CANADA AND THE US IN THE CHRÉTIEN YEARS: EDGING TOWARD CONFRONTATION

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Despite being much smaller and less powerful than its southern neighbour, for a number of years Canada has gotten the better part of its relationship with the United States. It managed to persuade the US to change its traditional mantra on Canadian national unity to vigorous support for the federalist side, apparently without giving any quid *for the* quo*. Under André Ouellet, the Chrétien government's relations with the US were largely harmonious. Lloyd Axworthy, however, apparently enjoyed going out of his way to annoy the US. So far, the 800-pound gorilla has been largely placid, but there are worrying signs that may not continue much longer.*

Depuis plusieurs années, le Canada tire bien son épingle du jeu dans ses relations avec les États-Unis—et cela malgré une taille et une puissance inférieures à celles de l'autre. Sans apparemment rien donner en retour, il est parvenu à convaincre les États-Unis de rompre avec leur politique traditionnelle en ce qui a trait à l'unité canadienne et de soutenir vigoureusement le camp fédéraliste. À l'époque du ministre André Ouellet, les relations du gouvernement Chrétien avec les États-Unis étaient harmonieuses, dans l'ensemble. Lloyd Axworthy, quant à lui, semble avoir pris plaisir à embêter le puissant voisin. Celui-ci est généralement demeuré placide, mais d'inquiétants signes donnent à penser que cela pourrait ne pas durer.

We are all familiar with the late Prime Minister Trudeau's famous analogy of the restless US elephant in bed with the nervous Canadian mouse. In fact, a more appropriate metaphor might be an 800-pound gorilla and an 80-pound chimpanzee; it provides an image closer to the relative population and economic proportions of both countries. It also stimulates the thought that an adroit chimp can out-clever a gorilla to its advantage. And, of course, such is Canada's essential objective in its bilateral relationship with the US: to manipulate the endlessly intricate political, military, and economic/cultural connections between the two countries to its own benefit. Often genius chimps in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (or DFAIT, once known as "External") have maneuvered a distracted or complaisant US gorilla into circumstances where Canada has gotten a free ride, such as in military security expenditures, or they have secured support for basic Canadian objectives ranging from national unity to UN Security Council membership with barely a *quid* for the *quo*. Unfortunately there are moronic as well as genius chimps, and those currently directing Canadian foreign affairs appear to have lost focus of the potential costs of needlessly irritating gorillas. There are signs that the 800-pound monkey may be losing its patience. The chimpanzees would be wise to take note.

Before the 1993 election, many casual US observers of Canadian politics equated the Progressive Conservatives with Republicans and the Liberals with Democrats. That identification was facile and inaccurate: The Canadian political spectrum lies substantially to the left of the American. All Canadian political parties view Canada as a kinder, gentler version of the US, particularly with their endorsement of comprehensive, tax-funded national health care, an extensive social safety net, federal assistance to university level education, strict gun control, and minimal national defense expenditure. These axioms in Canadian politics lie outside the US political mainstream. There is no legitimate political equivalent in Canada to conservative US Republicans, either in domestic or foreign affairs, and Canadians of virtually all political stripes, including Reformers/Canadian Alliance members, Tories, Liberals, NDPers, and *Bloquistes*, could find analogues to themselves within the Democratic party. For all of

the media frenzy over Canadian Alliance leader Stockwell Day, in the United States he would probably qualify as a moderate Republican.

During the 1993 campaign, Liberals worked privately to emphasize their historical connections with US Democrats. These roots went back 50 years, to the days of Mackenzie King in Canada and Presidents Roosevelt and Truman in the US. They also recalled the period of 1962-1968 when both Liberals and Democrats were in power in their respective countries. Without doubting their sincerity in these allusions, it was to Liberal advantage in the pre-election period to be perceived by official US representatives (and parts of of the Canadian electorate) as able to deal effectively with their southern neighbor, which had just enjoyed a highly collegial decade courtesy of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and his Tory government. At the same time, they glossed over economic and foreign policy differences, driven by both substance and personality, that had bedeviled Liberal relations with both Republicans and Democrats during the long Trudeau reign (1968-1984). Prime Minister Trudeau, who presumably represented Liberal party policy faithfully, is described by an admiring Lawrence Martin in *Pledge of Allegiance*, as having "opposed the Americans on arms spending, Star Wars, Nicaragua, Soviet policy and the invasion of Grenada."

Indeed, for perspective's sake, it is useful to recall that only the Mulroney-Tory government worked closely with its US counterparts. The other significant postwar Tory government, that of John Diefenbaker, 1957-1963, had problems with both Republicans and Democrats. During the nine years he was in office, however, Mr. Mulroney made an unparalleled effort (for a Canadian politician) to develop and maintain good bilateral relations with the US. Shortly after his election in 1984, he had declared to the *Wall Street Journal* that "good relations, super relations with the United States will be the cornerstone of our foreign policy." Somewhat later, he reinforced the point by noting "I am a friend of the United States of America; I make no bones about it. I don't believe like the Liberals and NDP in throwing verbal hand grenades at Washington every other day and then trying to pretend hypocritically that you are really a friend and neighbor." It is hard to imagine comparable sentiments coming from Ottawa in 2000.

