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**MIDDLE POWER ANGST: DETERMINING A NEW GRAND STRATEGY FOR
CANADA**

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ABSTRACT

This paper will argue that Canada needs to choose a new grand strategy of cooperative security in order to develop an appropriate international security policy (ISP) to meet the post-9/11 security challenges. This grand strategy choice would be reflective of Canada's historical stance towards security and would protect Canada's interests in the post-9/11 international system. The resultant new international security policy would allow Canada to formulate integrated foreign and defence policies that were based upon a conscious and specific grand strategy choice formulated from clearly articulated interests. It would maximize the utility of Canada's close relations to the US and would be mindful of the challenges posed by the post-9/11 security environment. While other options are available to Canada, they do not meet the historical and post-9/11 security imperatives that will drive Canada's future security choices. Whatever decision is made, the appropriate grand strategy choice for Canada will largely be decided by policymakers' conceptions of national interest and their perspectives on the nature of the international system. This paper outlines some options available to Canada to illustrate the range of choice and also analyzes the perspectives of realism and liberalism to demonstrate how they can impact upon grand strategy decision making.

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INTRODUCTION

Canada is at a remarkable crossroads in its history where tough decisions must be made as to what grand strategy choice it should make to meet the post-11 September 2001 (9/11) security environment. This grand strategy choice will determine Canadian foreign policy and drive Canada's international security policy. What makes this challenge particularly difficult is the complex process of determining what issues are in the national interest, what level of priority they should receive, and what action they should precipitate if threatened. This process becomes even more challenging if the threat can come from both state and non-state actors or if it is possible for the threat to change quickly as events unfold within the international system. Additionally, how policymakers view the international system, from a realist or liberalist perspective, can significantly influence how different grand strategies are designed and assessed for their efficacy and overall utility in protecting what is deemed to be in the national interest. Many grand strategy options exist that Canada can choose from, but each choice brings with it associated benefits and costs that directly impact upon Canada's ability to protect its interests and still interact with the international community in a manner that is mutually beneficial. This paper will argue that Canada needs to choose a new grand strategy of cooperative security in order to develop an appropriate international security policy (ISP) to meet the post-9/11 security challenges. This grand strategy choice would be reflective of Canada's historical stance towards security and would protect Canada's interests in the post-9/11 international system. In making this argument the paper will

contend that it is interests and not values that should drive Canadian grand strategic decision-making and that any Canadian choice must be modified to take into account American security interests and perceptions of the post-9/11 security environment. It is important to note that the paper will primarily focus on the grand strategy choice itself and not the actual resultant international security policy.

In order to argue the case for a new grand strategy choice, this paper will illustrate that Canada's present international security policy is no longer appropriate. It will define and discuss national interest as it relates to security and illustrate how liberalism and realism can impact upon grand strategy decision-making. In addition it will examine the three major grand strategy choices available to Canada to demonstrate that for historical and political reason, cooperative security is the best grand strategy choice for Canada. The framework for examining these three choices will be taken from Barry Posen's and Andrew Ross' article on "Competing Visions for US Strategy."¹ While this structure was written with the US circumstance in mind, the structure can equally apply in a Canadian context with certain modifications to make it Canadian centric which will allow for the differences between the US and Canadian geo-political situations.

CHANGES IN THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The *1994 Defence White Paper* correctly stated that "Canada continues to have a

¹Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for US Strategy," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1997): 5-53.

vital interest in doing its part to ensure global security, especially since Canada's economic future depends on its ability to trade freely with other nations."² However, since the white paper was published ten years ago, the international system has seen considerable upheaval and terrorism and has emerged as the greatest threat to international security. As a result of this significant change, conceptions of security have had to change radically. The 9/11 attacks on the US had a dramatic and immediate impact upon Canadian security considerations. As Dean Oliver argued, it "... roiled the familiar waters, it also returned the debate to a discussion of first principles in ways not seen even in the aftermath of the Somalia affair."³ It is these first principles that need to be reassessed given the ramifications of the terrorist attacks. In 1995, well before 9/11, it was argued by Dewitt and Leyton-Brown that "Canadians are in need of a new vision and rationale of Canada's role, its obligations and responsibilities, and its overall contribution to international peace and security. Not for a very long time has defence of Canadian borders carried much weight" ⁴ The post-9/11 security environment only makes this argument more compelling given the additional threat of terrorism.

