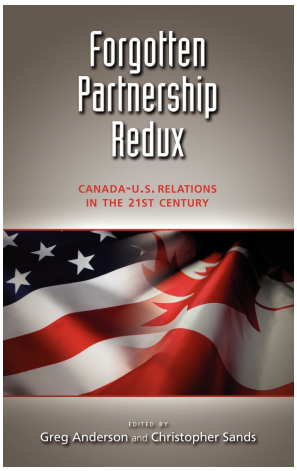

Kim Richard Nossal, "America's 'Most Reliable Ally'? Canada and the Evanescence of the Culture of Partnership," in Greg Anderson and Christopher Sands, eds., *Forgotten Partnership Redux: Canada-U.S. Relations in the 21st Century* (New York: Cambria Press, 2011), 375–404. Page turns indicated thus: **[376]**

At a news conference following the November 2008 election of Barack Obama, prime minister Stephen Harper said that he was looking forward to speaking to the president-elect, not only to congratulate him but also to promise Obama that "Canada is there to be not just an ally and a partner of the United States but its most reliable ally and its best friend and partner in the world. That's what we're there to do" (Palmer, 2008). Though the rhetoric of alliance, friendship, and partnership was by no means unusual for Harper—for example, in April 2003, during the American-led invasion of Iraq, he had said that "We are lucky to have the Americans as our neighbour, ally and friend.… They are our biggest asset in this very dangerous world" (CTV.ca, 2003)—it was very unusual for a Canadian **[376]** prime minister in the early 21st century to articulate the relationship in such terms. Indeed, this kind of prime ministerial rhetoric about Canada's alliance relationship with the United States had not been heard since 1984, when Brian Mulroney, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party from 1983 until 1993, promised during the election campaign that under a government led by him, Canada would be a "better ally, a super ally" of the United States (Michaud & Nossal, 2001, p. 9).

Mulroney and the Progressive Conservatives came to power in the same year that Charles F. Doran's *Forgotten Partnership*, with its expressed concern about the decline in the North American partnership, was published. But in the years after 1984, it can be argued that if one looks in particular at two key issues—the defense of North America and the use of force to support global American policy—the partnership that Doran saw in decline continued to slowly evanesce. A generation later, it can be argued that the culture of alliance and partnership, so central to Canadians' conceptions of their place in the world in the decade after the Second World War, has continued to evaporate. Harper's hyperbolic rhetoric about Canada as America's "most reliable ally" tends to gloss over the disconnects between Canadian thought and Canadian practice that can be seen in this area. Much more appropriate would be David G. Haglund's rather measured assessment in 2003: "Militarily … Canada remains a trustworthy ally for the United States, even if not in the same category as Britain and Australia" (Haglund, 2003, p. 679).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine and explain the slow, but steady, evanescence of the culture of partnership in Canada in the 25 years after Doran's book appeared. My focus is on two issues that are highly significant indicators of that culture: the degree to which the Canadian government conceptualizes its own defense policies as part of a common enterprise with the United States for the defense of the American homeland, and the degree to which the Canadian government is willing to use force in support of the global policies and initiatives of the United

States. Although there are other indications of a reliable ally in a disparate dyad (Black, 1974)—such as offering rhetorical support for the ally's positions, **[377]** avoiding initiatives that undermine the position of one's partner, refusing to criticize an alliance partner in public, subordinating one's interests to those of one's ally (see also Holmes, 1981)—these two issues arguably provide a solid indication of alliance partnership in action.

An examination of global policies over this 25-year period suggests that governments in Ottawa, Conservative and Liberal, have generally tended to be somewhat less than reliable allies. The trends identified by Doran a generation ago persisted: Canadian governments continued to be preoccupied with independence in global affairs, and governments in Ottawa continued to enjoy the benefits of alliance while reaping the domestic political benefits of claiming policy independence from the United States (Doran, 1984, pp. 256–259; see also Sands, 2008). To be sure, during this period the Liberal governments of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin did not claim to be strong partners of the United States in global policy; neither prime minister placed emphasis on Canada's alliance with the United States. But the Conservative governments of Brian Mulroney and Stephen Harper were in practice far less "super" or "reliable" than they claimed to be.

The Mulroney Era (1984–1993): A "Super Ally"?

When the Progressive Conservatives were in opposition in 1983–1984, Mulroney was as good as his word: On the Reagan administration's major global policy initiatives during this period, the Conservatives invariably aligned themselves with Washington. For example, whereas the Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau characterized the shoot-down of Korean Air Lines flight 007 by Soviet fighters on 1 September 1983 as an accident, Mulroney called it an act of murder, mirroring the more robust language being used in Washington. Likewise, when the United States invaded Grenada in October 1983, Mulroney supported the invasion and criticized the Trudeau government for its lack of support for the Reagan administration (Michaud & Nossal, 2001, pp. 9–10).

