

NATIONALISM, REGIONAL IDENTITY
AND THE 'DEEP INTEGRATION' DEBATE IN CANADA¹

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Brian Bow, Dalhousie University (Halifax, NS)

Studies of regional integration in Europe, East Asia, and other parts of the world have emphasized the importance of the cultivation of a sense of common identity and shared challenges – what Karl Deutsch (1957) called “we-feeling.” North America has become extensively and intensively integrated over the last twenty years, and is now debating arguments for “deeper” forms of integration, in spite of the virtual absence of a sense of mutual identification across the three countries, and even any concerted effort to **create** such an identification. Whereas political elites in Europe and elsewhere have often tried to gather support for controversial policy coordination initiatives through an appeal to their importance in bringing forth a latent regional community, their counterparts in North America have generally done so by framing these kinds of agreements as ad hoc solutions to “technical” problems, and downplaying any broader community-building implications. Why is there so little support for the idea of a North American community, and what effects does this have on when, where, and how the process of regional integration moves forward? Where does sovereignty stand in the interplay between identity politics and regional integration? What, if anything, can the North American experience tell us about the forces that drive regional integration more generally?

This paper is a building block in a larger research project designed to answer these questions. The much narrower purpose of this paper is to survey the kinds of arguments that have been made in recent years, in support of and in opposition to further regional integration, and to try to relate them to the long-run historical evolution of Canadian debates about national identity and sovereignty. The main focus will be on mapping the contours of the debate in Canada, but there will also be some comparative reflection on parallel debates in the United States. This is a first draft, and it is largely an impressionistic one, without any well-developed method for systematic coding and counting of different kinds of arguments. It is a preliminary cataloguing of arguments and themes, to set the stage for the formal content analysis that will follow. In later stages of the larger research project, I plan to go beyond just mapping out the arguments, by trying to explain how and why particular rhetorical strategies were selected, and to try to assess whether and why particular rhetorical strategies have successfully influenced the target audience, by influencing policy-makers’ sense of their own options and priorities, by shifting the axes of debate or inflecting the language used by others in the elite/expert debate, and/or by having measurable effects on public opinion. Ultimately, the aim of the larger project is to understand the way that rival conceptions of identity and shared purpose have influenced the course of regional integration in North America.²

The paper is divided into five sections. In the first, I offer a very brief historical overview of the evolution of Canadian attitudes toward integration with the United States, and toward the US more generally. This is followed by a set of even briefer reflections on the historical evolution of American attitudes toward integrative arrangements with Canada. Next, I outline some of the main features of the regional (bilateral and

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² For clues about how this might be done, see, e.g.: Sell and Prakash 2004; Parsons 2003.

trilateral) integration agenda today, focusing on the most prominent sources of “policy friction” and the most important venues for developing and negotiating collaborative/integrative solutions.³

These two initial sections are mostly review of developments and debates which have already been extensively covered by others and are not particularly controversial. The third section of the paper presents my preliminary understanding of the nature and dynamics of contemporary Canadian debates over post-NAFTA, post-9/11 regional integration. Many of the high-profile players in the debate – such as the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE) and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) – do represent interests with a direct, economic stake in the outcome of the debate. But many more – including most of the academic and think-tank combatants – are driven mainly by some mixture of theoretical hunches and ideological commitments. The general public is generally disengaged from the debate, but, to the extent that the average Canadian cares about the integration question, that concern is animated mostly by the impulse to become involved in a very broad struggle over the symbolic politics of national identity and purposes. As the various players in the elite/expert debate grapple with one another in terms of complex economic projections, political calculations and legal interpretations, they are also experimenting with rhetorical strategies designed to resonate within the much broader arena of symbolic politics, seeking a way to frame the debate in a way that will hold together a winning political coalition at some point down the road.

The fourth section provides a general inventory of the different types of arguments being made for and against more ambitious forms of integrative policy coordination. Proponents of further integration continue to disagree about the form that post-NAFTA integration might take, and about whether or not it is politically feasible at this time, but they do seem to have arrived at a tacit agreement about why further integration is needed (compare, e.g., Schwanen 2004 and Gotlieb 2005). They also have tended to use similar kinds of arguments to respond to criticisms of policy harmonization and coordination. Opponents of further integration are also fairly diverse in their views, but there are a number of recurring themes running through their arguments. Some of these can be traced back to the “free trade election” of 1988, and even further back. But there have also been some striking changes over the last twenty years, in terms of both the substance and the style of prominent arguments against further integration.

The final section of the paper relates all of this – in a more speculative way – to the prospects for further North American integration, of one kind or another. I contend that the current debates surrounding the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) and other small-scale moves toward integration are mostly a “dress rehearsal” for the real debate, which is essentially in stasis, awaiting the resolution of profound political uncertainties in both Canada and the United States.

CANADA AND CONTINENTAL/REGIONAL INTEGRATION

One of the most striking aspects of national identity in Canada is the degree to which it is relational, rather than self-referential. Other societies tend to define themselves mostly in terms of common ethnicity, language, religion, and/or historical experience. Canadian national identity is studded with each of these elements, but none of them is solid enough to hold the country together, so they have historically been bolstered – and sometimes even displaced – by a focus on the ways Canada is separate and different from the United States.⁴ This seems to happen all the time in small countries living in the shadow of bigger, very similar “cousins” (e.g., Austria vis-à-vis Germany, New Zealand vis-à-vis Australia). But, in the Canadian experience, it has been powerfully reinforced by the political legacies of the Empire Loyalists, and the carefully-cultivated a “mythology

³ By “policy frictions” here I mean differences in governing practices or standards which create obstacles for business. The concept is essentially the same as what Sylvia Ostry (1997) called “system friction.”

⁴ See, e.g., Gwyn 1996. For a general argument about why this kind of thing tends to happen in many different social contexts, see Lalonde 2002.

of rejectionism”: though Loyalists came to Canada for many different reasons, Loyalist elites – particularly in Ontario – succeeded in embedding into the national consciousness the idea that their migration was a principled rejection of the American Revolution, and the values it represented, and that Canada itself was therefore predicated on an alternative political philosophy and way of life (Nossal 2007). This tendency to think about Canada as “not-America” has had powerful and enduring effects on the way Canadians think about the bilateral relationship and the implications of interdependence and integration.

Canadian leaders have historically faced two main state-building challenges: holding together the two “founding nations,” and stitching together a network of east-west economic connections in defiance of established north-south market forces. In responding to these challenges, Canadian political elites have not only tried to cultivate a strong sense of national identity and solidarity, but more particularly to try to shape that identity in ways that would be supportive of a robust, activist federal government. Given the distinctive Red Tory streak running through Canadian society, this statist element in the national identity could certainly stand on its own. But in practice it has historically been propped up by invidious comparisons with the US. What made Canadian society distinctive, and distinctively virtuous, it was argued – or at least implied – was that it was not as torn by “mob rule,” not as over-run by rampant capitalism, and not as corrupt and scandal-plagued as the United States.

Free trade, or “reciprocity” as it was then usually called, was always in the background for Canadian policy-makers in the last quarter of the 19th century, and into the early 20th as well. Canadian farmers’ demands for greater access to American markets, and the flickering threat of a potential tariff war, kept it at the forefront of Canadian officials’ minds, but their American counterparts were generally not very receptive, particularly given Canadian insistence on continuing protections for Ontario manufacturing. John A. Macdonald had pursued a “national policy” backed by substantial tariffs, but he had also made quiet overtures to Washington about free trade. That didn’t stop him, of course, from condemning his Liberal rivals’ open advocacy of “unlimited reciprocity” in 1891, arguing that free trade would inevitably weaken Canada’s ties to Britain and lead to its absorption by the US.

The same kinds of arguments were replayed again in the election of 1911. Laurier’s Liberals congratulated themselves on having worked out a perfect deal with Washington: a reciprocity treaty that opened markets for farmers, but held on to protections for most manufacturers. But they were ultimately swept away by a tidal wave of pro-imperial and anti-American arguments, spurred by railway and banking interests that had prospered under the national policy (Hillmer and Granatstein 1994, 35-45). The government’s advocacy of the deal was justified mainly in terms of the concrete economic interests it would serve; opponents, on the other hand, attacked its *political* implications: just as in 1891, the main arguments were again that reciprocity would weaken the tie to Britain, draw Canada into orbit around the US, and open the door for creeping assimilation or annexation (Granatstein 1997).

After Laurier’s electoral destruction in 1911, Canadian political elites came to see free trade as an “untouchable” issue. When American officials quietly proposed a trade agreement in 1947, McKenzie King rebuffed them on political grounds, not economic ones (Hart 1989). Fear of free trade didn’t stop successive Canadian governments from signing on for other, more limited and less formal kinds of integrative policy coordination, particularly after the end of the Second World War (e.g., NORAD, the Defence Production Sharing Agreements, the Auto Pact, etc.).

Though there was no free trade agreement, there was a tremendous expansion of trade and investment ties between the two countries in the early Cold War decades, fuelling impressive economic growth. This fed into a greater sense of national confidence in the 1960s, supported by reflections of progress and international recognition (centennial, Expo), and the arrival of an energetic new generation of political elites. But Canada’s deepening dependency on US markets and financial capital also stirred up growing anxiety about the possible political implications. Would the United States be able to exploit this profoundly-asymmetrical

interdependence, many wondered and worried, to compel Canada to change its macroeconomic policies, its regulations, or even its foreign policy? These anxieties were reinforced by grave new doubts about the US as an alliance leader (Vietnam) and as an economic partner and neighbour (balance of payments crisis, race riots, urban decay). And these developments in turn had a kind of “reverse halo effect” on many Canadians’ perceptions of American society and the American people, triggering anti-American impulses and prompting calls for concerted efforts to “diversify” the country’s diplomatic and economic relationships.