Moreover, Prime Minister Mulroney did more than talk the talk. Throughout his government, the US enjoyed quick, almost automatic support from Ottawa, often when supporters were in short supply. Remember, in that context, the US liberation of Grenada, the bombing of Libya, the restoration of democracy in Panama, and the military response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Even granting that the role of the Official Opposition is to oppose, Liberal positions on these issues were either hostile or tardily, grudgingly supportive at best.

Under Mr. Mulroney, Ottawa provided strong support to the US Cold War confrontation with the Soviets, became a member of the Organization of American States, and largely endorsed US arms control initiatives. The negotiation of bilateral and subsequently trilateral economic arrangements in the FTA and NAFTA also characterized US-Canadian relations during his era. Although most North Americans are now willing to admit that the agreements have been advantageous, they were extremely controversial throughout the Mulroney era, with popular discontent exacerbated by recession. Had Prime Minister Mulroney not endorsed and supported them, they never would have come into effect.

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During the 1993 election campaign, then-Liberal party leader Jean Chrétien accentuated the negative. If the Tories had been closely associated with the US, he would not be. In repeated stump speeches, he emphasized that "Canada will not be the 51st state of America" (ignoring the reality that no one in the US had invited such an association). He stressed that he would not be a fishing and/or golfing buddy of a US president. Rhetoric aside, Chrétien and the Liberals repeatedly said that they wished to "renegotiate" the FTA and NAFTA. Their campaign-related literature explicitly criticized the FTA's "failure" to provide a set of common subsidy and anti-dumping codes and observed that it had done nothing to stop US trade harassment. The handbook claimed the Liberals would "take advantage of the Clinton administration's interest in improving these agreements" to seek an anti-dumping code, a subsidies code, a more effective dispute resolution mechanism, agreed labor and environmental standards, and "the same energy protection as Mexico."

Recognizing that NAFTA was distinctly unpopular in Canada and had still to be approved by the US Congress, the US was nervous over what direction Mr. Chrétien would take as prime minister. That the Liberals did not choose a revisionist approach to NAFTA was a triumph of reason over rhetoric. Before the elec-

tion diplomatic professionals had predicted this happy outcome, but we on the US side had received no private assurances.

In office, Prime Minister Chrétien has proved to be a political genius; as far as domestic politics are concerned, he evidently has the equivalent of perfect pitch. Seven years into his mandate, his personal popularity remains undented and attacks on his fiscal probity have no resonance. The extended opposition crescendo over the financial follies attending the HRDC's remarkable pattern of grant distribution is accepted as business as usual. If the Prime Minister's riding gets as much federal largesse as all of Alberta, the answer is for Calgary to vote Liberal. Although Prime Minister Chrétien has been greatly helped by a rising economy that has permitted low inflation, balanced budgets, and spare cash for adroit federal expenditures (e.g., the Millennium Scholarship Fund) the Prime Minister's personal command over his caucus and his ability to control the domestic political agenda is remarkable—even given a tattered/scattered opposition currently intent on reinventing itself. Despite Stockwell Day's testosterone injection for the Canadian Alliance, a third mandate is the Liberals' to lose.

Unfortunately, Mr. Chrétien's domestic virtually "perfect pitch" is matched by a tin ear for foreign affairs. Indeed, despite three decades in politics, he arrived as prime minister remarkably untutored in national security or international affairs. Despite his many cabinet positions, he was never defence minister, and his short tour as foreign minister in the transient Turner government is not even mentioned in *Straight from the Heart*. Indeed, if his autobiography reveals any interest in foreign affairs, it reflects an abiding suspicion of the United States. Although there is perfunctory recognition that the US is "our best friend," it appears that Mr. Chrétien regards the friendship as a role to which Canada is condemned. For example, he characterizes the American dream as a "mirage" and he criticizes virtually every aspect of the United States, including our health care, our trade, energy and investment policies, and our arms control proposals.