Once in power, however, the Conservatives proved to be somewhat less than the "super ally" that Mulroney had promised. Although, as Norrin **[378]** M. Ripsman has demonstrated, the Mulroney government was generally supportive of the Reagan administration's global policies, in a number of areas of defense policy Ottawa took an independent line (Ripsman, 2001, pp. 105–106). Canada's proposed acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines (eventually abandoned for budgetary reasons) was deeply opposed by the American military, not only because they objected to the expenditure of scarce Canadian defense resources that could have been better spent elsewhere but also because they objected to the possibility that these Canadian submarines might disrupt U.S. Navy submarine movements in the Canadian Arctic. Likewise, Canadian spending on the newly constructed North Warning System (NWS) was designed to entrench Canadian control of the Arctic as much as it was to defend against possible Soviet predations. And over their nine years in power, the Mulroney Conservatives spent far less on defense than a super ally to the United States might have.

But on the issue of the 1985 American invitation to Canada to participate in the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), clear evidence indicates that the Mulroney government was not prepared to embrace a North American conceptualization of defense. In its broadest "astrodome" version, articulated by Reagan in a speech in March 1983 (Reiss, 1992, pp. 37ff.), SDI offered the possibility of providing a missile defense system that would protect the American homeland from the threat of Soviet nuclear weapons. But when the United States extended an invitation to all of its allies to participate in the SDI research program, the Mulroney government hesitated. Although the government had formally endorsed the SDI concept, and although Mulroney himself was inclined to favor participation (Mulroney, 2007, p. 349), eventually the government accepted the recommendation of a parliamentary committee appointed to study the decision over

the summer of 1985 that Canada should not participate on a government-to-government basis (Michaud & Nossal, 2001, p. 14).

However, because the Reagan administration was counting on allies like Canada to be actively involved in SDI in order to increase the program's symbolic legitimacy globally, the Mulroney government **[379]** understood the implications of the Canadian refusal. Therefore before a formal announcement was made, Mulroney phoned Reagan to deliver the news personally. Although the president expressed "serious disappointment" at the decision (Mulroney, 2007, p. 352), it appears that the "polite no," as it came to be called (Bromke & Nossal, 1987, pp. 163–164) minimized the negative impact on the relationship.

On one occasion during his time in office, Mulroney faced the issue of whether to join the United States in the use of force: regarding the removal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1990–1991. Though Mulroney had actively supported the United States in putting together a multinational coalition after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the Conservative government was, like many other governments in that coalition, not part of the decision-making process that transformed the alliance. Rather, it was President George H. W. Bush who changed what had started out as Operation Desert Shield, a defensive American operation to defend Saudi Arabia from a possible Iraqi invasion, into Operation Desert Storm, the American name for the operation committed to expelling Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Bush managed to keep the multinational coalition together by ensuring that the campaign to oust Iraq from Kuwait by force had the formal approval of the United Nations Security Council (Cooper, Higgott, & Nossal, 1993, pp. 116–143). But even though Canada remained in the coalition and in January 1991 took what Mulroney called the "difficult" decision to go to war (Mulroney, 2007, p. 832), Canada's contribution to that operation was limited. In September 1990, eighteen CF-18 fighters had been deployed to the Gulf region to provide cover for the Canadian naval forces participating in the international blockade of Iraq. During the month-long aerial bombardment of Iraq in January and February 1991, these fighters were assigned to conduct combat air patrols, sweep and escort missions, and, in the final stages of the air campaign, air-to-ground attack missions. A CF field hospital was deployed to Saudi Arabia and combat-capable forces were deployed to protect the "Canada Dry" air bases in the Gulf, but no Canadian ground forces participated in the 100-hour land operation that pushed Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

[380] These two important decisions under the Mulroney premiership offer a window on the evolving nature of the alliance partnership during these years. The SDI case demonstrates that the government in Ottawa was unwilling to subordinate its desire to pursue a different course on ballistic missile defense to the alliance leader's needs for the symbolic political benefits of Canadian participation; the Gulf War case demonstrates the degree to which the government was hesitant to use force in the pursuit of foreign policy objectives. In both cases, it could be argued, this is not how a super ally of the United States might have responded. And yet, both cases demonstrate clearly that the Mulroney government was keenly aware of the principles of partnership: The polite no on SDI during the Reagan administration and the hesitation to commit to combat troops to the Gulf War during the George H. W. Bush administration were both framed with the "tone" of the relationship in mind, just as Doran (1984, p. 260) had proposed.

The Chrétien Era (1993–2003): "Your Closest Ally"?