The *1994 Defence White Paper* provided a framework for approaching the security issues of the day within an international context that did not forecast terrorism as being a major security concern. It recognized that the world was a very unstable place

²Department of National Defence, *1994 Defence White Paper* (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 1994), 3.

³Dean F. Oliver, "How Much Was Never Enough? Canadian Defence and 11 September," in *Canada Among Nations 2002: A Fading Power*, ed. Norman Hillmer and Maureen Appel Molot (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), 130.

⁴David B. Dewitt and David Leyton-Brown, "Canada's International Security Policy," in *Canada's International Security Policy*, ed. David B. Dewitt and David Leyton-Brown (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1995), 18.

and that Canada needed a responsive and flexible force to protect Canadian interests both at home and abroad. This security paradigm was based on failed states being the greatest threat to world order and while nuclear proliferation was an issue, proliferation to rogue states was the prime concern. However, the post-9/11 world has changed to such a marked degree that Canada's international security policy must also change if Canada hopes to retain its place on the world stage and safeguard its interests. As Andrew Cohen contends, "The issue here isn't the country's survival; it is more the kind of country that we will be in the world-with what means and ends, with what authority and what ambition, with what self-image and what self-respect."⁵ For Canada to appropriately solve these issues it must be mindful of its historical approach to security decision-making, the respected position it holds on the world stage, and clearly cognizant of the real threats to Canada's interests.

For Canada to remain secure in this risky international environment, it must clearly determine its global interests and decide on a grand strategy of action that is both uniquely Canadian and mindful of what course the US is taking. Frank Harvey draws attention to the hazard of worrying about differentiation between US and Canadian security policy as an end in itself when he argues:

In a post-11 September environment the imperative to be confident and proactive when crafting Canadian foreign and security policy has never been greater, and the dangers of a blind commitment to the default 'weak-state' strategy of 'distinction first, security second' have never been more apparent.⁶

⁵Andrew Cohen, *While Canada Slept* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2003), 4.

⁶Frank P. Harvey, "Dispelling the Myth of Multilateral Security After 11 September and the Implications for Canada," in *Canada Among Nations 2003: Coping with the American Colossus*, ed. David Carment, Fen O. Hampson and Norman Hillmer (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003), 206-07.

Canada, in wanting to remain distinct from the US, cannot allow this desire to supercede an objective analysis of its interests.

In determining what kind of country Canada will be, Canada must carefully assess what type of relations it will have with the US. Canada must also have a clear understanding of what course the US is going to follow given its status as the sole remaining superpower and its unremitting focus on security concerns. The US focus on security has been borne out by substantial changes to its security policy that in many ways has been echoed by another close ally of Canada, Great Britain. These security reconstructions have largely occurred in response to the changes within the international system as a result of the increased threat from international terrorism and the heightened concern over the proliferation of WMD. It is time for Canada to do the same type of reconstruction if it hopes to maintain a meaningful place within the international system. As Cohen argues, Canada has lost most of its weight on the international scene and “Canada’s influence as a middle power is more imaginary than real today.”⁷ If this disturbing trend is to be reversed, then Canada must move towards having:

... a clear and unambiguous security policy, one based on Canadian assessments, which thereby will give much needed direction to those who must decide the future of our armed forces and how Canada can best not only ensure its own prosperity free from want and fear but also can continue to make a valuable contribution to furthering international peace and security.⁸

It is possible for Canada to continue to accept the status quo as an option for managing its international security policy. It could continue to react to events on “a

⁷Cohen, 31.

⁸Dewitt and Leyton-Brown, 3.

largely ad hoc basis to the major international political and security issues of our time.”⁹

But this would seem largely disingenuous and would serve to weaken Canada as a middle power. It would also quite likely serve to continue distancing Canada from the US, its most important military and economic ally. Canada, perhaps understandably, has always wanted to remain distinct from the US, and has not wanted to appear to be a blind follower of US foreign policy. However, this belies where Canada’s security interests rest and seems to indicate a “weak state” strategy:

A weak state strategy for Canada would consider the threat of international terrorism largely a US concern, and seek to placate US pressures within minimum efforts while husbanding Canadian sovereignty and avoiding commitments to undertake new responsibilities with regard to the defence of North America.¹⁰

It does not seem credible that Canada would want to sacrifice its interests simply to remain distinct from the US or in the belief that Canada is morally superior. What is credible is that Canada needs to reevaluate where it stands on security issues and where its interests lie given all the recent security changes and in particular the US reaction to these changes. This change in the security paradigm cannot be ignored by Canadian policymakers and should be rapidly addressed so that Canada can move forward in the new millenium as a strong and prosperous power.