It is interesting that some of Mr. Chrétien's most obvious second-term domestic contretemps have had sources in foreign relations. Thus the Government's attempt to assure the security of Indonesian leader Suharto during the 1997 APEC evolved into a battle over the limits

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Canada in the driver's seat?

of free speech for Canadian citizens, the juridical ramifications of which continue into a third year. Ottawa would have been better served to have told Suharto's goons that it would guarantee their master's personal security, but that Canadians would protest, and Suharto could come or not under those terms. Likewise, the tempest over Prime Minister Chrétien's failure to attend King Hussein's funeral (which was not just a mistake but a stupidity) was rooted in a fundamental misunderstanding of foreign affairs: Leaders "suck it up" and go to these events—if only to schmooze with each other. Mr. Chrétien was at least consistent in not going to the funeral of Morocco's King Hassan—an error presumably repeated to justify his earlier mistake. Incidentally, if there really had been a serious logistical/transport problem in attending King Hussein's funeral, Ottawa could have asked the US to help, and we would have taken him along on Air Force One—despite the Prime Minister's disparaging open-microphone comments about President Clinton at the NATO Summit in Madrid in 1997.

Finally, the Prime Minister's extended Middle East trip in April degenerated into "gotcha" journalism made possible only by his blithe ignorance—and an oblivious unwillingness to master his briefing books and/or absorb the counsel of accompanying diplomatic professionals. Consequently, his approach appeared to be to "wing it" and quip through a long series of hot-button issues: Jerusalem; water rights; the return of Palestinian refugees; and UDI for a Palestinian state. For any friend of Canada, it was embarrassing.

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Still, the old adage of where you sit determines where you stand remains true, and even Canada's severest critics would not characterize Prime Minister Chrétien as an enemy of the United States. He did delay an official visit to the US until immediately before his 1997 election campaign, when the absence of such a visit would have been a political negative. During his first mandate, the US was a great place for skiing (in Vail) or golfing (in Florida) but not for official banquets. And his subsequent visits have frequently been so low-profile that one would think he was visiting a mistress rather than meeting with a neighbor. We can project, however, a formal official visit to Washington early in the new administration—one also calculated to provide appropriate visuals for the next federal campaign, in the now unlikely event that it does not take place this fall.

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The 1993 election was characterized by two dramatic events: the virtual annihilation of the Tories and, even more compellingly, the surge of the separatist *Bloc Québécois* to the status of Official Opposition in Parliament. The abstract, intellectualized grappling over the role of Quebec in Canada during the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accord debates was to become a concrete challenge to the political integrity of the country. Foreign affairs were distinctly secondary to domestic stability.

Of course, the demise of the Soviet Union, the end of apartheid in South Africa, the restoration of democracy throughout Latin America (except in Cuba), reconciliation between Israel and the PLO, and suppression of the Iraqi threat to the Persian Gulf also eliminated many of the neuralgic points of difference between Liberal ideology and previous US foreign policy. If peace had broken out all over, arms control was universally loved, democracy was the wave of the present and United Nations peacekeeping the wave of the future, the Canadian need for "third options" was dramatically reduced.

In this regard, it is interesting that Prime Minister Chrétien chose André Ouellet to head the External Affairs (subsequently Foreign Affairs and International Trade) ministry rather than Lloyd Axworthy, who had been the foreign affairs critic while the Liberals were in opposition. Also acting as the Prime Minister's Quebec lieutenant, Mr. Ouellet was, to put it politely, unversed in international relations. What he had, however, was a solid sense of Canada's priorities and an apparent willingness to listen to his professional diplomats. Instead of grandiose web-spinning ideology, there was now a substantial air of pragmatism to Canadian foreign affairs, almost at times making it appear as an annex of domestic policy. Prime Minister Chrétien led "Team Canada" trade missions to major potential economic partners such as China and Eastern Europe and downplayed the human rights concerns that had driven previous Liberal governments.

Consequently, with the exception of Cuba (see below), US-Canadian bilateral relations were essentially collegial. Having leaped the NAFTA hurdle, with Ottawa (despite campaign rhetoric) pragmatically accepting the agreement essentially as written, we settled into addressing the rolling laundry list of trade complaints. Many of these are akin to dermatological conditions: They don't kill you, but they are irritating and they never go away. Thus, almost annually, we address salmon, split-run magazines, wheat, softwood lumber, dairy, border transit, and the like. The emphasis is less on solutions, which usually are regarded as in the "too hard" box, but on "fixes" that will get us past the crisis of the day. Essentially, these issues are handled by diplomatic technicians in embassies and capitals who have substantive expertise and rely occasionally on high-level political intervention to solve specific problems. And don't worry: The current agreements on lumber, salmon, and magazines will be found to have loopholes that stimulate new generations of complaints and renegotiations. Even "acid rain" is returning to the bilateral agenda, with charges and countercharges to the effect that both countries are exporting smog.

On multilateral issues, relations were also congenial. If Canada was unenthusiastic about the manner in which the US was willing to intervene militarily in Haiti, Foreign Minister Ouellet nevertheless recognized that the substantial Haitian contingent in his Montreal riding and its support for federalism in Quebec required a Canadian role on the island. Canadian backing for Ukraine's fledgling democracy complemented US interests in the fragments of the former Soviet Union, but it also played to another important Canadian ethnic constituency. Canada provided naval craft for international patrols in the Persian Gulf (and coincidentally showcased its new frigates to possible buyers in the region). Canada continued to participate frequently in UN peacekeeping missions backed by the US, and though

the complexities of creating something looking like peace in former Yugoslavia coincidental with the Dayton Accord were endlessly intricate they were not bilaterally contentious.