Tom Keating (2006) reminded readers that Jean Chrétien's record in Canadian-American relations is mixed. On the one hand, Chrétien came to power in 1993 resolving both publicly and privately (for example, Chrétien, 2007, p. 87) to create distance between his government and the administration in Washington. Indeed, considerable evidence can be marshaled to demonstrate that he was markedly successful in this objective. During the Bill Clinton administration, Chrétien purposely created the appearance of distance between himself and Clinton, even though in reality the two leaders enjoyed a close personal relationship. During the administration of George W. Bush, who arrived in the White House in January 2001, Chrétien did not have to

pretend: The relationship was soured even before Bush was elected and deteriorated progressively until Chrétien left office in December 2003, accelerated not only by key differences on policy, but also by the anti-Americanism that was frequently on display within the Liberal government (Nossal, Roussel, & Paquin, 2011, pp. 200–202). At the same time, however, there can be little doubt **[381]** that during Chrétien's decade in power, the relationship between Canada and the United States deepened considerably—not only because of the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that came into effect on 1 January 1994 but also because of both countries' response to the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Any discussion of the Chrétien government's approach to alliance partnership must begin by recognizing the radical change in thinking about Canada's role in world politics that occurred during this period. Although Chrétien recorded in his memoirs that he told Clinton, "Canada is your best friend, largest trading partner, and closest ally" (Chrétien, 2007, p. 87), his government tended not to act on the view that Canada was America's closest ally in its international policy. On the contrary, the government's foreign policy review, published in 1995, is remarkable for its perfunctory reference to the defense relationship with the United States (Canada, 1995, especially chapter 4). Indeed, after Lloyd Axworthy was appointed minister of foreign affairs in January 1996, the government made a clear effort to change the "security imaginary" in Canada (Nossal, 2010). Instead of a traditional Canadian approach to strategic culture that involved a willingness to define security and defense as extending well beyond Canada (Nossal, 2004), Axworthy reconceptualized Canada's strategic location. In this view, Canada was no longer a *willing* partner and ally of the United States in global affairs; rather, Canada was in the American orbit as a necessary and unavoidable consequence of American hegemonic power. In this view, the connection was necessarily begrudged, and one could sense a deep frustration in Axworthy's description and analysis of American global behavior. Antihegemonism and anti-Americanism overlapped; while in opposition in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Axworthy had demonstrated a deep vein of antipathy towards the power of the United States. As the Liberal party's external affairs critic, he had contributed to the party's 1993 campaign platform, which promised that under a Liberal government Canada would cease to be a "camp follower" of the United States (Axworthy, 1992–1993). During his tenure as minister of foreign affairs from 1996 to 2000, Axworthy left no doubt that his views about American **[382]** hegemony and American unilateralism had not changed (Nossal, 1997). Nor had his views about the inappropriateness of following the United States in global affairs: As he put it euphemistically—without actually naming the United States—Canada had little interest in associating itself with "the way of the warrior, using the immense reach of a military apparatus to seduce, shape and when necessary coerce compliance with its own set of goals, values and interests, increasingly disdainful of any international rules of restraint" (Axworthy, 2003, p. 407). On the contrary, Canada was conceived of as an alternative to the hegemon, a country with the "strengths … to take a special kind of leadership in helping manage a world dominated by the power and influence of our continental neighbour" (Axworthy, 2003, p. 6).

Needless to say, such views were hardly consonant with the idea of alliance partnership, and they make more understandable Axworthy's willingness to cross the United States in the late 1990s by promoting key issues that were keenly opposed by Washington, including a global ban on antipersonnel landmines that did not take into account particular American interests in maintaining minefields in Korea, the creation of an International Criminal Court that did not assuage U.S. concerns about the liability of Americans to vexatious prosecution, and the promotion of a no-first-use of nuclear weapons for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). By the same token, Axworthy continued to oppose the latest iterations of ballistic missile defense schemes embraced by the Clinton administration (Oliver, 2005, pp. 70–71).

Though much of what Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick (2001) have called "the Axworthy Revolution" did not survive the minister's departure from politics in 2000, some of his ideas about alliance partnership did. For example, Axworthy's approach appeared in Chrétien's

ambiguous responses to the attacks of September 11—responses that included, on the one hand, a contribution to the American-led invasion of Afghanistan and the overthrow of the Taliban regime but, on the other hand, Chrétien's suggestion that the United States had brought the attack on itself by its assertion of power (Nossal, 2003). Likewise, the antipathy that Axworthy had demonstrated towards ballistic missile defense **[383]** throughout his years in Parliament persisted in Liberal opposition to the ballistic missile defense program embraced by the Bush administration in 2002 (Barry, 2010; Sloan, 2004, pp. 161–165).

Axworthy's positions manifested themselves most clearly in the decision of the Chrétien government not to join the "coalition of the willing" that the United States organized in the winter of 2002–2003 to invade Iraq and overthrow the government of Saddam Hussein. Chrétien's decision to stay out of this conflict produced severe conflict in the Canadian-American government-to-government relationship, not simply because of the decision itself but also because of *how* the decision was made (Barry, 2005). Instead of making an early decision that it would not participate in any invasion of Iraq and communicating that decision to the United States, the Chrétien government continued to participate in the invasion planning throughout the winter of 2002–2003, with Canadian Forces personnel deployed to Central Command in Florida. Moreover, Canadian cabinet ministers consistently refused to make clear the government's intentions. This left the impression in Washington that at the end of the day Canada might join the coalition, provoking American annoyance when the last-minute decision to stay out was announced.