⁹Denis Stairs et al., *In the National Interest: Canadian Foreign Policy in an Insecure World* (Canada: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, 2003), 11.

¹⁰Christopher Sands, “Fading Power or Rising Power: 11 September and Lessons from the Section 110 Experience,” in *Canada Among Nations 2002: A Fading Power* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), 71.

FORMULATING THE NATIONAL INTEREST

It is important to distinguish between interests and values when attempting to determine a security policy based on national interest. Sometimes these terms are used interchangeably, and while related, they are not the same things. National interest is connected to values in that what constitutes the national interest will be closely connected to what a state values. If interests are not clearly defined or understood, there is a danger of focusing on values instead of interests and letting what we value be the determining factor in Canadian foreign policy. As Dennis Stairs points out, “. . . concentrating on the projection of our values abroad has encouraged Canadians to lose sight of the central importance of interests in the responsible conduct of foreign affairs.”¹¹ For this reason, Canadian policymakers must clearly articulate what is in Canada’s interest so that they can choose the appropriate grand strategy to reflect Canada’s post-9/11 vision of its role in the international community.

In looking at national interest it is useful to categorize interests according to importance, and from an international security policy perspective, to determine which interests might require military action or military influence. Military action or influence are the key variables as they directly relate to Canada’s military force structure, which is largely determined by whatever grand strategy option Canada adopts.¹²

¹¹Stairs, et al, 14.

¹²The other options that are available to Canada in guaranteeing national interest security, such as economic sanctions for instance, will not be examined as it is assessed that these measures can be used within any grand strategy context.

There are many different definitions of interest that could be used to provide a framework for a discussion of national interest. For instance, interest can be defined in terms of power and looked at as something that either improves a state's power or has the potential to weaken it. Hans J. Morgenthau used power as a measuring tool to gauge state actions.

Morgenthau supposed he had an objective standard by which to judge foreign policies: were they pursuing the national interest defined in terms of power? That is, was the statesman making decisions that would preserve and improve the state's power, or was he squandering power in such a way that would ultimately weaken the state?¹³

This view is attractive in that it provides a ready mechanism for assessing state actions, but it may be too simplistic in that it only dissects one part of a composite problem and as a result does not bring enough clarity to understanding complex interactions. To provide more specificity to a working discussion of national interest, a combination of Donald E. Nuechterlein's and Hans J. Morgenthau's definitions shall be used.

Morgenthau, in seeing interest in terms of power, divided interests into two categories, "the vital and the secondary."¹⁴ Vital interests are those interests that impact upon the very existence of the state or what it values. Nuechterlein's nuance was to break vital interests into two parts; survival and vital. Survival interests are those that impact upon the life of the state while vital interests represent those issues that the state is not willing to compromise over.¹⁵ It would logically proceed from these definitions that if

¹³Micheal G. Roskin, *National Interest: From Abstraction to Strategy* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 1994), 4.

¹⁴Ibid., 6.

¹⁵Donald E. Nuechterlein, *America Recommitted: United States National Interests in a Restructured World* (University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 18-19.

a vital or survival interest were threatened, military forces would be needed to defend it. For the US, due to their status within the international system, any grand strategy choice would have to result in a military force structure that could protect its survival interests. In Canada's case this is more complex because of its proximity to the US and the almost inviolable intermingling of what constitutes survival interests between the two countries. Commitments between Canada and the US to guarantee each other's security go back as far as 1938 when US President Franklin Roosevelt, without first consulting Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King, stated that the "people of the United States will not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any other empire."¹⁶ In response, King "pledged that Canada would maintain sufficient defensive strength to deter any incursions aimed at the United States and that the Dominion would never become a strategic liability to its neighbor."¹⁷ J.L. Granatstein suggests that these commitments "have remained intact as the basic pledges from each nation to the other," but accurately points out that "one might argue that Canada has not always maintained enough military strength to keep its side of the bargain."¹⁸

