that of the United States" (Harrison 1995, 172). That statement holds true today for much of the Canadian right, and explains the anti-Canadian rhetoric it sometimes emits. Most dispassionate observers would likely see Canada as a wealthy country marked by little civil unrest and a political system that, while needing some repair, is relatively free of scandal—even noting the Sponsorship Scandal—compared with other countries. To listen to the Canadian right, however, Canada is a corrupt banana republic, beset with a host of failed policies—education, health, welfare, multiculturalism, immigration, criminal justice, etc.—facing certain economic ruin and verging on civil war.

Herein lies a central point. Anti-Canadianism, like anti-Americanism, is in part a product of an ideological divide separating North America. As

such, it is best understood in the context of what political purposes it serves. It serves slightly different purposes depending on whether a party or an ideological perspective is "in" or "out" of power. In the United States, neo-conservatives today employ the rhetoric of anti-Canadianism as a means of "insulating" Americans against "left-wing" policies, such as multiculturalism or Medicare.<sup>18</sup> By contrast, American Democrats on policy issues sometimes point positively to Canada.

In Canada, meanwhile, the governing Conservative party and its right-wing supporters (e.g., the *National Post*, the Fraser Institute, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation) occasionally employ anti-Canadian rhetoric partly out of frustration, but also necessarily in order to drive Canada towards an alternative (generally American) policy model. By contrast, Canada's right is generally reluctant to criticize American policy, that is, to appear "anti-American" because it does not want to denigrate its chosen model.

For its part, the Canadian left uses anti-Americanism as a means of "inoculating" Canadians against adopting right-wing policies while also using the anti-Canadianism label as a means of dismissing their right-wing opponents. In effect, both anti-Canadianism and anti-Americanism transcend national borders to instead constitute opposing positions along ideological borders.

## **Conclusion**

The degree of anti-Canadianism in the United States should not be exaggerated. At the level of ordinary citizens, many of whom display considerable sophistication in differentiating between citizens and the actions or policies of their governments, Canadians and Americans generally get along very well. This paper does not attempt to make of a relatively small and perhaps transient phenomenon more than what it is.

At the same time, creeping anti-Canadianism should also not be entirely ignored. Some of the major media that espouse anti-Canadianism in the United States do have constituencies and do inform public opinion. Likewise, some of the right-wing media's political counterparts do aspire to positions of power that, if attained, could harm Canadian interests. But it is also important to recognize the degree to which anti-Canadianism (no less than anti-Americanism) is fed by internecine political battles fought on both sides of the border. Finally, for Canadians as a whole, and policy makers in particular, it is important to understand some of the deep roots of anti-Canadianism; to recognize that these roots are durable enough to ensure the phenomenon's occasional re-emergence, irrespective of the generally good will that flows between the two countries.

## Endnotes

1. A version of this paper was presented to the Biennial Meeting of the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States, St. Louis, on November 17, 2005. I want to thank the panel discussant, Dr. Claire Turenne-Sjolander, as well as the other panel presenters and people who attended the session for their helpful comments. I also want to thank Dr. Harvey Krahn for comments made on a revised version and the anonymous reviewers of this journal for their insightful suggestions.
2. As described in its website (<http://www.americanassembly.org/index.php>), the American Assembly is “a national, non-partisan public affairs forum illuminating issues of public policy by commissioning research and publications, sponsoring meetings, and issuing reports, books, and other literature.... Founded by Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1950, The American Assembly is affiliated with Columbia University.” The 105th American Assembly, on “U.S.–Canada Relations,” was held February 3–6, 2005 at Arden House in Harriman, New York.
3. Ross and Ross (2004, 1) remark, “Anti-Americanism is as old as political modernity and could be said to be one of its founding discourses.”
4. Several authors note that it is not only foreign citizens who express anti-American sentiment, but also Americans themselves. Ross and Ross (2004, 2) also differentiate between anti-Americanism from above (among patrician elites) and from below.
5. Hollander (1992, 334) terms it “unfocused.” Crockatt (2003, 46) states that anti-Americanism “assumes many different forms, depending on historical contexts and political agendas.” Similarly, Sweig (2006, xii) states that “Anti-Americanism is expansive and diverse, deep and shallow; its intensity varies and is difficult to measure.”
6. Kohut and Stokes (2006) tie anti-Americanism to the founding idea of American exceptionalism, implying that these exhorted differences necessarily set the U.S. up for both praise and criticism.
7. These surveys suggest some slippage since the onset of the Second Gulf War in 2003. For example, a Pew Research Center (2004) report, based on 2002 and 2003 surveys, found Canada’s image among Americans slipped from 83 percent viewing it favourably in 2002 to 65 percent doing so in 2003. Similarly, an Ipsos-Reid poll, taken in April 2005, found that only 14 percent of Americans view Canada as their country’s closest ally, down from 18 percent in 2002 (*Globe and Mail* 2005).
8. Among examples of extreme hostility shown by Americans towards Canada is found in an email sent by a 56-year-old construction worker to *Maclean’s* magazine after it published a poll in 2004 showing most Canadians opposed George W. Bush’s re-election. “Socialized, homosexualized, feminized, gutless wimps,” said the individual, incensed that Canada did not join the American campaign in Iraq (*The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2005).
9. Ten years earlier, Buchanan also remarked that, “For most Americans, Canada is sort of like a case of latent arthritis. We really don’t think about it, unless it acts up.”