In addition, the decision was delivered in a way that was not at all in keeping with the principles of partnership. First, and most important, the prime minister did not do what Mulroney had done in 1985; he did not call the president with prior warning of what everyone understood would be disappointing news. And when the foreign minister, Bill Graham, suggested that he call his counterpart, Colin Powell, and do him the "simple courtesy" of giving advance warning, he was shut down by Chrétien's advisor, Eddie Goldenberg, on the grounds that it would be inappropriate to inform the U.S. government before telling the Canadian people (Stein & Lang, 2007, p. 76). Instead, the decision was communicated to the United States by a senior bureaucrat, who called Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national security adviser, just as Chrétien was rising in the House of Commons to make his announcement (Chrétien, 2007, p. 314). Second, when Chrétien announced his decision publicly in the House, the Liberal benches rose to give the prime minister a wildly cheering ovation, **[384]** conveying to anyone watching the video clip the clear impression that the decision not to join the American-led invasion was not a decision taken in sorrow. Third, the Bush administration was annoyed at the crass duplicity of Chrétien's announcement. The prime minister, while taking domestic political credit for refusing to participate, purposely did not mention in his public statements that the Canadian Forces in fact remained deeply involved in the invasion: Canada commanded a naval task force in the Persian Gulf that was involved in the hostilities and a number of CF officers on exchange with U.S. forces (such as BGen. Walter Natynczyk, who was attached to the U.S. mobile military headquarters) moved into Iraq with the invading forces (Stein & Lang, 2007, pp. 79–90). Finally, in the aftermath of the decision, members of the Liberal caucus continued to make anti-Bush remarks, the most widely reported of which was a highly personal criticism by Herb Dhaliwal, the minister of natural resources, who accused Bush of letting "not only Americans, but the world, down by not being a statesman" (McCarthy, 2003). The fact that Dhaliwal was not punished by Chrétien did not go unnoticed in Washington; many American policy makers concluded that Dhaliwal was merely saying what Chrétien was thinking (Barry, 2005, p. 235). Such a conclusion had been reached by Andrew Coyne earlier, when another Liberal MP had made anti-American remarks: "After so many similar episodes, the conclusion is inescapable: Liberal anti-Americanism is not a problem for Mr. Chrétien to manage, but rather an outgrowth of his own attitudes and beliefs. As with its counterparts elsewhere, the Liberal 'street' is less a spontaneous popular phenomenon than the unofficial voice of the regime" (Coyne, 2003, p. A15).

Keating is correct to point out that by the end of Chrétien's decade in power Canada was more closely tied to the United States, largely as a consequence of the deeply integrative effects of the free trade agreements that came into force in 1989 and 1994, but there can be little doubt that the Chrétien government was not driven by concerns about Canada's alliance partnership with the United States. The overall record of the Chrétien government strongly suggests that the alliance relationship was essentially unimportant, given a perfunctory and passing nod **[385]** but ignored in practice. The Iraq decision of 2003 was illustrative of that wider phenomenon: A government that really thought of itself as the closest ally of the United States would have participated *in some way* in the coalition of the willing; and even if the government had decided to stay out, a close ally would never have conveyed the decision in the rude and undiplomatic fashion used under Chrétien.

The Martin Interlude (2003–2006): "A Proud Partnership"?

Paul Martin came to office in December 2003 committed to correcting the damage done to the government-to-government relationship by Chrétien's Iraq decision. But like Chrétien, Martin did not appear to be moved by the alliance partnership. It is true that in his memoirs he used phrasing that is standard fare—"the United States is our nearest neighbour, our largest partner, and our closest ally" (Martin, 2008, p. 328)—but that the reference to the alliance is perfunctory is made clear by the qualifications that immediately follow it.

A clearer indication of how Martin conceptualized the relationship can be seen in less retrospective contexts than memoirs. For example, his speech to the Liberal leadership convention did not mention the United States as an ally. Rather, Martin suggested that "we need a proud partnership based on mutual respect with our closest friend and nearest neighbour" (Martin, 2003, n.p.). Likewise, in the Martin government's first Speech from the Throne, delivered in February 2004, there was a commitment to "a new, more sophisticated approach" to Canadian-American relations, but once again the language of partnership, much less of alliance, was conspicuously absent. Instead, the government noted that

> Canada and the United States are connected not only by the shared geography of North America and by hugely beneficial trade and investment flows – the largest bilateral economic relationship in the world – but also by ties of friendship and family, by commonly held democratic values, and by shared interests and responsibilities. (Canada, 2004, n.p.)

[386] Finally, the Martin government's International Policy Statement, published in April 2005, is notable for its very brief treatment of defense cooperation with the United States. Tellingly, other than a generic reference to new alliances in global politics, the words *alliance* and *ally* do not appear in the prime minister's overview booklet. Instead, the discussion of Canada-U.S. relations is framed within the context of Canada's ability to pursue independent objectives "despite the obvious differences in power" between the two countries (Canada, 2005, p. 5).