Being able to determine what are survival interests then becomes a key issue for policymakers to decide. Before 9/11 this was not difficult for Canadian policymakers as they were usually limited to issues that could directly impact upon homeland security and the political survival of the state as a whole. Prior to 9/11 this was commonly envisaged as conflict between states, such as a nuclear war or a major conventional war between the

¹⁶J.L. Granatstein, "A Friendly Agreement in Advance: Canada-US Defense Relations Past, Present, and Future," *The Border Papers* no. 166 (Toronto: C.D. Howe Institute, June 2002), 3.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 3.

existing superpowers that would affect the survival of Canada. Post-9/11 however, the emergence of non-state actors, and in particular their ability to acquire and then use weapons of mass destruction (WMD), has added a whole new dimension to understanding survival interests. The issue for Canada is whether it sees terrorism as being a threat to its survival interests or a threat to a lower echelon of interests. This subtlety is important because of how the US sees the issue. If there is a dichotomy between how Canada and US discern the threat, this could lead to a fracturing in synergy between Canadian and US grand strategy decision-making. This could affect Canada far more than the US.

In essence, how Canada approaches the issue of international terrorism as a threat to its interests, given the US view, could be the most important differentiation in selecting an appropriate grand strategy for Canada. This does not mean that lower priority interests are not worth fighting for, just that they do not threaten the survival of the state. This is a critical distinction. There would be very little argument that force should be used to defend survival interests; the difficulty arises when assessing interests that do not impact upon the survival of the state. There is very little, if any, choice when choosing to defend a survival interest. However, when choosing to defend other interests, it is practically all about choice. Interestingly, how Canada decides to view terrorism is a choice that could not only affect its survival, but the quality of its relations with its most important allies.

For Canada, in addition to the status of terrorism, other interests must be assessed to see if they reach the threshold of Nuechterlein's "vital." In terms of this analysis, vital interests will be those considered so important that military action would be a suitable

mechanism for resolution. Again, this implies choice and does not mean that if something is not a vital interest that force will not be used. Instead, it is offered as part of an interest framework that Canada can use to assess the differing grand strategy choices. An example of protecting vital interests might be Canadian involvement in Gulf War I, or more recently in Afghanistan. In both these circumstances, the Canadian government felt compelled to commit military force in situations that had become intolerable and that were impacting upon Canada's vital interests. However, in both these instances Canada had significant choice in deciding its involvement. Canada did not have to become engaged but in doing so revealed the need for an appropriate military force structure to support Canadian protection of its vital interests. It is not the purpose of this paper to argue the merits of these two actions in terms of whether they were vital or not, just to illustrate that military force was used in support of defending Canadian interests.

These cases of Canadian action precisely illustrate the difficulty in deciding what interests are significant enough to warrant military action. It is in deciding what is a vital interest and what is a lesser interest that policymakers face their greatest challenge. For the purposes of this discussion, interests that by their nature would not lead to the use of military force and thus have little or no impact on a state's grand strategy choice or international security policy, can be relegated to the two inferior categories of major and peripheral interests. A "major" interest then is,

One that a country considers to be important but not crucial to its well-being. . . . Such issues may cause serious concern and even harm to US [Canadian] interests abroad, but policymakers usually come to the conclusion that negotiation and compromise rather than confrontation, are desirable—even though the result may be painful.¹⁹

¹⁹Nuechterlein, 20-21.

Major interests of Canada have to be carefully determined and assessed according to their potential to turn into or interact with vital interests. Major interests must also be contrasted with “peripheral” interests which do “not seriously affect the well-being of the United States [Canada] as a whole, even though it may be detrimental to the private interests of Americans [Canad

that a state's interests actually reflect the will of its people, that the greatest challenge lies. This issue becomes exacerbated when concepts such as "world order," and "promotion of values" are considered. For instance, are Canadians satisfied not to engage themselves in nation building even if the cost is ethnic cleansing? Understanding the collective domestic value system correctly will have a huge impact on shaping what Canada is willing to fight for and thus determining an appropriate grand strategy.