The late 1970s and early 1980s were a time of severe testing for Canada: the kind of time when policy options which had previously been ruled out of bounds are grudgingly accepted as real possibilities, or even inevitabilities (Hart 2004). The Canadian and American economies were both buffeted by a severe recession, which triggered a wave of trade protectionism in the United States. This wave was made more forceful by Congress’ new inclination to make use of countervailing and anti-dumping measures to attack foreign competitors’ supposedly “unfair” trading practices. Under these pressures, the Trudeau government was compelled to give up on its interventionist agenda, and to seek some kind of integrative solution. Its initial response – in keeping with the pattern set down in previous decades – was to explore limited, sectoral trade agreements. When Mulroney replaced Trudeau in 1984, his instincts were similarly cautious, but American trade negotiators were not particularly receptive to sector-by-sector proposals. The new prime minister’s advisors argued that the only way to get the Americans’ attention, and thereby secure the kind of deal that Canada desperately needed, was to pursue a more ambitious, package deal, which offered the US some of the things that they really wanted (e.g., removal of restrictions on energy, trade in services) (Doern and Tomlin 1991, 108-110). Thus Mulroney made his “leap of faith” to free trade, and the Canada-US relationship moved into a new phase.

The 1988 election – like the 1911 election – was essentially a referendum on free trade, and a “test” of voters’ perceptions of its broader meaning and implications. Public opposition to the agreement coalesced into an extraordinarily large and diverse – yet remarkably cohesive – political coalition, which was mainly “held together by the glue of economic nationalism” (Macdonald 2003, 228; Ayres 1998). Most of the major labour unions in Canada had been proponents of freer trade during the early Cold War years, but turned increasingly to protectionism in the 1970s. That brought them into alignment with a variety of different “civil society” organizations, ranging from environmental activists to women’s advocacy groups. Their arguments against free trade occasionally referred to the specific economic impacts that the agreement was expected to have on particular sectors or groups within the Canadian economy. For the most part, though, they focused their rhetorical efforts on a set of more general arguments about the social and political implications of free trade, just as a previous generation of free trade critics had done in 1911.

The analytical critiques of economic integration were much more sophisticated in 1988 than before, identifying specific policy instruments that were expected to be compromised by the agreement, and explaining the resulting effects this might have on the federal government’s capacity to control the development of natural resources, protect and enhance cultural distinctiveness, and provide the kinds of social services that Canadians had come to expect (Ayres 1998; Gabriel and Macdonald 2003). These very clinical arguments about the mechanics of economic and political autonomy, moreover, were supplemented and reinforced by emotional appeals that played on Canadians’ sense of their national vulnerability. Again, as in 1911, the opponents of integration suggested that there would be a “slippery slope” effect, with economic integration inevitably leading to political integration (Nossal 1985). And, again, there were suggestions that the proponents of free trade were essentially an American “fifth column,” either out of political naïveté or something like treason. These two elements came together very clearly in the Liberals’ “erasing the line” campaign ad, which showed shadowy Canadian and American figures working together to rub out the border between Canada and the US.

Free trade might have been killed off again in 1988, if not for three crucial developments. First, while opposition to the free trade agreement was quite substantial, it was effectively split between the Liberals and the NDP, making it possible for the Conservatives to put together a solid majority. Second, there had been a

little-appreciated tectonic shift in the alignment of economic interests over the preceding twenty years, as Ontario manufacturers and financial interests, which had historically been the leading opponents of free trade, emerged as active proponents of a deal (Nossal 2007). Export-oriented manufacturers, particularly those with transnationalized production and distribution networks (e.g., auto parts), had become profoundly dependent on continuing access to American suppliers and markets, and were thus increasingly apprehensive about the outbreak of protectionist impulses south of the border. Whereas the “Toronto Eighteen” had paid for a highly-effective newspaper campaign against reciprocity in 1911, now Ontario business interests financed a powerful media campaign in support of the trade deal and Mulroney’s re-election (Granatstein 1997).

And third, the proponents of free trade worked out subtle and effective rhetorical strategies designed to blunt their opponents’ arguments about the broader political implications of free trade. Free trade backers developed highly-technical arguments about how the deal would strengthen the Canadian economy, by enhancing competitiveness, locking in market reforms, and securing a dispute-resolution mechanism that would deflect US “trade remedy” attacks. But equally important in carrying the day was the pro-free trade coalition’s willingness to fight back on questions about national identity and sovereignty. Liberal leader John Turner played the “fifth column” card in one of the televised campaign debates (“I believe you have sold us out...”), but Mulroney effectively trumped it with an indignant defence of his patriotism and his party’s loyalty to the national interest writ large. More generally, pro-free trade partisans tended to imply that their critics were either hopelessly naïve in their confidence in state-led economic strategies, or downright paranoid in their anxiety about sliding down the “slippery slope” to virtual annexation.

The results of the 1988 election, and the long run of economic prosperity that followed it, have permanently altered Canadian thinking about regional integration. In fact, if Canada’s decision to sign on for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is any test, then the relative absence of controversy surrounding that decision suggests that Canadians have come to accept the idea of further integration as politics-as-usual. Critics have argued that the CUFTA and NAFTA have led to massive job losses in Canada, and generally hurt the Canadian economy (e.g., Seccareccia 2005). But opinion poll numbers show that a majority of Canadians believe that free trade is essential to the country’s long-term prosperity and development (e.g., Nanos 2007). Many Canadians have abiding concerns about the trends behind freer trade, and there may be substantial opposition to any particular trade-liberalization proposal, but integration itself is apparently no longer the untouchable “third rail” that it was thought to be through most of the 20th century. Poll data also suggests that Canadians are generally less worried about becoming more like the US in terms of their economic and social policies, except when it comes to certain totemic policies like universal health care (Hart 2004, 5-8).

But the last few years have proven that many Canadians still have deep reservations about being “too close” to the US, and that the reports of the death of anti-Americanism in Canada (Granatstein 1997) were decidedly premature. Just as the war in Vietnam and other sources of turmoil tended to reinforce traditional Canadian skepticism about getting in bed with the American elephant, so the war in Iraq and Canadians’ general mistrust of the Bush administration has apparently darkened their view of closer ties with the US more generally today.

Some of the traditional arguments, themes and images associated with anti-Americanism in Canada have apparently faded from sight, but there is still a residual anti-Americanism impulse which can have substantial effects on Canadian opinion and policies. What Katzenstein and Keohane (2006) call “social anti-Americanism” – reflexive maligning of American society for caring less about the needs of the community, and not doing enough to protect the poorest and weakest within it – still exists, but has receded somewhat since 1988 (see also Inglehart et al 1996). The Bush administration’s domestic policies were certainly the kind to stir up “social anti-Americanism” in Canada, but it was Bush’s foreign policy that captured Canadians’ attention, and inflamed their fears and resentments of the United States. One reflection of this is the striking discrepancy between poll numbers for Canadians’ views of the American people, which are still consistently positive, and their views of American foreign policy, which have been just as consistently negative over the last few years.

(e.g., Pew 2004).⁵ The war in Iraq, and the “war on terror” more generally, have triggered the same kinds of apprehensions about America’s supposedly-inherent proclivity for unilateralism, militarism and empire-building that we saw during the Vietnam War. What is most striking here is that Canadian reservations about the US today seem so similar to those in Germany, France, India and other places; in that sense, we may be seeing a transition away from a time when there was a distinctively Canadian way of worrying about the US (and thus a distinctively Canadian version of anti-Americanism) toward a more generic apprehension about American power.

Anti-Americanism has always been a feature of Canadian politics, but it has tended to take a relatively limited form, and to have only sporadic or marginal effects on Canadian policies. Familiarity may breed contempt,⁶ but it can also act as brake on stereotyping and the “hardening” of negative images into deeply-rooted prejudices. Because Canadians are so directly plugged into American society, through television, travel and family connections, their version of anti-Americanism tends to be a tempered one, with not much of the extremism and raw emotions that characterize anti-Americanism in other parts of the world (Bow, Katzenstein and Santa Cruz 2007). Nevertheless, many of the images and arguments from the past – enduring anxiety about a slippery slope to political absorption, anxiety about a “continentalist” fifth column, and the general tendency to think of Canada as “not-America” – continue to resonate in Canada today, and form an important part of the symbolic politics of post-NAFTA integration.

THE UNITED STATES AND CONTINENTAL/REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Historically, the US’ top priorities when it came to Canada and Mexico were to have political stability in the regional neighbourhood, and to have the freest possible access to valuable markets and investment opportunities and to vital natural resources (esp. oil, gas, and uranium). American policy-makers were generally inclined to secure these things, and to manage the dislocations of extensive interdependence, through informal bilateral arrangements (Holsti and Levy 1974). But they were prepared to pursue formal, integrative arrangements when necessary, particularly with Canada (e.g., the DPSA, the abortive energy agreement of the early 1960s, the Auto Pact, etc.), but also with Mexico (e.g., various border plans and agreements, natural gas agreements). American policy-makers were inclined to informalism partly because it was politically “easier” and partly because the Canadians seemed to prefer it; but there was still a widespread expectation that more systematic, formal integration of one kind or another would come eventually. US Undersecretary of State George Ball (1968, 113), for example, once described Canada’s state-building efforts in the 1960s as a “rearguard action against the inevitable.”