Although Martin had an obvious commitment to improve relations with the Bush administration, his government's policy on the ballistic missile defense (BMD) system embraced by the Bush administration in 2002 soured the relationship. Though Martin himself was on record as favoring Canadian participation in BMD, he avoided making a decision on the issue throughout 2004, in large measure because it remained a divisive issue in Canadian politics (Barry, 2010). However, a visit by Bush to Canada in November and December 2004 propelled the issue onto the agenda. American and Canadian officials had agreed before the visit that Bush would not raise BMD publicly in order to avoid embarrassing Martin on this thorny issue. However, in a speech in Halifax on December 1, 2004, Bush explicitly stated, "I hope we'll also move forward on ballistic missile defense cooperation to protect the next generation of Canadians and Americans from the threats we know will arise." Martin was, as he noted in his memoirs,

"infuriated" (Martin, 2007, p. 388). Three months later, without giving the Bush administration any advance warning and without offering any reasoned justification for the decision, the Martin government abruptly announced that it would not join BMD, saying only that it was "not in Canada's interests." The United States government was not pleased: The U.S. ambassador, Paul Cellucci, claimed to be "perplexed" by the decision; Condoleezza Rice, by then the U.S. secretary of state, immediately postponed a planned trip to Canada. After this, the Martin government essentially abandoned its efforts to improve relations. The Martin government even openly insulted the Bush administration at an international conference on the environment in December 2005, and it played the anti-Bush card in **[387]** the campaign leading up to the January 2006 general election (Nossal, Roussel, & Paquin, 2011, pp. 171–172).

The BMD decision and its aftermath nicely illustrate the degree to which the alliance partnership had radically changed by the mid-2000s. On an issue that two partners in a functioning alliance should have been able to easily manage, both sides simply grew careless: Martin dithered for months over whether to accept the invitation to join BMD, eventually not even bothering to ground the Canadian rejection in rational terms, and for his part, Bush clearly did not care that his public pressure on a politically sensitive issue might cause the Canadian prime minister difficulty.

The Harper Government: America's "Most Reliable Ally"?

During the 2006 election campaign, the Liberal Party ran a series of attack ads in English and French seeking to paint Stephen Harper and the Conservatives as little different from Bush. The English ad quoted from an article run in the *Washington Times* the previous month:

> From the Washington Times, Dec. 2, 2005: "Canada may elect the most pro-American leader in the Western world. Harper is pro-Iraq war, anti-Kyoto and socially conservative. Bush's new best friend is the poster boy for his ideal foreign leader. A Harper victory will put a smile on George W. Bush's face." Well, at least someone will be happy, eh? (Liberal Party of Canada, 2006)

For francophone voters, the French-language ad contained even more reminders of Harper's foreign policy positions. On a screen with the words *pour* and *contre*, a male voice-over says that there would be pros and cons ("des pours et des contres") if Harper became prime minister. A female voice-over completes the play on words, reading phrases as they appear and fade into the background: "*contre* l'accord de Kyoto; *pour* la guerre en Irak; *contre* le droit des femmes au libre-choix; *pour* la présence de l'armée dans toutes nos villes; *contre* les mariages entre conjoints de **[388]** même sexe; *pour* le programme américain de bouclier antimissile; *contre* le bannissement des armes de poing" (*Against* the Kyoto accords, *in favor of* the war in Iraq, *against* women's right to choose, *in favor of* deploying the army in all our cities, *against* same-sex marriage, *in favor of* the American ballistic missile defense system, *against* banning hand-guns).

The ads, designed to plant in the minds of voters the neoconservative nature of the Harper Conservatives (Bloomfield & Nossal, forthcoming [2013]), were in the main accurate: Harper was on record as being in favor of Canadian participation in the invasion of Iraq and in favor of joining the ballistic missile defense system; he was, arguably, one of the most pro-American leaders. Thus once in power, the Harper Conservatives might have been expected to embrace policies that would position Canada as America's "most reliable ally."

In fact, once in office, Harper did very little that would have put a smile on George W. Bush's face. Although his government did make a high-profile purchase of C-17 Globemasters, mostly the Conservatives merely carried forward the significant changes to defense spending that had been introduced by Paul Martin (Nossal, 2007). On Iraq, Harper remained completely silent, offering neither symbolic comfort nor any kind of Canadian assistance to the American-led coalition there. This is hardly surprising. The Liberal attack ad of January 2006 was technically

correct to say that Harper had been in favor of the invasion in March and April 2003: He had declared that Canada "should have been there, shoulder to shoulder with our allies" (Sheppard, 2005; CTV.ca, 2003). What the Liberal ad manipulatively neglected to mention was that shortly after the invasion, Harper reversed his position. By April 2004, he was insisting that a Conservative government would not contribute to the coalition: "Given our limited military capacity, and the extent to which our people are already over-committed across the world, I don't think that's feasible" (CTV.ca, 2004a). By June, in the middle of an election campaign, Harper was imaginatively reinterpreting his 2003 position on the Iraq war, in the process constructing a version that bore strikingly little relationship to what he had actually said in 2003 (CTV.ca, 2004b). By the election campaign of 2005–2006, the reversal was complete. **[389]** On December 13 at a press conference in Trenton, Harper said: *"*If I were prime minister, we would not be involved in Iraq. I would encourage the Americans and hope they're successful, but our government would not be there" (Sheppard, 2005, .n.p.).

