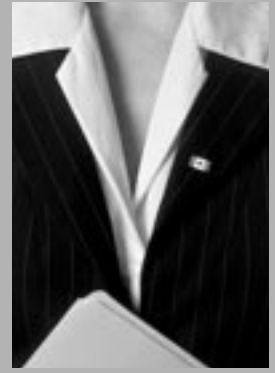


CANADA AND THE ANGLOSPHERE: IN, OUT, OR INDIFFERENT?

David G. Haglund



The war in Iraq marked a major point of departure in Canadian foreign policy in that Canada did not support the US and Great Britain, and found itself aligned instead with France and Germany in opposition to the American-led invasion. "What was truly remarkable about the Iraq war," writes David Haglund, "was how out of step Canada could be with its two long-standing partners in the 'English-speaking' world...Never on a matter of such import did Canada distance itself from both of its so-called 'Anglo-Saxon' partners at once." Instead, Canada found itself "so closely aligned with France's (position) as to become virtually identical to it...namely that Canada would only join in military action against Saddam if the UNSC approved, it was obvious that what really stood in the way of Council authorization was the threat of a French veto. If Paris decreed the war to be justified, Ottawa would snap to attention." While the UK and Australia might have found themselves supporting the US for larger strategic reasons, Canada's proximity to the US, in both geography and commerce, as well as being under the US security umbrella, paradoxically made it easier to stand aside. Canada doesn't need to get closer to the US in "the Anglosphere." Furthermore, opposition to the war was virtually unanimous in Quebec, which may have influenced policy outcomes in Ottawa, particularly in the middle of a provincial election campaign pitting the Liberals against the Parti Québécois.

La guerre en Irak a marqué un tournant majeur de la politique étrangère canadienne, notre pays ayant refusé son appui aux États-Unis et à la Grande-Bretagne pour se ranger du côté de la France et de l'Allemagne. « Le plus remarquable, note David Haglund, c'est la rupture du Canada avec ses deux partenaires de longue date du "monde anglophone" (...). » Sur une question de cette importance, jamais il ne s'était ainsi distancé, simultanément, de ses deux partenaires anglo-saxons. » Notre pays s'est « aligné si étroitement sur la France qu'il a adopté une position presque identique en refusant de participer à toute action militaire qui ne soit approuvée par le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, alors que celui-ci refusait à l'évidence d'accorder son feu vert par crainte du veto français. Si Paris avait jugé la guerre légitime, le Canada aurait aussitôt changé d'avis. » Bien que le Royaume-Uni et l'Australie aient pu soutenir les États-Unis pour des raisons stratégiques plus complexes, la proximité géographique et commerciale du Canada, combinée à la sécurité dont il bénéficie en étant voisin de la superpuissance, a paradoxalement favorisé cet éloignement. Faisant déjà partie de l'« anglosphère », le Canada n'a senti aucun besoin de se rapprocher davantage des États-Unis. D'autant que le Québec s'opposait presque unanimement à la guerre, ce qui a pu influencer Ottawa au moment précis où les libéraux provinciaux se mesuraient en campagne électorale au Parti québécois.

One immediate impact of the falling-out between America and the countries that the US secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld, branded "old Europe" has been a reconceptualization of Canada's own geopolitical situation. Not so very long ago, it was com-

monplace for observers to note how much more integrated Canada and the US were becoming in military and security matters. One word, interoperability, summed up the process of enhanced cooperation — a process that its supporters believed would enable Canada to retain combat

capability at minimum cost, by weaving Canadian units operationally into American (and other) allied deployments across all three services (or “environments,” to use DND jargon): the army, navy and air force. Critics of interoperability focused on the risk to sovereignty and other dangers they associated with a deepening of continental defence integration. Proponents countered that sovereign-

In fact, the Germans misconstrued Ottawa’s position on the war: far from joining them in their count-me-out stance on the war, Canada adopted a position more in keeping with long-standing tradition, one boiling down to “intervention if necessary, but not necessarily intervention.” And what could make a war against Iraq necessary? Nothing other than the blessing of the UN Security Council (UNSC),

country’s policy on the war, but Canada’s as well.