As it has already been stipulated that a state and its people would recognize the validity of defending a survival interest, the decision of what comprises a vital interest versus a major interest become critical. These choices will eventually result in a grand strategy and international security policy that will either provide for the security of Canadian interests or degrade its ability to protect what it deems important. The worst course of action would be to make no decisions at all. As Andrew Cohen laments:

The Critics call Canada an immature country, unable or unwilling to make hard choices. Bemoaning the evisceration of its armed forces, the stinginess of its aid program, and the cheapening of its foreign service, they paint a country unwilling to grow up, one without a real sense of nationhood, nor worse, a mission in the world.²³

This is clearly a situation that Canada does not want to be in. If Canada wishes to dispel this assessment, it must carefully weigh the grand strategy alternatives available to it in order to develop a cogent and truly relevant international security policy. Upon doing so, it will discover that cooperative security offers Canada the best grand strategy choice that is both consistent with its historical preference for multilateralism and its requirement to face the challenges of the post-9/11 security environment.

²³Cohen, 33.

REALISM VERSUS LIBERALISM

One of the main reasons that there are competing grand strategy choices is that policymakers as a whole may have different analytical perspectives as to Canada's role in the international system. How influential Canadian policymakers see Canada in relation to the international community is integral to the decision-making process. The two dominant discourses that will be discussed in this paper are realism and liberalism. The differences between these two standpoints can significantly influence what a state determines to be its vital interests. Consequently, understanding these differing discourses is important for two reasons. First, the adopted view of policymakers will dramatically impact how they approach the different grand strategy options. Second, if Canada and the US see the international system from opposite perspectives, as this paper will argue, this can then have a deleterious affect upon security relations between the two countries.²⁴ Realists, in their most basic form, view the international system in terms of national interest and power.²⁵ International relations are characterized by relative power measurements that contrast the differing strengths of international players. Traditionally, realism has always relied on the state being the unit of measurements within an anarchic international system.

Only state preferences count. In classic realism, human nature (as experienced in politics) frequently displays drives for power and domination in themselves, as well as for other purposes, and a

²⁴It should also be noted that policymakers can find themselves in a gray area between the two perspectives, but for clarity of study they will be looked at from their polar positions.

²⁵Micheal G. Roskin and Nicholas O. Berry, *The New World of International Relations*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2002), 10.

willingness to use force. Thus, state preferences reduce to a desire for power and willingness to use it.²⁶

This may sound somewhat Machiavellian in this day and age but it represents a view of the international system that recognizes that all states are self-interested and are concerned about their relative power position. Even a middle power such as Canada needs to be concerned about where it stands in the international community so it can protect its interests appropriately. In addition to contributing to a framework for analyzing the differing grand strategy choices, this definition will be used to contrast Canadian and US views of the international system. A nuance that will be added to the realist perspective is how it can still be the dominant form of thinking even in a post-9/11 environment that has seen such a significant emergence in the power of non-state actors to affect the international system. In a sense terrorism, as represented by Al Qaeda, has taken on a relative power position within the international order that must be considered when a state views its international security policy and indeed decides upon a grand strategy option. Heretofore, realism would have ignored the terrorist threat as being external to the state to state paradigm and thus outside its purview of analysis.

In calling Canada a middle power, Cooper, Higgott and Nossal's "behavioral" conception is useful in trying to understand exactly what a middle power is and the ideas it might represent:

. . . middle powers are defined primarily by their behavior: their tendency to pursue multilateral solutions to international problems, their tendency to embrace compromise positions in international

²⁶Patrick M. Morgan, "Liberalist and Realist Security Studies at 2000: Two Decades of Progress?" chap. in *Critical Reflections on Security and Change*, ed. Stuart Croft and Terry Terriff (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 44.

disputes, and their tendency to embrace notions of 'good international citizenship' to guide their diplomacy.²⁷

For the most part this serves as a good benchmark for calling Canada a middle power, but it must be borne in mind that if Canada chooses to limit its future international involvement, due to a grand strategy choice, its status as a middle power from a "behavioral" approach, would be in question. Notwithstanding any future choices made by Canada, this definition characterizes Canada in a starkly different manner from the US, an acknowledged superpower.