Nor did Harper make any move on ballistic missile defense. Although Gordon O'Connor, Harper's minister of national defense, indicated in February 2006 that the new government would be open to starting talks with the United States on the issue and to putting the issue to a free vote in Parliament, in fact nothing further happened (Denholm Crosby, 2006). And when the Senate Standing Committee on National Defence recommended in October 2006 that the government open negotiations with the United States with the aim of eventually participating in BMD (Canada, 2006, pp. 79–81), the Harper government essentially ignored the call (Richter, 2009, pp. 17–18).

Finally, Conservative policy on the mission in Afghanistan is one that might reasonably prompt some doubt about the prime minister's claim to be America's most reliable ally. Harper came to office strongly supporting the mission—promising, for example, that Canada would remain in Afghanistan even if the situation became difficult, because "Canadians do not cut and run" (S. Harper, 2006, n.p.). By 2008, however, the mission showed few signs of success in Afghanistan itself; as Canadian casualties mounted, Harper negotiated an agreement with the Liberal opposition to pass a parliamentary resolution that committed Canada to withdrawing from Afghanistan by 2011 (Nossal, 2009). This agreement essentially took the issue off the political agenda—including during the 2008 election. From this firm commitment to withdraw in 2011 the government did not waver, not even when Barack Obama announced a troop surge as a means of accelerating the end of the NATO mission. The refusal to reconsider the 2008 promise to withdraw by 2011 prompted the U.S. secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, and the British foreign secretary, David Miliband, both of whom were visiting Canada for a foreign ministers' meeting in March 2010, to openly (and undiplomatically) press the Harper government to reconsider its withdrawal date (Campion-Smith, 2010). Miliband argued that the alliance should act in **[390]** unison: "The best thing from our point of view is that we go in together, we stay in together, and we come out together" (Stewart, 2010, n.p.). However, Ottawa brusquely dismissed this pressure.

Canada's commitment to the Afghanistan mission is a good measure of alliance reliability for the simple reason that a unilateral withdrawal would have immediate consequences for the United States. Because other U.S. allies were not eagerly stepping up to volunteer to replace countries that decided to withdraw (such as the Netherlands and Canada), and because most of the other allies with troops in Afghanistan were operating with numerous caveats that purposely limited their contributions to the counterinsurgency mission, the United States was left to fill the gaps left by departing contingents. This had an inexorable impact on American casualties as the surge was applied. Simply put, the refusal by the Canadian government to consider alternative options revealed a lack of concern for its alliance partner. Moreover, there was no indication that the dynamics of alliance prompted any second thoughts by the Conservative government. Throughout the summer and into the fall of 2010, it continued to dismiss not only signals from the Liberal party that Canada should reconsider its decision to withdraw (Rae, 2010) but also appeals from parents of Canadian soldiers who had been killed in Afghanistan (Fisher, 2010).

Explaining the Changing Dynamics

I have sketched a broad portrait of the changing dynamics of alliance partnership in the Canada-U.S. relationship; the critical alliance decisions—decisions about the use of force and decisions about homeland defense—demonstrate a long-term evanescence of the partnership that Doran was worried about in 1984. How to explain this shift? To do so, I focus on proximate and underlying causes.

The clear proximate cause in most of the cases examined in this chapter is domestic politics—or, more accurately, a calculation by political leaders that public opinion on an issue is of such depth and intensity that a government defying that opinion would suffer electoral retribution, **[391]** whereas a government acting in accordance with that opinion might benefit electorally. As David Haglund and Stéphane Roussel have noted (2007), this connection should not be surprising given the democratic nature of the American alliance system. Certainly this seems to be a reasonable explanation for the willingness of Brian Mulroney, Paul Martin, and Stephen Harper to abandon the policy preferences on the various iterations of ballistic missile defense that each of them had prior to taking power. In each case, the prime minister was confronted with clear evidence that public opinion across the country was opposed, sometimes strongly, to Ottawa's participation in ballistic missile defense of the United States and Canada. In the cases of Mulroney and Martin, public opposition to a clear American invitation was mobilized in a number of ways, including via the parliamentary caucus. In the case of the Harper government, the rule of anticipated reaction applied: The Americans had withdrawn their invitation because the present version of BMD does not require any contribution by Canada, and Ottawa simply decided to leave the issue alone. For example, the government chose to ignore the recommendation of the Senate committee that Canada approach Washington to join BMD. However, public opinion plays a role in other issues as well: There can be little doubt that the lack of enthusiasm, evident in public opinion polls, for joining with the United States in using force constrained the Mulroney government in 1991 and the Harper government's policies on both Iraq and Afghanistan after 2006.