Early in the Chrétien administration, Ottawa directed a baseline parliamentary "White Paper" to reexamine national priorities. Canada's objective was for "good management" of its relationship with the US, not "good relations." There was a greater need for Canadians to understand US goals and objectives and to appreciate our international responsibilities. Privately, US officials were told that even NATO membership was under review. Although Canada elected to continue its association with NATO, Ottawa's level of enthusiasm for the alliance and other national security concerns had clearly diminished with the end of the Cold War. Thus immediately prior to the visit of Secretary of Defense William Perry in May 1994, Canada unilaterally renounced the agreement permitting the US to test cruise missiles over Canadian territory. Ostensibly, the action was the consequence of a resolution passed by Young Liberals at a Liberal Party Conference in Ottawa. Canadian government officials professed embarrassment over the lack of consultation, but insisted that the action could not be reversed—a claim that was hardly credible considering the Prime Minister's iron control over his party and caucus. Nevertheless, Secretary Perry politely indicated that our side had not anticipated extending the agreement. It leaves one wondering whether the Young Liberals could scuttle the bilateral agreement over the Nanoose torpedo testing range in British Columbia whenever they next meet.

As US ambassador to Canada from 1993-1996, former Michigan governor James Blanchard was an excellent politician. And that is not a slam at politicians, whose requirements for success overlap in several categories with diplomats'. Thus Blanchard, who is correctly regarded as the best US ambassador to Canada in many years, was enthusiastic and vigorous on the diplomatic (read "campaign") social circuit. Likewise, he was adroit in managing key short-term fixes to specific problems—Pacific Coast salmon, for instance, which he settled with the "Codfather," Fisheries Minister Brian Tobin. He also pressed successfully to update the antiquated and often annoying *Civil Aviation Agreement*. Such jobs required skills akin to legislative maneuvering, and Ambassador Blanchard had them in abundance.

For a politician, knowledge is power and is best held closely for future advantage. By contrast, for a diplomat, knowledge must be communicated and reported to the capital, both to provide an informed basis for future instructions and to create a historical record to which a constantly rotating bureaucracy can refer. Blanchard did not appear to understand or appreciate the reporting function of diplomacy, and nowhere was this tendency more apparent than in the US-Canada-Quebec interlock.

Blanchard's memoir, *Behind the Embassy Door*, which could have been subtitled *How I Saved Canada*, recounts his orchestration of US support for Canadian unity during the 1995 Quebec sovereignty referendum. His account makes it clear that early on he believed the United States' pre-1995 "mantra" on Canadian unity implied that we were indifferent to Canada's fate, and he sought to strengthen our support with vigorous statements delivered by senior US officials, ultimately including the President. He describes in detail how he was extensively briefed by Canadian government pollsters and consulted by senior officials, including Prime Minister Chrétien, throughout the referendum campaign. Unfortunately, the strong presidential statement endorsing Canadian unity that the Ambassador was ultimately able to deliver, although much appreciated by the federalists, was released on the day that Mr. Chrétien and separatist leader Lucien Bouchard dramatically addressed Quebeckers and had commensurately reduced effect. Nevertheless, success has the proverbial "thousand fathers" and Ambassador Blanchard can credibly claim to share pride of paternity.

During the process, however, details of Ambassador Blanchard's activities went largely unshared with US authorities. It is perhaps understandable that senior embassy officials would not have been privy to what he was saying by telephone to the White House, but they were also in the dark about his relations with key Canadian officials. Nor was it known at the time that Reform leader Preston Manning anticipated the need to divide Canadian debt if the separatists won the referendum and had asked US advice on the topic. Subsequently, this embarrassing revelation reduced the likelihood for frank exchanges between Manning and Blanchard's successor. Almost as intriguing is Blanchard's February 1996 exchange on Canadian unity with Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard and his subsequent recounting of this conversation to Prime Minister Chrétien. There

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'Castro appears to weave a special hypnotic magic for Canadians.'

was no follow-up with Bouchard and no official account of the discussions—at least not in normal diplomatic channels.

Blanchard never seemed to understand the depth of Canadian commitment to bureaucratic negotiation on bilateral issues, which he dismissed as "nit-picking" obstructionism. He seemed to believe that because we were working vigorously to promote Canadian national unity, Ottawa should offer reciprocal gestures in areas such as split-run magazines and UN resolutions on Cuba. For example, he notes with approval that the US elected not to push dairy product concerns before the referendum as Canadian compromises could have affected francophone support for federalism, but he clearly hoped that Ottawa would be accommodating in other areas. The possibility that Canadians had concluded we were working for Canadian national unity because it was in our interest (so they owed us nothing for it) never seems to have crossed his mind. Another possibility is that the federal government and its bureaucracy always believed (perhaps blithely but ultimately correct) that it would win the referendum and that ancillary concessions on bilateral issues were therefore unnecessary. In any case, a tougher-minded US approach would have proposed direct linkages between support for Canadian national unity and specific bilateral problems.