Before liberalism is discussed, it is important to stipulate that this paper will argue that the US predominately sees the international system from a realist perspective. This means that the US believes that its national interests and its relative power position are what drive its international security policy. However, this position is not purely realist due to the impact of terrorism on the US security agenda.²⁸ As the last remaining superpower, there is no question that US security issues are different from Canada's. However, it would be impossible for Canada to select an appropriate grand strategy choice and it is difficult to see how Canada's realist bias when it comes to international

liberalism embraces a different notion of what constitutes security and challenges most of realism's underlying assumptions.²⁹ Liberalists agree that the international system is anarchic, but believe that states are able to cooperate within this environment regardless. Essentially, Liberalists argue that realists tend to over-emphasize the role of the state as a unitary international actor.

. . . the realist view of the state as a unitary actor is an abstraction that masks the essence of politics that is found principally with the state. The state is not some reified entity – an abstraction to be treated as if it were a physical being that acts with single-minded determination, always in a coherent manner.³⁰

From a liberalist viewpoint, cooperation is possible within the international system and the character of states can be very important in accepting compromise and viewing relations from a non-zero sum position.

A liberalist stance towards grand strategy options will focus on many interests and not just on relative power. Liberalists will be concerned with economic security, environmental security, energy security, and other non-military concepts of security that still pose a threat to Canada. Andrew Ross points out that “Security, for liberals, is about more than protecting the country from external military threats.”³¹ As a result, liberalists will tend towards grand strategy options that recognize the value of alliances and other forms of cooperation including international institutions and other non-state actors that

²⁹It should be noted that not all liberals see the international system the same way but for sake of clarity the classic liberalist viewpoint is offered.

³⁰Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 7.

³¹Andrew L. Ross, “The Theory and Practice of International Relations: Contending Analytical Perspectives,” in *Strategy and Force Planning*, 3rd ed., ed. Strategy and Force Planning Faculty (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2000), 62.

can help resolve conflict before military intervention is required. In Canada's case, its tradition of multilateralism fits nicely into the liberalist paradigm. Liberalists, as a result of their view of the international system, will tend to want to engage Canada in situations where cooperative and multilateral solutions are more likely to maintain or increase international stability. This would be in marked contrast to the realist hands-off approach unless a vital interest is directly threatened.

As can be seen, realism and liberalism offer differing views of the international order which can impact upon grand strategy decision making, this brief description of realism and liberalism is only offered to illustrate that Canadian and US policymakers can easily see the world in different ways. Even within Canada itself policymakers will have different views of the international system with some leaning towards the US view while others may think Canadian policy should be as liberalist possible. Consequently, there can be no right or wrong grand strategy choice based on perspective alone and it could be extremely difficult to build political consensus around the specifics of any one grand strategy. Therefore, the three grand strategy options that will be examined in this paper will be considered according to their respective discernment of what constitutes Canadian interests and what is the best way to secure those interests.

In looking at these grand strategy choices, specific factors will be examined to differentiate each option. This will include the prevalent viewpoint that is identified with each option (realism or liberalism) along with its conception of interest. In addition, force structure implications will be addressed along with the ability of the strategy to deal with the terrorist threat. Finally, criticisms of each theory will be discussed. Using this methodology, it will be possible to emphasize the key differences between the three

strategies while highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. Different frameworks and vernaculars exist for assessing grand strategy options. For the purposes of this essay, Barry Posen's and Andrew Ross's grand strategy conceptions of neo-isolationism, selective engagement and cooperative security will be used as a guide for assessing Canada's options.³² While terrorism was not specifically addressed by Posen and Ross, these grand strategy choices will also be assessed relative to this significant security threat. It should be noted that these grand strategy choices are usually associated with US options but can be applied to Canada within its middle power context.

Posen's and Ross' construct is a useful framework for assessing Canada's options because it provides three clear choices that could drive Canadian international security policy. Posen and Ross actually offer "primacy" as fourth choice for consideration but this is clearly out of Canada's reach because of its middle power status. Only a great or super power could consider primacy as an option because it essentially assumes a leadership role that Canada, due to its size and ambition, could not fulfill.³³ In using this structure there is a danger of considering US options inappropriately within a Canadian context, but as Stairs argues, "Even smaller powers, however, make their decisions based on underlying assumptions about their fundamental interests, capabilities and requirements, given their general place in the world."³⁴ While the scale of US Grand Strategy decision-making is certainly larger than Canada's, the basic tenets of what drives these choices are the same. Therefore, Posen's and Ross' competing visions can

³²Posen and Ross, 5-53.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Stairs, et al, 10.

be useful in studying the Canadian geo-political context to establish three clear choices that Canadian policymakers could possibly choose from.