If public opinion (i.e., a desire to avoid electoral retribution or to maximize electoral support) appears to have driven Mulroney, Martin, and Harper to take some of the decisions surveyed in this chapter despite the contrary positions that they had articulated before coming to power, the same cannot be said of Chrétien's decisions. Though there can be little doubt that Chrétien read the polls no less assiduously than other leaders—and was guided by his own well-developed sense of the Canadian electorate—it is not clear that his approach to the defense and alliance issues surveyed in this chapter was driven purely by public opinion. First, unlike Mulroney, Martin, and Harper, all of whom took office openly committed to seeking good relations with the United States, **[392]** Chrétien, by contrast, had openly campaigned in 1993 on the promise *not* to be as close to the Americans as Mulroney had been. Unlike the other leaders, Chrétien had an antihegemonistic perspective on American power, revealed in a number of ways. Sometimes this took the form of undiluted anti-Americanism, and on at least one occasion Chrétien openly admitted that he used anti-American positions for domestic political purposes. Sometimes, after 2000, it was simply "anti-Bushism," an antipathy for George W. Bush and his administration that is analytically different from an antipathy towards America or Americans (Nossal, 2008). For this reason, it is not clear precisely where the Chrétien government's foreign policy preferences lay. What does seem clear about the Chrétien era is that the alliance relationship with the United States was neither nurtured nor privileged.

If one can locate proximate causality at the decision-making level, in public opinion, or the ideological orientations of leaders, how might one explain the evolution of public opinion on such issues as ballistic missile defense or broader strategic issues? In other words, why were Canadians in the 1950s generally supportive of the alliance partnership with the United States, of Canadian participation in the American-led coalition that went to Korea in 1950, or of the

continental air defense command, whereas Canadians in the contemporary era seem so much less supportive of the alliance partnership with the United States—a lack of support manifests in strong opposition to such schemes as ballistic missile defense or such global U.S. policies as the invasion of Iraq? What, in short, explains the slow evanescence in Canada over the last three decades of a willingness to privilege the alliance partnership? Why have Canadians been so reluctant to conceptualize their interests within the larger frame of a partnership, reluctant to subordinate—in the interests of the partnership—skepticism or hesitation about perceived missteps by the United States?

One answer, I suggest, is to be found by looking at another ally of the United States. Australia and Canada might be "strategic cousins" (Blaxland, 2006), but the culture of alliance partnership plays out very differently in each country (Bloomfield & Nossal, 2007). In Australia, **[393]** the alliance with the United States remains as important today as it was in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when the architecture of the contemporary alliance—the security treaty among Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (ANZUS) of September 1951—was put in place. Over the broad sweep of Australian history since the end of the Second World War, concern to maintain the alliance link with the United States was (N. Harper, 1987; Bell, 1988)—and continues to be today (Tow & Albinski, 2002)—a matter of general bipartisan agreement on both sides of politics, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) on the left and the Coalition of the Liberal Party and the National Party on the right.

As a result, the alliance dynamic in Australia plays out in a much more unproblematic way than in Canada. For example, Australian governments have proven much more willing to participate in wars with the United States; indeed, *pace* Harper, Australia can claim to be America's most reliable ally when it comes to support in times of war. It is the only U.S. ally that has fought alongside Americans in every major war that the United States has been involved in since the beginning of the 20th century: the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, the invasion of Afghanistan, and the invasion of Iraq. Likewise, Australia has generally supported American efforts to maintain its nuclear dominance. During the Cold War era, Australia played a crucial part in giving the United States a global capacity to monitor Soviet launch-on-warning through the Joint Defence Facility Nurrungar in South Australia and signals intelligence collection and communications at the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap outside Alice Springs. The Australian government is actively involved in the BMD: In 2004 it signed a 25-year cooperation agreement, focusing in particular on the Aegis BMD system.

To be sure, many Australians are opposed to the United States, American hegemony, and Australian support for the larger country. And not every government in Canberra has been in lockstep with the alliance leader. For example, the ALP government of Gough Whitlam, elected in 1972, opposed the United States on a number of global issues. Likewise, in the 1980s, the ALP government of Bob Hawke (1983–1991) opposed **[394]** the Strategic Defense Initiative and barred the United States from using the Joint Facilities to test the MX Peacekeeper missiles. But serious antipathy toward the United States or the ANZUS alliance tends to be consigned to the margins of politics by both the electoral system and the party-leadership system. In November 1975, Whitlam was dismissed from his position as prime minister by the Governor General, Sir John Kerr, following a constitutional crisis; the ALP lost the election that followed. Hawke's opposition to SDI did not seriously jeopardize the alliance. Subsequent ALP leaders who have won elections (Paul Keating, Kevin Rudd, and Julia Gillard) were all firm supporters of the alliance with the United States.