Whatever may have been true before the 1995 Quebec referendum, one has the impression that after it Canadian officials implicitly concluded that they had locked in US support for national unity at the highest levels. Because our support is deep and unquestionable, this removes any requirement for Ottawa to "pay" for it. Indeed, President Clinton's gratuitous endorsement of Canadian national unity at the October 1999 Mont-Tremblant conference on federalism was reportedly an unrequested and virtually *ad lib*, unscripted response to points scored earlier by separatists. This freedom gives Canadian diplomats greater ideological flexibility, as has been demonstrated during the second Chrétien mandate.

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The post-referendum period also coincided with the departure of Foreign Minister Ouellet and the arrival of Lloyd Axworthy in the summer of 1996. As foreign minister, Axworthy immediately proceeded to shake up DFAIT and distinctly altered the previously more accommodating Canadian approach to bilateral relations with the US.

Mr. Axworthy, who announced his retirement from politics in September of this year, was doubtless well qualified and trained in foreign relations. It was clearly the ministerial position for which he lusted, and he barely tolerated his position as Human Resources minister (where he was most memorable for changing UI to EI). That said, Mr. Axworthy was an ideologue who appeared to gain greater personal pleasure from finding ways not to accommodate US interests than the reverse. He presumably believed that with his long experience and youthful familiarity with the US he could provide us with the benefit of his knowledge for our own good. If his and our versions of US national interest varied, clearly we didn't understand what was best for us.

When Mr. Axworthy's actions were coincident with US interests, such as in Kosovo, it was for his own reasons and driven by his own logic. He stood clearly on the left in international relations, a position that dates from his graduate studies at Princeton in the 1960s. One cannot doubt that he believed in his views; but he seemed to enjoy them most when they most irritated the US. True, upon assuming his position, the new foreign minister emphasized his desire for good relations with the US. At that juncture, we took counsel of our hopes; we were wrong. Mr. Axworthy's obvious efforts to "do a Pearson" and secure a Nobel Peace Prize would be more worthy had they not so regularly set him against US interests. His emphasis on "soft power" was fundamentally flawed: Someone with a big stick

can elect to walk softly; someone with no stick doesn't have a choice.

United States-Canadian differences over Cuba have gone on for so long that they have become axiomatic in our relationship. Castro appears to weave a special hypnotic magic for Canadians. Havana is a sort of Mecca for Liberal politicians, and one wonders if their desire to engage Castro is genetically imprinted. At times, when there was little bilateral friction between Canada and the US, some of us suspected that this point of disagreement was required to demonstrate Canadian independence. Today, it provides the backdrop for other irritations.

Essentially, the US believes that Canada is on the wrong side of history in providing support to the Cuban regime, and that if Castro now professes a desire to be a good neighbor, it is only because he has lost the ability to be a bad neighbor. Thus we often see Canadian "engagement" with Castro less as a principled outreach to the Cuban people than as a calculated effort to develop economic advantage. Some still remember Prime Minister Trudeau's 1976 speech in Cuba which he concluded by shouting "Viva Castro! Viva Cuba!"—a highlight of the Trudeau years re-played many times on CBC during the national reflections prompted by the late Prime Minister's death. For the US, however, it was the diplomatic equivalent of being prodded with a lighted cigar.

Forgive us if Americans enjoyed an "I told you so snicker" at the 1999 Canadian contretemps over Cuba (which has now been swept under the carpet). For those with short memories: When four Cuban dissidents were jailed for attempting to exercise the basic political rights we all take for granted, DFAIT devised a neat scenario: a Cuba visit by the foreign minister; a follow-up trip by the Prime Minister; some polite urgings that the dissidents be released; acquiescence by a statesmanlike Castro; the dissidents' triumphant flight to Canada, perhaps even a heady public relations appearance from the visitors gallery in Parliament. Another triumph for soft power's engagement tactics and, of course, an illustration of their superiority over the archaic Cold War-style confrontations of the United States. Unfortunately, instead of accommodating Ottawa's scenario, Mr. Castro, who has executed thousands of opponents over the years, played to form and delivered harsh prison sentences for the four dissenters.

Ottawa's subsequent huffy reassessment of bilateral relations (what we used to call an "agonizing reappraisal") ended predictably: No significant sanctions—no halt to investment, no discouragement of tourism, no breaking or even suspension of relations. Cuba's government is described in the 1999 *US Human Rights Report* as continuing "systematically to violate fundamental civil and political rights of its citizens." It is not as if stern action would not have been justified.