Both the perceived need for, and the political obstacles to, integration increased markedly in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As the US economy became more integrated with the world economy, economic interdependence began to bite harder on some interest groups. At the same time, the breakdown of the early Cold War “imperial presidency,” and the fragmentation of power within Congress, created more and more points of access for aggrieved interests to demand or oppose new integration initiatives. Reagan kick-started the turn toward regional integration in 1979, with campaign-trail talk of a “North American Accord.” This didn’t have much of an impact at the time, but the economic turbulence of the 1980s – both internationally and within the US – created conditions in which regional free trade became possible, and then essentially inevitable. The United States moved toward free trade with Canada partly to realize real economic gains, and to resolve bilateral diplomatic tensions, but the crucial motivation was a desire to put pressure on overseas trade rivals within the Uruguay Round of GATT, by showing the Europeans and Japan that the US had viable “regional”

⁵ A recent Environics poll (2005, 14) asked Canadians “what countries, if any, stand out as being a negative force in today’s world?” More than half identified the United States.

⁶ The historian J.B. Brebner once argued that “Americans are benevolently ignorant about Canada, while Canadians are malevolently well-informed about the United States.”

options (Winham and DeBoer-Ashworth 2002). The CUFTA barely registered on the radar for most Americans, and it was not particularly controversial on a national level. There were of course some interests that would be hurt by the deal, but they were unable to rally broad-based popular or Congressional opposition to the agreement (Hart and Dymond 1995).⁷

The NAFTA agreement, on the other hand, stirred up a firestorm of controversy in the US. There were several reasons why NAFTA had a rougher ride in 1993 than CUFTA did in 1988. The CUFTA debate awakened export-competing industries in the US to the dangers posed by regional free trade, catalyzing a coalition-building process which had finally produced concrete results by 1993. Popular awareness of, and anxiety about, “globalization” as a political issue had taken off over the preceding five years, and led to the formation of new civil society organizations mobilized to fight against the forces of globalization wherever they might appear. These concerns were much more acute when it came to Mexico than they had been with Canada, because it was easier to see the connection between low wages in Mexico and the danger that American investments and jobs might be moved south of the border, and – for some – it was easy to see how a deregulatory “race to the bottom” might lead to further impoverishment and environmental destruction in Mexico. And of course there were also growing anxieties about immigration and the “hispanicization” of American society (e.g., Huntington 2004). But there were also powerful reasons for the US to be supportive of free trade with Mexico at that time, beyond straightforward economic benefits, including a perceived need to “rescue” Mexico from the economic malaise and political disorder of the 1980s, by reinforcing and “locking in” the turn to liberal market reforms (Pastor 2001; see also Skonieczny 2001).

There has been extensive debate in the US, just as in Canada (and Mexico), about whether NAFTA has been good for the American economy. Skeptics say that Perot was right about the “giant sucking sound,” and thousands of US jobs have flown to Mexico. But supporters say that the jobs that have left were ones which cost the US economy more than they contributed (i.e., high-wage manufacturing jobs), and – in any event – those losses have been more than offset by new jobs created by NAFTA. This is still very much a live issue in the United States, as the Democrat primary in Ohio made clear, with both Clinton and Obama promising to “renegotiate” NAFTA on gaining the White House (Globe and Mail 2008).

The WTO has struggled through the ongoing Doha Round, but the US does not have the same kinds of incentives today to pursue region-building as a foil to difficult multilateral trade talks. There are two main kinds of rationales for the US to look toward post-NAFTA integration with Canada (with or without Mexico): First, there is the ongoing demand from constituents to eliminate or ameliorate policy frictions which obstruct cross-border business, education and travel. Second, there is a new post-9/11 impulse to enhance national security against unconventional threats, which might involve a “thickening” of the border at the 49th parallel, but might just as well involve some kind of “common security perimeter.” Given the obvious Canadian desperation to hold on to access to American markets, many have argued that there is a natural trade-off to be made, and bureaucrats on both sides of the border are busily searching for a new policy coordination formula that would reconcile America’s priority on security with Canada’s priority on continuing market access. The Smart Border Accord of 2002, and some of the peripheral arrangements that have gone with it (e.g., IBETs), represent substantial progress in this direction, but there are still significant frustrations on both sides. There are parallel issues – and parallel trade-offs – at the US-Mexico border, but the border agenda has so far gone ahead on a “dual bilateral” basis, rather than a trilateral one.

Of course, the US has a lot on its plate right now, and the Bush administration has had neither the time nor the inclination to look seriously at either Canadian or Mexican proposals for new forms of policy coordination. Canadian aspirations to integration were not improved by the management of the bilateral relationship during the 1990s and early 2000s. Chrétien’s “no” on Iraq and Martin’s “no” on missile defence – and, more

⁷ The Reagan administration did face significant Congressional obstacles, but these were mostly a side effect of broader opposition to Reagan’s trade policies in general (Hart and Dymond 1995).

particularly, the way that those decisions were presented publicly – provoked widespread resentment in Washington, and generally contributed to the long-term deterioration of American perceptions of Canada's importance as an international partner. With relations soured at the top, and other issues dominating the agenda, there was little interest in sitting down to talk with Canadians about new arrangements to improve Canadian access to US markets (Jones 2004; Burney 2004).

THE INTEGRATION AGENDA TODAY

States pursue integration in order to solve (shared) problems. While business interests and liberal economists in Canada are generally very happy with the free trade agreements and their effects on the Canadian economy, they have argued that there are still a number of different kinds of obstacles to free economic exchange within North America, and that these barriers undercut all three countries' capacity to compete within the broader global economy. CUFTA and NAFTA pushed the boundaries of what a trade agreement could do, going far beyond tariff-cutting to include provisions for trade in services, limits on investment restrictions, intellectual property right protections and a groundbreaking system of dispute-resolution panels.⁸ But some difficult issues were deliberately left aside in 1987-88 and in 1993, and the remaining obstacles to fully liberalized trade and investment have naturally floated to the surface as sources of bilateral friction and/or anxiety about extra-regional competition.

Most supporters of further integration in Canada maintain that the dispute-resolution mechanisms built into CUFTA were the most important concession secured by Canadian negotiators (e.g., Hart 2007), and feel that they were improved – or at least protected – in the NAFTA. Many have argued, however, that the dispute resolution mechanisms for trade (NAFTA Chapters 19 and 20) and for investment (Chapter 11) are not robust enough to deflect continuing protectionist pressures, and must be supplemented or replaced with new institutions or procedures which are more effectively “sheltered” from political pressures and yet which are also more transparent and are seen to have greater political legitimacy (Gotlieb et al 2006). Most of the cases which have come before the CUFTA/NAFTA panels have turned out as they should, but there have been some high-stakes disputes where panellists voted on national lines, and a few high-profile cases (softwood lumber being the most notorious example) where a resounding “loss” within the panel system did nothing to deter an escalating outbreak of protectionism. Some in Canada are dissatisfied that the mechanisms for trade only force US policy-makers to adhere to US laws, and therefore still leave open the option of restricting trade or investment by simply changing the laws themselves. Others accept this limitation, but argue that – even when it comes to enforcing the laws as they stand – the mechanisms do not actually “force” anything. Where the stakes are high enough – as in the softwood lumber dispute – organized interests in the US apparently can still effectively “capture” the relevant government agencies, and use them to launch an unlimited number of questionable countervailing and anti-dumping attacks, until their Canadian competitors are bankrupted or forced to sue for peace (Hart 1997; McKinney 2004).

With the apparent limitations of the dispute resolution mechanisms very clearly in mind, former Canadian ambassador Allan Gotlieb (2003) has argued that the key concept for post-NAFTA integration should be the creation of a regional “community of law.” The concept is a little bit vague, but the idea seems to be to create a set of common standards and procedures for clarifying each country's laws, negotiating convergence or harmonization wherever possible, and intervening as necessary to ensure that each country is applying its own laws appropriately. Policy-makers and academic experts have studied the nature and effects of the different legal regimes in the three countries, and the SPP process has generated a renewed commitment to study and cooperate on political frictions caused by differing legal systems, but there has been no real political movement toward a “community of law” in North America (see Wolfe 2004). What is most striking about some of the challenges to the existing dispute resolution mechanisms is not the fact that some of the players have questioned the wisdom or impartiality of particular dispute-resolution panels, but rather that some have

⁸ NAFTA superseded CUFTA, so in a sense there is only one agreement in play.

actually questioned the premise of the mechanism itself. The softwood lumber lobby in the US, for example, has publicly questioned whether the regime is compatible with the US constitution's provision for a trial by a jury of peers, and made veiled threats to pursue a direct constitutional challenge if it didn't get what it wanted in the bilateral dispute (McKinney 2004, 19). At the same time, moreover, the emergence of the WTO dispute resolution mechanism creates an alternative arena for challenging foreign governments' trade-related policies, which has created incentives for strategic "venue-shopping." This in itself may undercut the overall salience of the NAFTA regime, either taking momentum away from regional integration or driving it toward informal, political settlements which by-pass the formal structure of the NAFTA regime.