Now, there is nothing truly remarkable about a Canadian reluctance to march off into combat without UN blessing; generally, getting the latter is thought to be highly desirable. And if the 1999 Serbian war demonstrated that we could go to war without such blessing (after all, Russia would hardly allow the UNSC to authorize bombing of Serbia), the view in Ottawa was that the Kosovo action could not be taken as any “precedent” and, besides, did not the overwhelming majority of UNSC members agree that Milosevic was due for a whipping, and who better than the “human security alliance,” NATO, to administer it?

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ty’s very preservation *required* such deepening. Besides, they asked, would any Canadian government be prepared to spend on defence what a more genuinely autonomous military requires? Would the Canadian public support such spending levels?

Both critics and proponents agreed that the integrative trend was well in place. Never, or so it seemed, had Canada become more of a North American and less of a “European” strategic entity than at the start of the current decade, a trend enhanced by the terrorist attack on America on 9/11 and the ensuing anxiety, on both sides of the border, regarding homeland security. And then came the Iraq War, which has given every appearance, if only temporarily, of reversing the integrative pattern, at least insofar as concerns the “away game” — military interventions outside of North America. Indeed, for the core group of old Europe, the Iraq War convinced them that Canada, situated on the far shores of the Atlantic, might continue to be a “European” place after all. The Germans positively enthused about Ottawa’s eagerness to take their side, and the French similarly welcomed Canadian participation in the coalition of the unwilling.

which in the run-up to the war 60 percent of the public deemed to be a requirement if Canada were to head off into combat (15 percent took the German position, and another 15 percent thought Canada should join the war even without UNSC approval).

But if the Germans misinterpreted Canada’s stance as being identical to their own, things were different when it came to the French. For a short time during the late winter of 2003, Canada’s position was so closely aligned with France’s as to become virtually identical with it; and though few would actually state things as boldly as I am about to, just prior to the outbreak of the war you could say that Ottawa’s grand strategy had very much become hostage to France’s preferences. For, given the position of the Chrétien government, namely that Canada would only join in military action against Saddam if the UNSC approved. [I]t was obvious that what really stood in the way of Council authorization was the threat of a French veto. If Paris decreed the war to be justified, Ottawa would snap to attention. Thus when France’s president, Jacques Chirac, announced during a nationally televised interview on March 10, 2003, that France would not approve the war that everyone saw coming, he not only settled his own

What was truly remarkable about the Iraq War was how out of step Canada could be with its two long-standing security partners in the “English-speaking” world, the UK and the US (to say nothing of its strategic cousin, Australia). For sure, there have been moments ever since the historic rapprochement between the US and UK when Canada would line up with only one of the two (e.g., when it entered both world wars on England’s side at a time when the US officially was trying to remain neutral, or in 1956 when Ottawa supported Washington against London during the Suez crisis), but never on a matter of such global import did Canada distance itself from *both* of its so-called “Anglo-Saxon” partners at once. Some in France could be forgiven for thinking that, at long last, Canada had freed itself from the embrace of those Anglo-Saxons who had so vexed Charles de Gaulle and countless others in Paris.

For the past few years, it has become more and more common to hear those Anglo-Saxons being discussed in the context of something known as the “Anglosphere.” This was especially so during the Iraq War, when it seemed to many commenta-



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Students from several universities marching on the McGill University campus to protest the war in Iraq in 2003. "In Quebec," writes David Haglund, "near unanimity ruled, both before the war and after the fall of Baghdad, on the unwisdom of the war."

tors that there existed a close, if curious, fit between a country's maternal tongue and its proclivity to engage in military interventions. After all, were not the big three of the interventionist coalition all populated mainly by native English speakers? Could there be some link between this "cultural" characteristic and the willingness of America, Britain, and Australia to engage in combat? Some thought there was such a link.

There probably is a "cultural" connection here worth noting, though it is not really what usually comes to mind when the Anglosphere is invoked. In fact, there are three different means of construing the Anglosphere, so before we try to answer the question posed in this article's title — namely of how Canada relates to this grouping — it is worth identifying these variations upon an Anglosphere theme. Google

(and who these days can argue with it?) tells us that the word first appeared in print in Neal Stephenson's 1995 science fiction novel, *The Diamond Age*. But Google is of little help in telling us what we should make of the concept.