Most recently Canadians have been amused at the contortions performed by US presidential candidates maneuvering to be simultaneously on all sides of the issue of returning Elian Gonzales to Cuba. Canadians have delighted in criticizing United States policy toward Cuba as hypocritical, in thrall to Cuban-Americans, and (most damning of all) unsuccessful. On this last point, one can agree: It has not been successful—yet. Of course, neither was the United States' "impractical," "ideological," and "confrontational" refusal to recognize Soviet control over Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. We stood on that principle for almost 50 years, keeping their embassies open in Washington even when there was virtually no one still alive from their original diplomatic list. In the end, history proved us correct. In that regard, one might recommend that Canada focus only on short-term investments in Cuba, as any democratic successor regime is hardly likely to be enthusiastic about Ottawa's generation-long embrace of Castro.

Probably no Canadian policy in recent years more irritated the US politico-military establishment than the Ottawa/Axworthy campaign to eliminate antipersonnel landmines (APL). Driven by media visuals of injuries to innocent civilians in third world states where civil/guerrilla wars continue to be waged, the "Ottawa process" appeared inspired more by woolly humanitarianism than by any calculation of the consequences for the combat forces that would have to live with such policy. Canada simply ignored the legitimate military value of APLs, which are used in defensive operations, particularly to protect anti-tank mine fields from easy detection and removal, and are an important part of the Korean peninsula's demilitarized zone defenses. That Mr. Axworthy apparently also ignored the views of the Canadian military on APL policy is indicative, if apparently not relevant: Canadian forces presumably are not prohibited from sheltering behind US-deployed APLs.

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The upshot has been a meaningless, feel-good agreement, signed by Canada in March 1999 and by an assortment of other trivial military powers. No major military state has signed it, and it simply generates greater risk and vulnerability for NATO and US combat soldiers (but no unpleasant visuals to bother the CBC).

If Canadian landmine policy was misguided, Ottawa's pronouncements on NATO's nuclear strategy were breathtakingly arrogant in their ignorance. For over 55 years, the world has lived with nuclear weapons. And for over 55 years, such weapons have not been used. To suggest that a world in which states choose to acquire nuclear weapons is inherently unstable and dangerous is simply wrong: No nuclear weapons states have ever fought each other. The NATO countries—and Canada, in particular—have sheltered behind nuclear deterrence policy to their immeasurable benefit.

Having so benefited for over half a century, Canada's House of Commons Foreign Relations Committee and subsequently the Government's official statement immediately prior to the April 1999 NATO Alliance Washington Summit, took upon themselves to suggest that NATO's strategic policy was in need of review. Foreign Minister Axworthy re-emphasized these points before the December NATO Ministerial meeting and has belabored them subsequently.

To be blunt, there is an air of arrogant sanctimony about implicit Canadian endorsement of nuclear "no first use." In circumstances where for the foreseeable future the United States military will be doing the dying for Western defense, it requires considerable temerity for the Canadian government to tell Washington how we should be defending ourselves or even deterring attacks on our forces. It would be one thing if Canadians were making a sacrifice themselves; saying "We will not use our nuclear weapons first." Then the Canadian government would have to explain to its citizens why it was unwilling to defend Canadian soldiers with its most powerful weapons. But—need anyone be reminded?—Canada has no nuclear weapons and thus no inherent ability to so defend itself or deter such attack. What Canada now suggests, in some perverse form of logic, is that the United States should weaken its ability to defend itself while maintaining its commitment to defend Canada. With friends like this ... !

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Happily, the ritualized Canadian internal argument over renewing the North American Air Defense (NORAD) agreement (which had been due to expire in May 2001) is now over. With the decision to extend the previous agreement until 2006 Canadians have determined they will remain relevant so far as participation in North American air surveillance is concerned. In all honesty, the current NORAD agreement is almost entirely to Canadian benefit; it provides continued training and education in, and access to, the most sophisticated electronic communications and intelligence gathering systems in the world—systems that are fiscal light- years beyond the Canadian forces' ability to obtain independently.

The comity achieved on NORAD unfortunately has not been experienced in discussions on the antiballistic missile defense, however labeled. In essence, the argument is philosophical: What threats are really threatening? At what point does defense become offensive? In an era of global connectivity, can one country opt out of another's problems—especially if they are intimately related neighbors? So National Missile Defense (NMD) is another round in the debate that the *Anti-Ballistic Missile* (*ABM*) *Treaty* has never resolved: What type of anti-missile defense is legal, effective, and affordable? The US has passed the buck to the next Administration, but the issue remains.