The most prominent proposal in terms of facilitating a more thoroughgoing integration of markets is for the creation of a common external tariff, which would transform the NAFTA regime from a free trade area into a customs union. A customs union would effectively streamline economic relations within North America and strengthen the participating countries' competitiveness vis-à-vis other parts of the world, by removing complex rules-of-origin requirements, further reducing remaining barriers, and thereby facilitating transnational production and distribution (Dymond and Hart 2005). However it would be technically and legally very complicated, and – more importantly – politically very divisive, since it would tend to involve bringing Canadian tariff policies in line with those of the US, and more consistently following the US lead in multilateral trade negotiations. Even strong supporters of the customs union idea recognize that it is not very likely to move forward in the near future, partly because there is no sense of economic urgency to compare with that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and partly because of the crowding-out effect that the "war on terror" has had on the US foreign policy agenda (Goldfarb 2003; Gotlieb 2003; Dymond and Hart 2005; for a more optimistic view, see Huelsemeyer 2001 and Hart 2004).

Most observers agree that the economic integration agenda is complicated by the new security agenda after 9/11, and the resulting US impulse to close off borders and put security ahead of other policy goals. Some have argued that this new emphasis on security effectively blocks efforts to move ahead on economic policy coordination, while others have made the case that it actually provides a needed rationale for the negotiation of more ambitious forms of integration.

In the aftermath of 9/11 – and, more importantly, the subsequent, massive dislocations of transnational production and exchange – many in Canada (and the US) argued for the creation of a "common security perimeter," which would involve greater policy coordination and resource-sharing to fight terrorism and other kinds of transnational security problems (illegal immigration, crime, etc.). From the Canadian side, this was partly motivated by the desire to tackle these emerging threats, but more so by the desire to convince the US that Canada was not only **not** a potential conduit for threats, but also an active and reliable ally against them. The basic idea was essentially to make the border around North America "thicker" in order to prevent the anticipated thickening of national borders **within** North America. In that sense, the basic logic is exactly the same as that behind calls for a customs union: solidify "external" frontiers in order to facilitate the streamlining of "internal" ones. Thus it should not be surprising to find that calls for a common security perimeter have sometimes gone hand-in-hand, particularly in recent years, with calls for movement toward a customs union (e.g., Haynal 2004).

With immediate, post-9/11 border security issues having quickly found their way into a groove (the Smart Border Accord) and with the negotiation of a customs union essentially "off the table," the main focus in recent years has been on ad hoc policy harmonization, particularly with respect to regulation, primarily through the trilateral Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) process. The SPP's mandate is defined fairly broadly, in terms of "establish[ing] a cooperative approach to advance our security and prosperity," and it has been charged with creating working groups to develop solutions for a variety of difficult issues, including rules of origin, pre-clearance and surveillance for cross-border shipping, traveler identification procedures, and energy market reforms. But in practice it has so far only worked out concrete proposals to pick some of the "low-hanging fruit" from the broader post-9/11 policy coordination agenda (e.g., border-crossing

infrastructure, coordinated emergency management planning, insurance regulation, food inspection standards). Some have argued that most of the SPP's "accomplishments" so far are really only policy initiatives that had been in train long before its creation in March 2005, wrapped up in new SPP packaging (e.g., Anderson and Sands 2007, 17; VanNijnatten 2007).

Though the SPP is far less ambitious (at least in its current agenda and results) than many proponents of further integration would like, it still touches on a number of politically-sensitive issues. CUFTA and NAFTA impinged on the member states' sovereignty – as all trade agreements do – by setting limits or conditions on the use of certain kinds of policy instruments. But many of the most prominent post-NAFTA integration proposals – including the SPP's relatively limited regulatory harmonization agenda – might be seen to go even further in this direction, in at least three kinds of ways. The negotiation of regulatory convergence or harmonization raises questions about whether different states have their own styles of governance, which ought to be recognized and protected as such. The increasing complexity of the integration agenda – e.g., through the negotiation of rules of origin that would be required in order to create a customs union – and the growing importance of resolving different interpretations of complex agreements seems to point to the long-run development of supranational institutions, which might be in a position to directly challenge individual states' policy choices, or even impose sanctions on them for defying trilateral judgments. And, complicating these questions even further, some of the policy reforms that might be involved in the building of a common security perimeter involve thorny questions about the terms of citizenship and the legal status of individuals (e.g., rendition) and corporations (e.g., Chapter 11 investment rules).

HOW THE INTEGRATION DEBATE WORKS

Arguments about political struggles over regional integration often define the political arena in terms of a contest between rival interest groups. And, as noted above, many of the main players are defined and driven by their representation of clear-cut economic (or possibly bureaucratic) interests. But, as noted in the introduction, many – perhaps even most – of the protagonists in the broader debates are "activated" and driven into the fray by their commitments to particular conceptions of national identity and purposes, in combination with (more- or less-) educated guesses about the likely **political** implications of various economic policy outcomes.

As Mayer (1994, 219-255) pointed out in his account of the NAFTA debate in the US, only a small percentage of the people who actively pay attention to, or even become politically mobilized by, debates over regional integration are actually thinking primarily about the likely effects on their own prosperity or job security. Economic integration does of course have profound effects on the lives of some people (shareholder earnings, job loss, etc.), but probably far fewer of them than we might think. Economists have put a lot of effort into counting the number of jobs that were created and destroyed by NAFTA, and would be created or destroyed by any future integration initiatives (CBO 1999; Hart 2004); but it is important to keep these numbers in perspective, since they represent only a small share of the total number of jobs which are created and destroyed every year, even in the much more trade-dependent Canadian economy. For most people, in Canada and in the US, the likely consequences of further integration – whatever the form it might take – will generally be small, indirect, and cross-cutting, and these effects will undoubtedly be even harder to identify and measure than they were back when we just talking about relatively straightforward tariff reductions. Very few people have the time or the inclination to try to work out some kind of definitive accounting of the cost-benefit calculations for themselves personally, for a particular industry or community, or even for the national economy writ large. Instead, most people become involved in debates over integration because they want to feel like they are part of a broader debate over the nature and purposes of their community (see also Uslaner 1998). Canadians care about regional integration because they care about what happens to Canada, and they think that regional integration will have important effects on Canada. Participation in debates like this helps individuals to locate themselves in various overarching political communities, and is therefore an important

part of their ongoing effort to relate themselves to their social environment and to find meaning in the vast, whirring complexity of the modern world.

Someone making an argument for or against further integration might anchor that argument in a story about the likely effects on the life of a particular person or community, as Ross Perot did (always eccentrically, occasionally masterfully) as part of his opposition to NAFTA. But more often these arguments are framed in terms of a given potential agreement's anticipated effects on the life of the broader national community. One colourful illustration of this is the infamous Turner-Mulroney campaign debate of October 1988, in which Liberal leader John Turner argued:

We built a country east and west and north. We built it on an infrastructure that deliberately resisted the continental pressure of the United States. For 120 years we've done it. With one signature of a pen, you've reversed that, thrown us into the north-south influence of the United States and will reduce us, I am sure, to a colony of the United States... (Azzi n.d.)

When Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney scoffed that CUFTA was nothing more than a "commercial document," Turner looked stunned. "Commercial document?" he exclaimed, "That document relates to...every facet of our life!"

Because most people engage with the integration debate through the symbolic politics of the collective national experience ("our life"), even the most hard-headed, pragmatic policy-maker or pundit will be driven to frame his or her arguments for or against further regional integration in these kinds of terms. There are of course venues where policy wonks can debate the technical virtues of various econometric models or projections, but – to the extent that they hope to have an impact on **political** outcomes – they must find ways to relate their position to some broader argument about the way that complex economic or administrative changes will impact the collective experience of the relevant (usually national) community. Economists and officials may develop and debate technical arguments among themselves, but, because every policy must ultimately be ratified – directly or indirectly, formally or informally – those technical arguments can only have a meaningful political impact where some clever policy entrepreneur finds a way to frame them in ways that effectively resonate with the popular imagination. And this in turn depends on successfully tapping into deeply-rooted, shared ideas about national identity and the nature of national sovereignty.

There are of course many, many different kinds of arguments out there in favour of some form of more extensive policy coordination between Canada and the United States (and Mexico), so it is a gross oversimplification to discuss them as if there were only one kind of rhetorical strategy in play. The same is true for arguments against further integration. Nevertheless, there is extensive "overlap" in the kinds of assumptions, ideas, images, themes and rhetorical flourishes within each of the two camps. This is probably a function of three different elements: First, there are some things which are objectively known about the current state of the bilateral relationship (e.g., results of dispute-resolution panels), and therefore tend to call forth similar kinds of responses from people with similar goals or priorities. Second, the protagonists in the debate tend to identify, evaluate and re-evaluate their rhetorical strategies according to the perceived response from target audiences. If an argument is seen to be well-received by a substantial part of the attentive public, then it will be used again (and again); if it doesn't resonate, it will usually be discarded. Since most of those involved in the debate are ultimately seeking a favourable response from the broadest possible cross-section of Canadian society, they will tend to converge around arguments and images which are widely seen to have very broad popular appeal, particularly where there are readily-available metrics for measuring public response (e.g., opinion polls). Third, there is a great deal of conscious and unconscious "borrowing" of ideas within the debate, as particular themes are picked up, adapted and refined by others. Indeed, many of those involved in the expert/elite layer of the debate seem to be primarily interested in influencing others within that layer, with the expectation that their ideas will ultimately "trickle down" into the broader, popular debates. Most often this "borrowing" occurs between like-minded individuals or organizations, but there have also been some

interesting cases where a particular theme is picked up by players with very different – even diametrically opposed – priorities, subverted or otherwise re-cast, and deployed in entirely new ways. Wendy Dobson's (2002) "big idea" argument for further integration, for example, was one of the first high-profile pro-integration arguments after 9/11, and many subsequent articles made a point of spelling out explicitly their acceptance or rejection of the metaphor, and – where they adopted it – how their version resembled and diverged from the original (e.g., Gotlieb 2003; Barry 2003).