The chief intellectual luminary of the Anglosphere is James C. Bennett, president of the Anglosphere Institute, who is associated with the variant we might call Anglosphere "lite." It can be both surprising and insulting to modify in this manner the Anglosphere of Bennett's dreams, since he really does argue that their possession of a common tongue enables the English-using world to constitute a highly advantageous "network commonwealth," whose economic and political largesse its members will continue to enjoy in a world characterized by English-enabled globalization. What could be "lite" about such a world?

The answer comes when we try to discover what, if any, relationship this commonwealth has to the issue of military intervention. And here it turns out that advocates of Anglosphere lite envision an entity that, from the military point of view, is very much a homebody. Lite does its political work by dint of its serving as the fount of the Western world's liberal-democratic "zone of peace." As such, its value inheres in its embodying those economic and political principles whose provenance is said to have been England, and whose propagation mightily depended upon the spread of English ways throughout the world during the period of the first British empire — ways whose presence continues to have a major impact upon the global prospects of liberal democracy.

This Anglosphere, founded as it is upon collective identity derived above

all else from shared political values, may in many respects be a mighty thing, yet it seems to be a particularly inert beast when it comes to the issue of actually using, instead of refraining from using, military force. In other words, Anglosphere lite may be a marvellous device for getting its members to abstain from physically bashing each other; but it is not such a good vehicle if the challenge at hand is to impel them to intervene outside their zone of peace. If culture is somehow correlated with interventionist preferences within the setting of the Anglosphere, we will have to turn to one, or both, of the alternative variants, because in this respect lite cannot even whet, let alone slake, a thirst for military expeditions.

If one takes inspiration from headier obligations, and insists that the Anglosphere must not just *be*, it must also *do*, then a stronger brew is required, something, say, in the nature of “Anglosphere heavier.” This variant seeks to establish a connection between those above-named *political* values and a cultural identity that, at the extreme, can be and has been invested with explicitly *ethnic* (at times even “racial” and biological) qualities. In a very real sense the current discussion of the Anglosphere is but a continuation of a debate harking back more than a century, concerning the meaning of Anglo-Saxon identity for international peace and security. To be sure, no one called it by the current name a century or so ago, but panegyrists of this earlier, heavier, Anglosphere made appeal to cultural solidarity — specifically to the once and future cooperative vision of a great people, the Anglo-Saxons — destined to prevail over the international political arena, and in so doing usher in the “universal peace” through the establishment of Anglo-American condominium.

From the point of view of collective identity, the Anglo-Saxon idea that was at the heart of the earlier iteration of the Anglosphere was always a bizarre mélange, appealing as it did both to racial and ersatz “biological” categories, as well as to political values that were thought somehow to be carried in the genes. Among the latter values, none was so exalted as liberty, said to be a peculiar possession of only a lucky few peoples, whose sources could be traced back to the Teutonic forests of antiquity. But the rise of Kaiser

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Wilhelm’s Germany as Britain’s chief strategic challenger made homilies to Teutonic solidarity awkward, to say the least. Nor was this the only problem that enthusiasts of Anglosphere heavier encountered; for if ethnicity really did determine virtue, then what was a good Anglo-Saxon to make of the United States itself at the dawn of the twentieth century? Had not that country, Britain’s first and greatest spawn,

been rapidly shedding its Anglo-Saxon biological and cultural heritage as a result of massive influxes of immigrants from less wholesome parts of Europe?

Notwithstanding the logical difficulties, not to say absurdities, encountered by racial Anglo-Saxonism a century ago, one can still make an “ethnic” and not simply linguistic (though the two are obviously related) case for Anglosphere heavier today. By this I mean that there could well be some societal traits (“folkways”) associable with denizens of the Anglosphere, and these might be said to put a cultural impress upon interventionist practices. For if the US, notwithstanding the immigration patterns of the past century, remains societally what it always has been, namely a chip off the old (British) block, and if there is an indisputably British folkway that correlates positively with a willingness to use military force abroad, then it would not be pushing things too far to decry an ethnic proclivity — albeit a social not racial or biological one — toward interventionism.