Essentially, the United States believes that it continues to have real enemies: states (rogue or regular) that could have sufficient interest in preventing our action or punishing previous action that our cities and citizens could be at risk within the foreseeable future. Perhaps we are wrong in our fears—we would certainly prefer to be wrong—but we are not omniscient. Presumably, the issue would be more pertinent to Ottawa if Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal were at risk from such threats. But they are not, and consequently Foreign Minister Axworthy felt free to expound upon the virtues of the now 28-year old bilateral US-USSR *ABM Treaty*—as if he were a direct party to it. If Washington were to be comparably presumptuous about a Canadian concern, Ottawa would be incensed.

We do not now know the NMD outcome. Missile testing and negotiations with Russia and North Korea are still very much in play. After gratuitously suggesting that NMD would "set loose the demons" of a nuclear arms race and publishing a schoolmarmish instructional letter to the US in a Swedish newspaper, Foreign

Minister Axworthy curbed his hyperbole. The regret is that it took so long and that Mr. Axworthy chose to engage loudly, in public, on a topic that was and remains far more a US than a Canadian concern.

One of the more curious events of the past year was Ambassador Raymond Chrétien's May 31 speech to the Professional Association of Canadian Executives. The spin and counterspin associated with the public release of the speech provided some revealing insight into Canadian attitudes toward bilateral relations; attitudes that one can assume belong to the Prime Minister uncle as well as the Ambassador nephew.

The Ambassador identified Canada's overwhelming challenge as managing its bilateral relationship with the US to Canada's (not mutual) benefit, and he urged every member of his audience of senior Canadian bureaucrats to keep this challenge in mind when making recommendations to their political ministers. It was useful for Washington, accustomed to thinking of Canadians as "nice guys," to be reminded of this primary Canadian objective.

The most bruited-about element of the junior Mr. Chrétien's speech, the casual balancing of the pluses and minuses of Vice President Gore and Governor Bush, in fact occupied merely 15 lines of a 12-page speech. They cannot be spun into neutrality, however; there was an unquestioned preference for VP Gore. ("He knows us. He's a friend of Canada. Very strong on the environment. Still grateful to Canada ... Probably would make life easier for us ..."). Nor is that set of judgments surprising. There is a natural, semi-automatic preference for known qualities; most diplomats correctly assume that it will be easier on them (and their countries) to deal with familiar faces rather than new regimes. Thus "President Gore's" administration would have platitudes and attitudes with which Ambassador Chrétien would be familiar, if not always in agreement.

The problem for Ambassador Chrétien (and thus for Canada) was that, no matter how inadvertently, he allowed his—and presumably the Prime Minister's—personal and professional preference to become public. The temporizing throw-away line "We will deal with whomever is elected ..." was meaningless. Of course Canada would, just as, following the next election, Washington would deal with "Prime Minister Alexa McDonough" if she were to win. But you did not find former Ambassador Blanchard suggesting to general audiences in 1993 that the Clinton administration was worried over vocal

CP Picture Archive

Minuet with small sticks: Chrétien and Clinton at Mt. Tremblant

Liberal criticism of NAFTA or Mr. Chrétien's initial reluctance as opposition leader to support action to reverse Iraq's seizure of Kuwait—regardless of what our embassy in Ottawa may have noted privately at the time. Nor will you find anyone other than a brain dead US official expressing a preference for a particular Canadian politician in the next federal election.

It is fortunate for Canada that Ambassador Chrétien was transferred to Paris. He had made his preferences too public to be ignored in a Bush administration and would even have been an embarrassment in a Gore regime. There are many issues (Cuba, Sudan, North Korea, payment of UN dues, NATO nuclear modernization, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, border controls, and weapons transfer security) on which Canadian views are often 180 degrees at variance with US positions. Doubtless Ambassador Kergin will carry the same substantive instructions on these topics, but at least he doesn't have the diplomatic burden of pretending that his public comments were abstract hypotheticals rather than concrete criticisms. And Americans don't have to pretend we believe him.

Together, the reassignment of Ambassador Chrétien to Paris and the departure of Foreign Minister Axworthy to academia, sans Nobel Peace Prize or offer of the position of UN Secretary General, open the door to tactical revision of our bilateral affairs. Mr. Axworthy's hec-

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The Axworthy era led to a Canadian foreign policy that was more shrill and less relevant—and not just in bilateral relations. At points Mr. Axworthy's actions seemed almost wilfully counterproductive. In February 1999, for example, he hectored the Turkish ambassador about giving accused Kurdish terrorist Abdullah Ocalan a fair trial. This approach was condescending at best and gave the impression of politically correct public posturing, but it was made even more fatuous by NATO's need barely a month later for Turkish bases to support air strikes against Yugoslav forces. And this past August, with two Canadians held by the Yugoslav military on suspicion of terrorism, he denounced Slobodan Milosevic as a "thug"—a description not lacking in accuracy, but not necessarily helpful diplomatically.