As in all policy debates, there are arguments which are pitched mainly to an expert/elite audience that is already very knowledgeable about the issues at stake, and there are arguments which are pitched more broadly, to a more diverse "attentive public" or even to voters in general. The former tend to be driven by "technical" arguments about how best to understand the relevant economic, political or legal dynamics, and the latter tend to focus on normative arguments about shared political purposes or priorities. But this distinction should not be over-drawn, because – as noted above – both elements are always in play, in both the elite/expert and popular "layers" of the larger debate. The focus in the following paragraphs will be on the way that various authors have connected up technical and normative arguments, which I see as the pivotal step in bridging the two layers and thereby building up a winning political coalition, either in support or in opposition to further integration.

We can also make a distinction between arguments which are essentially "positive," in the sense that they are concerned with giving reasons why the proposed plan of action should go forward, and those which are essentially "negative," in the sense that they are concerned with countering criticisms or deflating alternative plans. In practice, of course, most speeches or articles tend to have a mix of both positive and negative. But there are often important differences between them in the types of arguments that are made, or the audiences to which they are directed.

MOVING FORWARD FROM NAFTA

When it comes to "positive" arguments for further integration, we can readily observe six main recurring themes in the debate. (I will turn to "negative" arguments in a later section of the paper.)

1. *NAFTA is good, but it is not good enough.* Most proponents of further integration argue that the free trade agreements have brought substantial benefits to the Canadian economy. A few have argued that these benefits are significant, but contend that "it is fair to say that the two agreements ... have failed to deliver on some of the rosy scenarios that were touted for them" (Schwanen 2004, 4). As outlined above, a number of policy-makers and pundits have argued that the existing institutional structure needs repairing (e.g., dispute-resolution mechanisms) and/or there are still significant non-tariff obstacles to free exchange which need to be addressed (e.g., regulatory reform). Derek Burney (2007, 43), one of the original Canadian architects of the CUFTA and a strong supporter today, has characterized the dispute-resolution mechanism's failure on softwood lumber as "a serious scar on the agreement as a whole, undermining confidence more generally about the willingness of the US to live up to solemn treaty obligations." And Daniel Schwanen (2004, 4) has referred to enduring post-NAFTA policy frictions as "the grains of sand that linger in the gears of cross-border trade flows, investment decisions and the legitimate movement of people, on which all three countries – but Canada's and Mexico's in particular – rely."
2. *"Red tape" must be eliminated in order to enhance international competitiveness.* This is a leading concern for business interests, who have taken a prominent role in the larger debate (e.g., CCCE 2003), but it is also reflected in much of the academic literature (Schwanen 2004; Haynal 2004; Hart 2004). The theme here is that commerce in North America was greatly helped by the removal of formal tariffs and other conventional trade barriers through CUFTA and NAFTA, but it is still held back by a web of regulatory obstacles. A country's regulations may be problematic in their own right, because they are redundant in combination with similar regulations in the other countries, or because they are different from regulations

in the other countries, resulting in confusion or unnecessary costs for firms doing business across national borders. Problematic regulation is said to be the product of pure bureaucratic inertia and/or of cynical efforts by narrow interests to use regulation as a form of non-tariff barrier.

Some have called on the Canadian government to take unilateral steps to streamline its own regulatory structures and bring them into line with the US, arguing that failing to do so will provoke political challenges from the US (as trade issues or as investment issues), and/or provoke private firms to “vote with their feet” by relocating to the US, or even overseas (e.g., Haynal 2004; Hart 2008). Others have called for negotiated harmonization, with reciprocal changes made by each of the three countries, in order to maintain the competitiveness of all three countries in the face of extra-regional trade rivals (e.g., CCCE 2004).

Not surprisingly, the main thrust of business advocacy in this area has been focused on removing or scaling back regulatory structures, rather than reformatting them or expanding them. The CCCE, for example, frequently calls for “eliminating” or “simplifying” regulations. But they have been careful to frame these changes in terms of maintaining a balance between competing priorities, usually in terms of cutting back (“unnecessary”) regulation up to, but not beyond, the point at which this begins to undercut the state’s legitimate interest in national security or health and safety (CCCE 2004, 9-10).

These arguments are not particularly interesting ones; they are exactly the sort of thing one would expect to find with virtually any effort to press for regional integration. There are, however, some additional themes which are more specific to Canada’s historical experiences and to its position within the evolving North American order. Each of these is more controversial, even within the broad pro-integration “camp.”

3. *Canada needs to pursue a “grand bargain.”* Several high-profile proponents of further integration have argued that Canada cannot expect to get what it wants from “piecemeal” negotiations with the US, and it must therefore find ways to bundle issues together into a package deal, or “grand bargain” (Dobson 2002; Gotlieb 2003; Gotlieb et al 2005). Two kinds of reasons are usually given. First, the fragmentation of political power in the US makes it possible for protectionist interests to “capture” key parts of the policy-making machinery, and thus to effectively block any kind of compromise on “their” issue. Second, the only way to break through these obstacles is by mobilizing top political leaders to spend their political capital, and this can only happen where they see much at stake (Burney 2003). This happened with CUFTA, when the Reagan administration saw a very ambitious regional trade agreement as a tool that could be used to leverage multilateral trade talks. And it happened with NAFTA, when US leaders saw the deal as a way to fundamentally restructure the US-Mexico relationship, and ultimately Mexico itself.

Since many of the issues at stake on the integration agenda are longstanding ones, where the interests of the respective countries seem to be fundamentally at odds (e.g., US countervailing and anti-dumping duties), the only way to have a breakthrough on any one of these issues is to negotiate sweeping trade-offs **across** issues. The United States is reluctant to make significant changes to its “trade remedy” laws, and Canada is reluctant to make major concessions on the terms of energy trade. But, the argument goes, there may be room for each side to achieve a major breakthrough through cooperative linkages (e.g., Haynal 2004).

There are a number of analysts that are sympathetic to the values and priorities behind further integration (e.g., liberalization of trade), but reject “grand bargain” thinking on strategic grounds (Schwanen 2003; Hart 2003; CCCE 2004, 5). Robert Wolfe (2003), for example, has argued that Canada does just fine in one-issue-at-a-time negotiations. Don Barry (2003) argues that the previously-mentioned fragmentation of

power in the US seriously undercuts its capacity to make real cross-issue trade-offs, making it virtually impossible for Canada to secure a good deal by bundling issues together.⁹

4. *There is a historic opportunity for a breakthrough now, but the window of opportunity is closing.* In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, a number of proponents of further integration argued that the new US obsession with security could be a catastrophe for Canada – since borders were tightening up – but it could also be a potential opportunity – since the US would be inclined to re-open and re-think old issues, particularly for a trusted ally in the “war on terror” (Dobson 2002; Kirton 2005). If Canada were to make some “extra” effort on continental security, and perhaps on extra-regional security initiatives as well, then the US might be more receptive to Canadian calls to keep the border open for trade and travel. This argument has weakened over the last few years, however, and this theme has receded somewhat from the debate. Chrétien’s decision on Iraq and Martin’s decision on BMD, as noted above, raised questions in Washington about Canada’s reliability as a diplomatic and strategic partner, and the subsequent building up of NorthCom as a regional command headquarters is a reflection of a unprecedented inclination in the US to make decisions about security first, and talk to Canadians about them afterward. Michael Hart (2008) has gone so far as to argue that “the crisis of September 11, 2001, provided the perfect opportunity to seize the moment to re-imagine the border, but Canada blew it.”

With world oil prices going into the stratosphere, and Canada’s tar sands project starting to hit its stride, advocates of further integration are increasingly framing the “grand bargain” in terms of energy, instead of security. The NACC (2007), for example, identifies the development of a “common energy outlook” as one of five top priorities for the SPP process – quite possibly the only one that is very important to most American participants. Canadian politicians have clearly caught on to this way of positioning the issues, as we saw in the Canadian trade minister’s thinly-veiled playing of the energy card during the recent flap over the Democratic candidates’ campaign trap promises to “re-negotiate” NAFTA (Chase 2008).

5. *Canada’s real choices are between making a deal with the US now, or accepting US choices later.* Arguments along these lines were particularly prominent vis-à-vis post 9/11 security cooperation, with supporters of closer collaboration worrying that the US would replace its existing continental security policies and institutions (some of which, like NORAD, are formally bi-national, and others of which are informally “close”) with a set of new policies and institutions that would leave Canada “out of the loop” (e.g., Noble 2003). Proponents of these arguments found vindication, for example, in the US ambassador’s comment that American policy-makers were “perplexed” by the Martin government’s decision on missile defence:

We have this odd situation where the Canadians will participate in NORAD, detecting when the missile is launched, determining where it’s heading, and even if they determine it’s heading towards Canada, it’s at that point they will have to leave the room, because they are not participating [in BMD]...In the United States, we’ll decide what to do about the missile (CTV News 2005).