By contrast, when ALP leaders demonstrate anti-American tendencies, not only does the party experience difficulty in the polls, but the leader struggles to maintain the support of the parliamentary caucus, which in Australia selects the party leader. For example, Mark Latham was selected as leader in December 2003 even though he had often expressed opposition to both Bush and the U.S. government. Earlier in 2003, for example, he had called George W. Bush "the most

incompetent and dangerous president in living memory" and had excoriated the coalition prime minister, John Howard, for his close relations with Washington, calling Howard an "arse-licker" and his cabinet "a conga line of suckholes" (Bloomfield & Nossal, 2010). But under Latham's leadership, the ALP lost the October 2004 election; in January 2005 Latham was forced to resign, and the caucus selected Kim Beazley, a strong supporter of the relationship with the United States.

In short, the politics of an alliance with the United States play out very differently in Australia than it does in Canada. The reason for this, it can be argued, is that each country occupies a very different geostrategic location. Throughout the decades after the Second World War, Canada's security progressively improved: The threat from Soviet bombers, against which defense was possible, was eventually replaced by the threat of large-scale nuclear attack, against which no defense was possible; this threat, in turn, evaporated with the end of the Cold War, leaving Canada with no serious threat to its territorial integrity. **[395]** Moreover, technological developments made Canada less important to the United States over time. Although Canadian territory was crucial for American homeland defense in an era of manned bombers, by the mid-1980s, Canada was "strategically less important" than it had been in the 1950s (Legault, 1985, pp. 201–202). With the advent of the BMD, Canadian territory became completely irrelevant to American BMD systems; in the face of Canadian hesitation to participate in BMD, the United States simply deployed the system unilaterally, with minimal impact on the Canadian-American relationship (Barry, 2010). These interrelated developments meant that Canadians increasingly had the luxury of what Douglas A. Ross aptly called "strategic dissent" (Ross, 2010, p. 355), rejecting American ideas about how best to defend North America. Moreover, because very early on Canadians recognized that the United States would automatically consider a threat against Canada a threat to North American territorial integrity and respond accordingly, they felt quite comfortable not participating in conflicts like the intervention in Vietnam. In short, Canadians have increasingly recognized, if only inchoately, that they can *afford* to be ambivalent allies—to use John Herd Thompson's and Stephen J. Randall's (2008) term—and can afford to treat the alliance partnership with indifference, for crossing the United States on strategic policy brings few real material costs.

Australians, by contrast, occupy a radically different space. Australia's vulnerabilities to external threat were deeply exposed during the Second World War, when an invasion by Japanese forces was thwarted only by American military intervention. During the Cold War, Australians faced the same existential threats as Canadians from the dynamics of mutual assured destruction, but they also faced additional threats from Asian neighbors. Since the end of the Cold War, the menace of nuclear destruction lifted has been lifted, but other threats are still perceived to remain for Australians. In the post–September 11 era, as in the past, the United States is widely seen as the best guarantor of Australian security. It is true, as David Haglund and Stéphane Roussel noted, that in the kind of democratic alliance in which countries like Canada and Australia find themselves, smaller states have to worry **[396]** less about being abandoned than in a "normal" alliance (Haglund & Roussel, 2007, p. 5); there is nonetheless a concern in Australia about the American commitment, and therefore considerable attention is devoted to fostering and developing that relationship. For example, by all accounts, the "conspicuously pro-Bush administration posture" (Tow, 2004, p. 286) of John Howard's coalition government that led to Australian forces' participation in the "coalition of the willing" in the invasion of Iraq was driven not by any conviction of the rightness of the arguments being advanced by neoconservatives in the Bush administration but by a more parochial calculation that Australia would benefit from this act of alliance and partnership. Likewise, the Howard government negotiated a free trade agreement with Washington precisely because it was hoped that a closer economic relationship with the United States would help cement the security relationship: Mark Vaile, Australia's minister for trade, claimed that the Australia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement would be "the commercial equivalent of the ANZUS treaty" (Capling, 2005, pp. 53–54, 75).

Conclusion

Surveying the defense relationship between Canada and the United States in 2009, Andrew Richter argued that the relationship was at a "crossroads," but because the Harper government was so committed to the defense relationship and because the Obama administration was more multilateral in its orientation than the Bush administration had been, the prognosis was "encouraging" (Richter, 2009, pp. 36–37). The analysis presented in this chapter leads to a much less optimistic view. A survey of Canadian approaches to the defense partnership over the last 25 years suggests that the potential problems for the partnership about which Doran raised concerns in the mid-1980s have actually intensified, even if the Canadian-American relationship has on the whole deepened and broadened. More importantly, in the absence of any exogenous disruption, it is unlikely that the trends identified in this chapter will change any time soon.

[397] Though Canadians might have good reason for their increasing indifference to the alliance partnership—there can be little doubt that their country is far more secure against external threat than it was in the mid-1980s—it is clear that the habits of alliance partnership developed in the decade after the Second World War have continued to atrophy. Canadian leaders (or their speechwriters) may continue to reach for hackneyed tropes about what an excellent ally Canada is. But Canadian leaders' policy behavior—and the public attitudes that give rise to, legitimize, and sustain that behavior—strongly suggest that the culture of alliance partnership that Doran was so worried about in 1984 continues to evanesce.

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