Some analysts do detect such a proclivity, and argue that the folkways carried to America in the 18th century by the “Scotch-Irish” (sometimes, “Scots-Irish”) constitute that link between (British) ethnicity and intervention. I argued in this publication a few issues ago that there is much to be said in support of the claim that a “Jacksonian” subculture has come of late to play a prominent part in American foreign policy. However, can this same subculture be said to influence policy orientations elsewhere in the interventionist Anglosphere? Not really.

So despite its name, Anglosphere heavier turns out to be even more insipid than lite when it comes to assessing the “cultural” sources of

interventionism. This leaves the default option, which I call “Anglosphere heaviest.” There is something inherently improbable about the search for a cultural source of interventionism using this third variant, for Anglosphere heaviest depends upon the claim that the *real* basis of US, British and Australian interventionism is the coinciding of discrete national interests. This is to say that what is “cultural” here is the adaptive rationality that goes under the name “historical learning.” Both Britain and Australia will have their own special

Both Britain and Australia will have their own special relationships with the US because they have learned, over time, the value of being able to have America on their side. They will not want to squander, unless forced to, that American backing. Thus, going along with America on matters it deems of the utmost importance, and the Iraq War has been one such, will always be the preferred option, even if it will rarely be a problem-free one.

relationships with the US because they have learned, over time, the value of being able to have America on their side. They will not want to squander, unless forced to, that American backing. It would not be rational for them to do so, nor would doing so in any way advance their separate national agendas. Thus, going along with America on matters it deems of the utmost importance, and the Iraq War has been one such, will always be the preferred option, even if it will rarely be a problem-free one.

It is in this sense, and only in this sense, that we can speak of a cultural proclivity toward interventionism, with it being understood that the referent for culture is the special relationship itself, which to repeat is a product of historical learning. This is what Anglosphere heaviest connotes, and thus we can glimpse, from both the Anglo-American and the Australian-American relationships, the cultural context of interventionism at work. For whatever the specific merits of the intervention itself, the lesson of Iraq for both Britain and Australia — and

therefore, for an Anglosphere heaviest that shrinks yet at the same time deepens — is that what was primarily at stake was the conservation of a cultural convention: a bilateral relationship judged to be so valuable that its preservation and, if possible, improvement, could and did take priority over any other single *raison d'état*.

So why cannot Canada, or why does not Canada, fit into this Anglosphere? Two answers come to mind. First is the Quebec factor. Though much attention is paid to the

outsized importance of this province in Canadian domestic affairs, surprisingly little has been said lately about the impact of Quebec on the country's strategic culture. This is so, even though in an earlier era no one could have been oblivious of the role played by what used to be called “French Canada” when it came to military interventions; from the Boer War through the two world wars, decision makers in Ottawa always had to wrestle with the dicey political and national-unity implications associated with the raising of expeditionary forces.

And whether or not public opinion in Quebec really was the reason that Ottawa abstained from joining in the Iraq War, there can be no mistaking the linguistic gulf in public attitudes toward that war: in English-speaking Canada, the public was initially split fifty-fifty on the merits of going to war, though by the time Baghdad fell in April 2003, some two-thirds of the public outside Quebec felt that *not* going to war alongside the US and UK had been a mistake (this view

would change by the summer, when it became obvious just how messy nation-building would turn out to be in Iraq). By contrast, in Quebec near-unanimity ruled, both before the war and after the fall of Baghdad, on the unwisdom of the war.

The second reason for Canada's opting out of the Iraq War, also “cultural” in its own way, concerns adaptive rationality. Simply put, there is no major downside risk for Canada in abstaining from American-led interventions. Some in the US may have been disappointed, others angered, by Ottawa's decision, but it is simply not possible to detect any quantifiable (especially economic) costs associated with the decision to remain on the sidelines during that contest. More to the point, and this sets Canada very much apart from Australia, there exists no need to buy into

US interventions abroad in a bid to maximize the likelihood that America can be called upon to safeguard the country's security in the event of dire necessity. For all the inconveniences that can sometimes be associated with living cheek by jowl with the world's mightiest power, Canada possesses by dint of geography what Australia and other allies have to earn: a well-nigh automatic American security guarantee.

So while Canada may be a partial player in the Anglosphere lite, it is an outlier when it comes to the heavier and heaviest variants of the club. Not only this, but it is also a matter of indifference to most Canadians that the Anglosphere has so little salience to them.

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