Similar kinds of arguments have been made about economic cooperation as well, particularly with respect to the question of regulatory harmonization. As mentioned above, some have argued that Canada must find ways to streamline its regulations, either before the US does or in concert with the US. The alternative, they argue, is to wait for the US to set its own new regulatory standards, and then face a tough choice about whether or not to move adopt American standards, recognizing that failing to do so will encourage businesses to relocate their investments to the more attractive US environment (Haynal 2004; Gotlieb et al 2006; Hart 2008).

⁹ On the broader question of how Canada can deal with the fragmentation of power in the US, see: Bow 2006-07. It is interesting to note that this group’s opposition to the “big idea” concept seems to be mostly grounded in a different reading of Canada’s experience with the CUFTA/NAFTA dispute-resolution mechanism; Gotlieb and Hart think it has worked well enough to justify similar trade-offs and further institutionalization, but Wolfe and Barry disagree.

There is a striking tendency in many of these arguments, however, to stress not the economic implications of failing to harmonize, but rather the national security and/or public safety implications. Haynal (2004), for example, draws particular attention to potential policy conflicts or shortfalls in dealing with terrorism, blackouts, and infectious pandemics. There must be a tacit consensus that this is likely to strike a chord with the Canadian public, because we see the same kind of tendencies in recent studies by opponents of integration as well (see, e.g., Campbell 2005a).

6. *Canadians have to give up outdated ways of thinking about the meaning and mechanics of sovereignty, and be open to new ways of exercising policy control/autonomy.* Sovereignty is normally understood in terms of having the legal right and practical capacity to make choices free from outside interference, and in that sense is often seen to be incompatible with “deeper” forms of integration. But proponents of further integration have tended to argue that real policy autonomy often has more to do with having some measure of control over others’ choices, and that often can only be purchased through mutual agreements to set aside certain policy goals or instruments. During the 1988 free trade debates, this theme often played out in arguments about the necessity of setting limits on Congressional protectionism, even at the cost of accepting certain limits on Canadian choices. This might represent a diminution of sovereignty as traditionally understood, but it would ultimately **expand** the Canadian government’s capacity to deliver policy results to constituents (Dobson 2002; Hart 2004; Gotlieb et al 2006).

Traditional ideas about sovereignty also tend to understand the pursuit of security in terms of a “hard” border, which holds off threatening armies at the castle gate, so to speak. Some proponents of further integration have argued that the nature of contemporary security challenges (terrorism, transnational crime, disease, etc.) makes this approach to security – and this way of thinking about borders – anachronistic and dangerous, not to mention profoundly unhelpful to the interests of regional commerce. They argue for a “deep border” (Haynal 2004), managed through pre-clearance and constant tracking of cross-border trade and travel, which effectively concentrates scarce security resources on the kinds of border crossings that are most likely to generate real threats.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE

It’s worth pausing here to briefly note some of the parallels and differences with respect to pro-integration debates in the United States. Proponents of further integration in the US have made arguments which also draw on the first two themes above: limitations and problems of the NAFTA regime, and the need to pursue regulatory harmonization to enhance international competitiveness.

Some in the US have talked about the aftermath of 9/11 as a catalyst for a fundamental re-thinking of border security and/or immigration issues, but the tendency to frame the integration agenda in terms of a historic moment of crisis/opportunity is far less pronounced in the American debate than it is in Canada. To the extent that this theme has emerged, moreover, it has almost always been with reference to the bilateral relationship with Mexico, and the perceived need to maintain the momentum behind political and economic reforms there (e.g., Pastor 2004).

Arguments about reconceptualizing the border notwithstanding, only a few Americans have been prepared to consider some kind of “grand bargain” or to broach the idea of re-thinking sovereignty. The idea of a cross-issue trade-off between trade and security apparently has no traction at all in Washington, where (not surprisingly) most tend to think that Canada ought to do as much as it can to help make North America secure, without expecting any kind of economic “reward” for doing so. But there are a number of American analysts that have supported the idea that reducing trade barriers can go hand-in-hand with strengthening continental security measures (e.g., Hufbauer and Vega-Canovas 2003). There are a few in the United States –

like Robert Pastor (2001; CFR 2005) – who have been more inclined both to think about pursuing integration on many fronts at once, and to reach for more ambitious forms of integration, but this way of thinking seems to be less widespread in the US than it is in Canada.

CANADA AT RISK?

There are essentially two main types of arguments against further integration in the Canadian context: arguments which are primarily concerned with the supposed threat to national sovereignty posed by some kind of post-NAFTA “big deal”; and arguments which are primarily concerned with the supposed threat to the state and society posed by excessive corporate influence. Some of the leading players in the debate have combined the two elements, or moved back and forth between them, but there is a surprising tendency for many to tend to stick with one or the other.

Just as many in the US are strongly opposed to talk of a customs union, or common currency, based on their commitment to a traditional conception of national sovereignty, so many in Canada reject those same developments for the same kinds of reasons. But whereas the American rejection is generally triggered by antipathy to supranationalism, the Canadian rejection is less about supranationalism per se, and more about antipathy to the idea of being “trapped” in a profoundly unequal political union – and, more specifically, political union with the United States. For many Canadians, this is just a minor variant on the longstanding anxiety about being “absorbed” by the US.

As in the “reciprocity” debates a hundred years ago, and in the free trade election of 1988, arguments against further integration that are based on a perceived threat to national sovereignty have been made by those on both the left and right of the political spectrum. In the 1911 election, there was widespread anxiety that economic integration would inevitably lead to political annexation. The war of 1812 was nearly 100 years in the past, but the dark shadow of “manifest destiny” and still had not been lifted.¹⁰ In 1988, there were again many Canadians that worried economic integration would inevitably lead to some kind of political absorption. Not many seriously worried about formal annexation, and few had clear ideas about exactly what form this absorption would take (instead); nevertheless, there was a tangible and widespread anxiety that the future of Canada as a separate nation-state was at stake. After 1988, a more sophisticated version of this argument began to emerge, building on some of the ideas and imagery from concurrent theoretical debates about globalization and its implications for state sovereignty. The real threat, it was argued, was not formal annexation, but rather a kind of “virtual” annexation, in which law and politics in Canada would be effectively subordinated to a larger, regional structure dominated by the United States. Clarkson (1998; 2002), for example, argued that CUFTA and NAFTA represented the creation and refinement of an “external constitution,” which displaced the (more or less) democratically-accountable legal structure which nominally governed Canadian society with a thoroughly-undemocratic legal structure which privileged transnational business interests.

There are a number of key themes which recur in most national-sovereignty arguments against further integration:

1. *There is a slippery slope, from relatively innocuous forms of integration (e.g., regulatory harmonization) to much more “dangerous” ones (e.g., supranationalism).* This is a very old idea. Macdonald’s attacks on “reciprocity” in 1891 implied a slippery slope, as did Turner’s challenge to CUFTA in 1988. Most versions of this argument suggest a “ratchet effect,” where each integrative step is instantly “locked in” and creates momentum for the next step. This is reflected, for example, in Bruce Campbell’s (2005) account of the

¹⁰ One can certainly sympathize with this anxiety in the 1911 context, since the US was arguably more inclined to aggressive expansionism at the end of the 19th century (e.g., Spanish-American War) than at any other time in its history.

origins of the SPP process: “NAFTA begat deeper economic integration and increased vulnerability which, with 9/11, begat the Smart Border Accord, which in turn begat pressure for still deeper integration.”

2. *Canadians have a clear set of values and priorities which is distinctively different from the US, these differences are deeply-rooted in Canadian culture, and these differences are worth protecting as such.* In the 1988 debates, this theme was most commonly played out in arguments about the importance of protecting Canadian cultural industries against overbearing American competitors. This premise is still embedded in contemporary arguments against further integration, but often it seems little more than an afterthought – something that ought to be included, but isn’t particularly crucial or immediate (see, e.g., Dobbin 2003; Campbell 2005b). Today, this theme most often comes out instead in arguments about the importance of protecting distinctive Canadian modes of governance, in the context of broader debates about policy harmonization or supranationalism (e.g., Campbell 2005a; for criticism, see Dymond and Hart 2004). These kinds of arguments have undoubtedly been fuelled in part by the current version of the “Canadian values” debate, which was re-activated by Adams’ (2002) popular and controversial book, *Fire and Ice*. It was picked up again in Martin’s 2005-06 election campaign, which explicitly contrasted a distinctively “Canadian” way of setting priorities and selecting policies (ostensibly embedded in the Liberal party) as opposed to a nastier American way of doing things (attributed to the Conservatives). These kinds of arguments often refer to popular policies which are seen as totemic representations of a “Canadian” approach to politics (e.g., universal health care).
3. *Proponents of further integration are knowingly or unknowingly disloyal to Canada.* Opponents of free trade a hundred years ago often implied – or even came right out and accused – that supporters represented a political “fifth column” in Canada, serving the interests of the United States. (How else could one explain why Canadian politicians and business leaders would pursue something that was obviously not in the interests of the nation as a whole?) In the 1988 debate, however, and again today, this is almost always implied rather than stated outright, and much more often cast as a matter of political naiveté, rather than outright complicity. (Where there is a whiff of complicity, it is now more often seen to be with corporate interests, rather than with the US government. I will return to this theme below.)
4. *Economic integration requires or otherwise brings about military and diplomatic collaboration.* A substantial majority of Canadians don’t like George W. Bush and his administration; there are a variety of reasons for this, but the central one is evidently the administration’s handling of the post-9/11 “war on terror,” and the war in Iraq in particular. For some, this is simply a visceral dislike of Bush and his policies; for others, the war in Iraq is the trigger for an anti-American impulse which tends to see unilateralism and militarism as inherent features of US foreign policy. Given the broad antipathy to Bush’s foreign policy in Canada, it is not surprising that Canadian critics of further integration have tried to tap into these feelings of resentment and frustration, by connecting other forms of integration with defence integration and defence collaboration. The Council of Canadians-sponsored “Integrate This!” web campaign (CCC 2007), for example, taps directly into popular apprehensions about Bush’s foreign policy in two of the five “main reasons” it offers for opposition to the SPP: “SPP ties us to the US ‘war on terror’” and “SPP makes us less secure.”