Bilaterally with the US, it became ever harder to resolve even second-level problems. For example, the issue of *International Traffic of Arms Regulations* (*ITAR*) was complicated by US impressions that Canadians had an attitude of bland indifference toward arms exports and border security. This impression, doubtless unfair, was reinforced by the casual initial comments of senior Canadian officials when a Montreal-based Algerian terrorist was caught with explosives while crossing the border in December 1999. The impression of "What, me worry?" drove the US to insist on greater regulatory rigor for a revised *ITAR*, which cost Canadian manufacturers long-standing access to US military contracts.

Every foreign minister operates within the constraints of the essential Canada-US power relationship, but each also puts a personal stamp on bilateral affairs. Foreign Minister Axworthy pushed the limits of civility, and Canadian interests suffered as a consequence. Canada puts great stock in regular election to rotating UN Security Council membership. In the past, Ottawa has benefited from US support, though recall that the alternative last time was Greece—an even greater irritant for US policy. If in the future Canada is grouped with Latin America for a rotating Security Council seat, it might be decades before the US supports Ottawa again.

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In times of both domestic tranquility and turmoil, national leaders often turn to foreign policy as a way to leave a legacy. Canadian prime ministers have been particularly adept at operating adroitly, initially within the confines of the British Empire, but, over the past 50 years, on a global stage. Some prime ministers have been impeccably prepared for such involvement, most obviously Lester Pearson; others such as Pierre Trudeau and Brian Mulroney, albeit initially untutored, became skillful practitioners. One could agree or disagree with their policies, but one still had to respect their commitment. Thus far during the Chrétien incumbency, however, Canadian diplomacy and foreign affairs have lacked a "Chrétien touch." Ottawa's foreign policy has been directed by its foreign ministers, with the Prime Minister often appearing as an abstracted onlooker.

This approach appears to reflect both the Prime Minister's management style and his apparent personal disinterest in the details of foreign policy. In handling his cabinet, Mr. Chrétien has a reputation for giving his ministers wide latitude, only reluctantly stepping into disputes, let alone replacing them as negotiator. In part, of course, this hands-off management style is possible because ministers operate within a well-understood framework of Liberal Party policies and objectives.

Mr. Chrétien came to adulthood as a virtually unilingual Quebec provincial; before election to parliament he had hardly ever traveled even in English Canada. His biographer, Lawrence Martin, provides endless detail on his youthful interests in domestic politics, but suggests no wider interest. As a consequence, although as prime minister Mr. Chrétien has traveled widely, much of his foreign travel (beyond vacations in the US) has been either scripted attendance at OPEC/G-8/UN meetings or "Team Canada" trade missions. There is no "Chrétien doctrine" reflecting the Prime Minister's specific interests and objectives to serve as a template for current Canadian foreign policy. This may be a regrettable shortcoming, in view of Canada's previously having carved a clear niche for itself during the Cold War confrontation. But it is not an absolute requirement for current Canadian foreign policy. What prime ministerial indifference does require, however, is the selection of a foreign minister who does not squander US-Canadian historical amity by needless sniping and confrontation.

The United States and Canada share an undefended 3,500 mile cliché. But it has become a cliché only through persistent,

active, bilateral effort; it was not somehow historically fated to evolve so happily. For many historical, demographic, economic, and cultural reasons, our border with Mexico is hardly as benign. Indeed, history is more likely to develop shared animosities along with shared boundaries; often, to know your neighbor is to loathe him.

The installation of a new foreign minister offers Ottawa the opportunity to pause and reassess. Fortunately, there are no immediate crises. The new US administration, whether headed by Mr. Bush or Mr. Gore, will afford a rationale for such re-thinking. Canada, after all, will need to determine what directions the US Government will be taking and what emphasis new personalities will put on US foreign policy priorities—a process that usually takes most of a year to sort out. A new US ambassador in Ottawa will also be part of the process.

It is not as if the US expects robotic Canadian support for or subservience to our every foreign policy view. That would be absurd—and Ottawa would never give it. One senior Canadian diplomat said "We will never surrender our right to yell 'Wait!' when you are at the top of your backswing." Irritating? Certainly. But the recent impression has been that Canada not only thinks we are duffers at the game, but is delighted at the opportunity to tell the world of our perceived inadequacies.

I want to close by embroidering my initial "gorilla/chimpanzee" metaphor. The essentially placid nature of the US gorilla remains unchanged. So far as Canadian interests are concerned, its potential for violence is thoroughly caged. But the chimpanzee has recently amused itself by poking sticks at the gorilla—and the beast is a bit red in the eye. At the moment, our differences remain jaw/jaw. They are, however, jaw/jaw through clenched teeth. The combination of a new Canadian foreign minister and a new US administration offers a fortuitous opportunity to refurbish the relationship.

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David T. Jones is a retired US diplomat who was Political Minister Counselor in Ottawa from 1992 to 1996. His opinions are his alone and are not shared by the Department of State or the US Government.