10. Gibson's other two countries in the Axis were Belgium and South Korea.
11. Some Americans also boycotted French wines and other products.
12. More than 1.6 million French soldiers died during WW I, no more than 1/3 of French soldiers coming out unscathed in some fashion (Hobsbawm 1995, 26). Roughly 250,000 French soldiers died during WW II, along with perhaps 350,000 civilians. France did not "quit" during WW II, it was defeated, as were numerous other countries in Europe, by the German Wehrmacht, the most powerful military assembled to that time. And, while some members of France's elite collaborated with the Nazi occupation, this also occurred in other countries, just as an active underground continued in France and elsewhere.
13. *Wikipedia* provides an extensive etiology of the phrase and its later political use in the U.S. in the period leading up to the Second Iraq War.
14. Canada, it should be noted, also kept up-to-date its own plans for invading the United States in the event of war.
15. The incident in question occurred following a speech made by Pearson at Temple University in the United States in which he mildly criticized American involvement in Vietnam. Johnston summoned Pearson to his Texas ranch where the president (a large man) picked up the more diminutive prime minister by his lapels and shook him, declaring, "Dammit, Les, you pissed on my rug!" to describe metaphorically his anger at what he viewed as Pearson's intrusive comments.
16. At the same time, the two countries are sometimes recognized as distinct when it is to the United States' advantage, as President Richard Nixon declared when he came to Ottawa in 1972 declaring the special relationship between Canada and the United States was dead. "It is time for us to recognize," he stated, "that we have very separate identities; that we have significant differences; and that nobody's interests are furthered when these realities are obscured."
17. An attendant at the St. Louis conference wondered if the quote had perhaps been taken out of context. The enlarged quote reads as follows:

Alberta and much of the rest of Canada have embarked on divergent and potentially hostile paths to defining their country.

Alberta has opted for the best of Canada's heritage—a combination of American enterprise and individualism with the British traditions of order and co-operation. We have created an open, dynamic and prosperous society in spite of a continuously hostile federal government.

Canada appears content to become a second-tier socialistic country, boasting ever more loudly about its economy and social services to mask its second-rate status, led by a second-world strongman appropriately suited for the task.

Albertans would be fatally ill-advised to view this situation as amusing or benign. Any country with Canada's insecure smugness and resentment can be dangerous. It can revel in calling its American neighbours names because they are too big and powerful to care. But the attitudes toward Alberta so successfully exploited in this election will have inevitable consequences the next time Canada enters a recession or

needs an internal enemy.

Having hit a wall, the next logical step is not to bang our heads against it. It is to take the bricks and begin building another home—a stronger and much more autonomous Alberta. It is time to look at Quebec and to learn. What Albertans should take from this example is to become “maîtres chez nous.”

18. It should be pointed out that, much of the misinformation about Canada’s health care system, including the repeated epithet that it is “socialized,” comes from right-wing organizations in Canada, such as the Fraser Institute.

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