The other category of arguments against further integration is predicated on the idea that the process is being driven forward by a (transnational) business agenda, and that corporate interests are being pursued to the detriment of broader national or public interests. Whereas supporters of the free trade agreements have argued that liberalization has had some negative effects, but that these are greatly outweighed by countervailing positive effects, critics have argued that CUFTA and NAFTA have hurt the Canadian economy overall, and that further integration will do the same (e.g., Seccareccia 2007). The main argument today, as in 1988, is that the industries that are best served by further integration are large transnational ones, usually export-oriented, which send jobs and profits out of the country. The business interests supporting further integration, they argue, are inclined to pursue deregulation, not in order to remove unnecessary trade barriers or to converge

on “best practices,” but rather to cut costs and political oversights as part of a desperate “race to the bottom” (Campbell 2005a).

While arguments about the macroeconomic effects of further integration are still at the forefront, there has been a marked increase since NAFTA in the frequency and prominence of supporting arguments about the **political** implications of economic integration. Opponents of integration often argue that the free trade agreements increased the “weight” of corporate actors within the political landscape, granting them new rights and privileges while taking rights away from ordinary citizens (Clarkson 1998; Clarkson 2002; Campbell 2005b). According to Macdonald (2003, 233), this strategic turn came about in the late 1990s, after anti-globalization activists used this kind of argument against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), and interpreted its apparent success in derailing the argument as a sign of its general effectiveness. Whatever the reasons, there does seem to have been a clear increase in the importance placed on arguments about the circumvention of democratic politics and citizens’ rights, as opposed to direct economic effects (see, e.g., Campbell 2005b).

WHAT IS LOU DOBBS AFRAID OF?

Again, it’s worth pausing for a moment to compare these arguments with their American counterparts. As in Canada, opposition to further integration in the US is predicated on both risks to national sovereignty and the negative implications of excessive corporate influence. But these two elements take subtly different forms in the US context.

Whereas Canadian opposition is generally to integration **with the United States**, American popular opposition is generally to integration *per se*, and more particularly to supranationalism. The history of European integration has proven that all societies have deeply-rooted anxieties about supranationalism, but these anxieties are especially acute in the US, because of the mythology of America’s founding as a fight for popular sovereignty, and perceived need to fight to protect the “shining city on a hill” from the corrupting effects of international politics, which – in combination – lead many Americans to equate supranationalism with a predatory empire or world government. Americans are almost religiously attached to their constitution, for obvious historical reasons, and one of the corollaries of that devotion is a reflexive opposition to supranational arrangements, since by definition they would tend to supersede or otherwise displace the constitution.

One way in which American anxiety about supranationalism has manifested itself is in the rhetorical manipulation of actual or potential parallels between the North American integration agenda and the European experience. Exploration of these cross-regional parallels have not yet excited much interest in Canada (for exceptions, see Clarkson 1998 and Hart 2004, 31-33), but they have done so in the US, largely because of the way they grind against deep-rooted concerns there about supranationalism and popular sovereignty. Pastor’s (2001) explicit drawing out of these cross-regional parallels has probably done a lot to further serious academic discussion of what is at stake in North America, and may have been effective in catching the attention of US policy-makers. But it has also tended to inflame popular anxieties about the inescapability of the “slippery slope” toward political integration and – in combination with the low-key, exclusionary SPP process – to affirm anti-integration activists’ perception of a secret agenda to push integration forward. This knee-jerk rejection of the European experience is most clearly reflected in the way that most popular critics of further integration consistently talk about it in terms of the engineering of a “North American Union,” sweeping aside proponents’ use of the less-imposing, but still Europe-evoking “North American Community.”¹¹

¹¹ Pastor’s “lessons from the Old World for the New” approach has received mixed reviews from proponents of further integration, but in general there seems to be a quiet aversion to playing up parallels with the European experience. It is hard to pin down the reasons behind any particular observer’s reaction, but in general there seem to be at least three kinds of reasons out there for choosing not to talk about the European model: i. a clear recognition that there are significant differences between the two regions which strictly limit the bases for useful comparisons (explicitly

(Neither of these phrases has really caught on in Canada, where most critics have converged around the generic question of “deep(er) integration.”) Along similar lines, while there can be no doubt that proposals for a new North American currency were bound to trigger a negative reaction in the US, regardless of what that currency was called, there also can be no doubt that the reaction was further intensified by the original advocates’ decision to name it “the Amero” (Helleiner 2006; Gilbert 2007).

In the US, as in Canada, the current push for further integration is often associated with hijacking of the political process by a network of shadowy “elites,” and this is seen as a harbinger of much more serious challenges to democracy. In keeping with the country’s historical traditions and distinctive institutions, however, the US version of this argument tends to emphasize the importance of popular sovereignty, embodied in Congress, and is particularly critical of the supposed “integration by stealth” agenda that is often seen in the SPP. Critics of the SPP, on both the left and right, have repeatedly emphasized that its political and corporate architects deliberately set it up as a “process,” rather than a formal inter-state agreement, in order to put it out of reach of Congressional oversight. The irrepressible Lou Dobbs (CNN.com 2006) has put this in characteristically dramatic language: “What they are doing is creating a brave new world, an Orwellian world, in which the will of the people is absolutely irrelevant.”

To the extent that popular opposition to further regional integration in the US has anything to do with the regional partners themselves, it is Mexico that triggers alarm. (Mexico is usually an afterthought in the Canadian debates, for both opponents and supporters of further integration.) Opposition to further regional integration in the US is tightly tied up with opposition to further immigration from Mexico, which many see as having been accelerated in recent years by NAFTA. Mexican immigration is in turn connected to the ongoing “hispanicization” of American society, which some have associated with increased levels of crime, welfare dependency and social dislocation (Huntington 2004). These arguments have fed into a powerful anti-immigrant current in the US, which resonates with a post-9/11 impulse to close off borders, and generally undercuts support for any kind of international integration, regional or otherwise. These themes are all tightly bundled together, as reflected in popular anti-integration campaigners’ frequent use of the phrase “open borders” (e.g., CNN.com 2006), which rhetorically connects integration to laxity in policing illegal immigration **and** vulnerability to terrorism, simultaneously.

While Mexico is at the forefront of US opposition to further integration, there have also been some pointed comments by conservative pundits in the US about the dangers posed by closer integration with Canada, most of which involve concern about the contamination of American society by “liberal” Canadian attitudes and policies, including gay marriage, permissive abortion laws and legalized marijuana. Given their supposedly leftist proclivities, Ann Coulter has fumed, Canadians “are lucky that [the US] allow[s] them to exist on the same continent.” Some have seen these arguments, in combination with the tendency to unfairly “blame Canada” for a range of contemporary security problems (including the big one, 9/11 itself), as evidence of a new wave of “anti-Canadianism” in the US.

CLEAN CABBAGES AND BLACK HELICOPTERS

The internet has had a profound impact on the way that these issues are debated, in at least two ways. It has changed the way that arguments are presented, shifting the emphasis away from extended, dry, clinical analysis of economic statistics toward much simpler, flashier presentations, focusing on a small set of core themes. There is some sophisticated analysis on the web, of course, but it is drowning in a sea of one-page manifestos and YouTube video clips. At the same time, the internet has broadened the variety of different viewpoints with access to national and regional (even global) audiences, and challenged traditional standards for credibility/authority. In the internet debates, where casual surfers and serious researchers alike are roving

acknowledged by Pastor himself); ii. a strategic calculation to avoid playing into critics’ “slippery slope” arguments; and iii. the business community’s general preference for market-led rather than state-led processes and images.

incessantly from one site to another, the seriousness with which any given participant in the debate is taken may have more to do with facility with web design than with real insight or expertise.

One side-effect of these developments is the increasing prominence of radical arguments which verge on (or dive right into) the realm of conspiracy theory and crackpot social theory. Among the most fanciful of these conspiracy theories is the argument that the “North American Union” project is just a small stepping stone on the road to an authoritarian world empire, where citizens have no real political rights, and the general public is monitored and kept in line through the use of microchips implanted under the skin (e.g., *Zeitgeist* 2007). Most radical critiques, however, are less about science fiction, and more about subversion of democratic politics. The most common theme here is that, regardless of what SPP participants say publicly about the process’ limited aspirations, they are secretly planning the creation of sovereignty-swallowing supranational institutions along the lines of the European Union. One piece of “evidence” frequently cited in support of this kind of argument is the Council on Foreign Relations report (2005) whose recommendations helped to catalyze the SPP process, but actually went beyond what the political leaders were willing to actually pursue (e.g., free movement of workers). Another is the Trans-Texas Corridor project, which many see as the keystone for a series of similar transport infrastructure projects that would amount to a “NAFTA superhighway” (which would presumably be required to service the new flows that would follow from post-NAFTA integration...). The CFR did make those proposals, and there are groups in both the US and Canada who support some kind of “corridor” project (e.g., the government of Manitoba). But of course advocacy of certain initiatives by certain actors – even well-connected ones like some of the members of the CFR – is not necessarily evidence of a more ambitious conspiracy. The “super-highway” idea says a lot about the radical critique: there isn’t really anything particularly objectionable about the idea of a highway running from Winnipeg to Monterrey, except perhaps the amount of money that would be wasted in such a spectacular boondoggle; the only reason why someone might lose any sleep over such a plan is the perception that governments are deliberately concealing it, because it is a clue to secret plans that would never withstand the light of public scrutiny.

Many of the government officials involved in integration-related policy negotiations like the SPP, and non-government analysts supportive of further integration, have seized on these conspiracy theory accounts of the SPP as a way to counter-attack against the anti-immigration camp more generally. At the Montebello summit in August 2007, all three leaders ridiculed the “NAFTA superhighway” argument (CTV News 2007) as a way to deflect anti-integration critiques, by equating mainstream political rivals with internet eccentrics, and dismiss them all out together.

We can of course be dismissive of arguments which obviously have no basis in political reality, but it would be a grave mistake not to see that radical and conspiracy theory accounts pick up on many of the same themes that run through mainstream criticisms, and are often reflective of much more widespread anxieties within the Canadian public, and in the US and Mexico. One (very rough) indication of just how widespread these anxieties are is the fact that a Google search for the anti-integration coded phrase “deep integration” generates a slightly higher number of hits than does the actual name of the formal negotiations it generally refers to: “Security and Prosperity Partnership.” (“North American Union” returns more than a million hits...) While opinion surveys indicate that Canadians have come to accept economic integration as a fact of life, many of them are apparently still very skeptical about their political leaders’ capacity to control the integration agenda, and to find the right balances between reaping economic benefits and protecting political sovereignty (Inglehart et al 1996; Alexandroff and Guy 2003; McCarthy 2003). Reinforcing this is the general deterioration of trust in political leaders, in both Canada and the US, which has apparently led significant numbers of Canadians and Americans to conclude that it is more likely that their governments are lying to them about what they are up to, rather than that the SPP really is just a vehicle for pursuing lowest-common-denominator policy harmonization.

It was fear of these deep-rooted anxieties (in combination with very concrete political threats posed by highly-mobilized civil society organizations) that encouraged political leaders to try to keep the SPP process out of

the public eye, and to “de-politicize” it by making it a series of informal reciprocal commitments, rather formal treaty negotiations. But this effort to go “under the radar” might ultimately undercut the SPP process, and perhaps even the pursuit of expanded policy coordination more generally, by fostering popular mistrust and disarming potential political supporters (Pastor 2004; Golob, forthcoming).

Opponents and advocates of further integration each have their own strategic dilemmas. Opponents need to try to convince policy-makers and the general public that much is at stake, and that the economic and political costs of going down the wrong path are potentially catastrophic. But they are somewhat stymied, in the long run, by the sheer complexity and uncertainty surrounding more ambitious forms of integration (like a customs union), and, in the short run, by the secrecy surrounding the SPP process. Critics simply don’t know for sure – and not from lack of trying to find out – what kinds of agreements are being made informally through the SPP, or even exactly which issues are on the table.

This is just fine with many supporters of further integration, particularly within the business community. Whether they want the SPP process to lead to something more ambitious or not, most of them are inclined to avoid the kind of “politicization” that made the 1988 free trade negotiations so tumultuous. For that reason, they have been inclined to send the message that nothing particularly earth-shaking is going on within the SPP. Harper found a clever way to do this at the Montebello summit, by framing the SPP agenda in terms of the trials and tribulations of New Brunswick candy manufacturer David Ganong. Ganong, one of the Canadian representatives to the NACC, apparently complained to the Prime Minister that his company has always had to maintain two separate inventories of jellybeans, because the product-safety standards in Canada and the US are different. “Is the sovereignty of Canada going to fall apart because we standardize the jellybean?” Harper asked reporters. “[Liberal leader Stephane] Dion might think so, but I don’t think so” (National Post 2007). American pundit Charles Krauthammer later made a very similar argument, but in a slightly more colourful way:

What’s happening here is that [President Bush] organized a meeting a few years ago with the leaders of Mexico and Canada to work out stuff like how to regulate the borders in terms of terrorism, or pandemics, or how much pesticide you can have on cabbage. This is the piddling stuff that these committees [SPP working groups] are involved in, and anybody who believes it is about a great North American Union is in the league of people who believe that Elvis is still alive (Fox News 2007).

But, while proponents of further integration have incentives to try to convince wary publics that nothing important is at stake, they also have good reasons to convince political leaders that quite a lot is at stake, in order to try to capture their attention and move the integration agenda forward.

SYMBOLIC POLITICS AND THE FUTURE OF NORTH AMERICAN INTEGRATION

As much as the SPP process strikes fear in the hearts of anti-integration activists, it is really more like treading water than it is like swimming. Business interests that were frightened by the dislocations caused by 9/11 are reassured by the SPP, because it is a sign that politicians are paying attention to their problems, and the bilateral conversation is going on. They also like the SPP because it allows them a lot of input into long-term policy-coordination talks, but doesn’t expose them to a lot of public criticism, and because it can be shown to have made some incremental progress in removing troublesome regulatory obstacles. What makes powerful business lobbies happy also makes politicians and bureaucrats happy, because it means that they can concentrate on dealing with other kinds of post-9/11 challenges. But things cannot go on forever this way. The process will either run out of “easy” issues to work on, as seems to be the case with the wrapping up of the Montebello summit, or some aspect of what has been agreed to so far will provoke some kind of political reaction, the SPP’s institutional weakness will be exposed, and participants will start wondering why the process’ results aren’t more “binding.” What business associations want to have happen probably won’t matter much soon, anyway. Not because of any kind of grassroots resistance, but because of waning White

House interest and/or increasing Congressional interest. Anti-SPP forces have always maintained that the core problem with the process is lack of Congressional oversight, and – as Greg Anderson and Chris Sands (2007) have argued – they may soon get their wish. Barring some kind of serious crisis in bilateral energy relations, the White House will continue to be distracted by electoral campaigning, domestic economic turbulence, and the war in Iraq. Congress, however, will become increasingly interested in the SPP, just as they became increasingly interested in NAFTA, and they will start to put pressure on for more oversight, more transparency, and more formal institutional structures and agreements. When that happens, business leaders will move away, and the SPP – like a delicate soap bubble that disappears when you touch it – will shut down (practically, if not formally), and therefore no longer perform its function as place-holder for more substantial integration initiatives.

When we get to that point, the dress rehearsals for the next big round of the perpetual Canada-US integration debate will be over, and the main event will begin. Without the SPP holding out the promise of progress in removing costly obstacles to free trade and investment, faced with ever-escalating anxieties about intra- and extra-regional competition, business interests will push for something more ambitious. It is hard to say what kinds of specific institutional structures will be proposed, negotiated or pursued (though one expects the main themes will be regulatory convergence and movement toward a common external tariff). But we can say for sure that the debates surrounding these measures will be driven only in part by technical questions; symbolic politics will be a major part of this debate, just as they were in 1988 (and 1993).

The proponents of systematic regulatory harmonization, or a customs union, or whatever it may be, will have to set aside their current tendency to tell the general public that nothing is going on, and make a “positive” case for further integration. In doing so, they will of course have to make technically-compelling arguments about the economic costs and benefits, but they will also need to stress the suitability of bilateral and trilateral forms of governance, and that will require the development of creative arguments about regional identity and purposes. This is going to be a stretch, of course, and there will be determined resistance, just as it was in France and Germany in the 1960s. But necessity, as they say, is the mother of invention. The opponents of further integration may feel confident about the solidity of Canadians’ anti-continentalist impulses, and of the federal government’s appreciation for what John Helliwell (2002) has called “border effects,” but they should remember that their political forebears felt this way in the mid-1980s as well, and they were left in the dust by pro-CUFTA forces. Opponents of integration will have to come up with creative new arguments as well, which go beyond traditional “not-America” nationalism and respond to evolving conceptions of state sovereignty. To appeal to younger Canadians, they will have to tailor their ideas to this new generation’s less-reflexive commitment to national loyalties and purposes, and its more cosmopolitan conception of their interests and values (Inglehart et al 1996). We may already have seen signs of this in recent years, as more and more of the arguments made in Canada against further integration have tended to frame the underlying conflict, not in terms of one national community against another, but rather as one between shadowy “elites” and “the people” – just as in the United States. There’s a little bit of historical irony in that, one supposes, in the sense that now there seems to be convergence even in the arguments made against further convergence.

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