NEO-ISOLATIONISM

The first grand strategy option to be considered is neo-isolationism, which is primarily influenced by a realist perspective of the international system but can be adopted to a liberalist standpoint.³⁵ Considering neo-isolationism as an option for Canada may initially seem surprising. However, while isolationism in general is something that is normally thought of in reference to the US, it can be seriously considered within a Canadian context as it can be argued that Canada, while preaching multilateralism, has in fact had *de facto* isolationist tendencies. As David Haglund points out, there are those within the Canadian political system that believe that Canada may already be isolationist or certainly on the path towards it.³⁶ Isolationism can in fact be a default strategy because as Kim Nossal argues, “internationalism is fundamentally a voluntaristic form of diplomacy. In other words, it is an entirely optional form of statecraft—in the sense that one could get by without engaging in it.”³⁷ Haglund himself argues that Canada is not becoming isolationist, but acknowledges that Canada is “cheap

³⁵Eric A. Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured: American Foreign Policy for a New Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

³⁶David G. Haglund, “Are we the isolationists?,” *International Journal* 58, no. 1 (Winter 2002-03): 1-23.

³⁷Kim Richard Nossal, “Pinchpenny Diplomacy,” *International Journal* 54, no. 1 (Winter 1998-99): 100.

because our strategic culture instructs us to be.”³⁸ Nossal, while not comfortable with labeling Canada as isolationist or even neo-isolationist, does in fact characterize Canada as practicing “pinchpenny diplomacy.”³⁹ Nossal suggests that this phrase refers to a “particular attitude towards international activity, an essential meanness of spirit that underwrites an overly frugal foreign policy conducted by a rich and secure community in a world that continues to be marked by poverty and insecurity.”⁴⁰ Nossal’s reference to “frugal foreign policy,” and “meanness of spirit,” while different from neo-isolationism, does illustrate that neo-isolationism is not just a US grand strategy option, but something that Canada could easily choose in light of its present diplomacy.

Interestingly, even if neo-isolationism was chosen for Canada, policymakers might choose to disguise it as something else when the reality is that the *de facto* political outcome would be neo-isolationism. However, because of Canada’s proud perceived tradition of multilateralism and indeed internationalism, Canadian policymakers may not desire to have their neo-isolationist choice known politically either domestically or internationally. What Haglund’s and Nossal’s articles inadvertently demonstrate, is that neo-isolationism is a real grand strategy choice for Canada, despite its roots in US foreign policy discussions.

Neo-isolationism as a theory suggests that there is no major symmetric threat to Canada and that Canada has become a secure state as a result of its geographic location and the end of the Cold War. Canada is essentially geographically unassailable and it is

³⁸Haglund, 22.

³⁹Nossal, 104.

⁴⁰Ibid., 104.

therefore unlikely that Canada would be threatened within its borders from another state actor. It would also presume that because of US proximity, Canada would fall under its security umbrella, as it would always be in the US interest to protect Canada. As well, due to its close ties to the US economy and its integration with the US military, Canada would not have to rely on other alliances or international organizations to help guarantee its security. In effect, Canada would be turning its back on traditional alliances such as NATO, and would be less concerned with the relevancy of the UN. National defence, which includes the freedom of Canadian citizens, security from threat, and protection of property, would become the only vital interests to be protected.

Neo-isolationism from realist perspective results in an attitude towards the international system that strongly depends on assessments of relative power. As a result, when looking at the possible threats to Canadian security, it would have to be clear that there are no threats that have considerable economic and military power that could be used to threaten Canadian security, especially on the home front. In conducting a threat analysis to support neo-isolationism, threats from other state actors would be much easier to determine than the threat from terrorism. However, a strong argument could be made that a neo-isolationist stance would in fact reduce the threat from terrorism because Canada would be less active in areas of the world where terrorism has historically originated. Conversely, close ties to the US could undermine any perceived non-involvement gains. Canada, when considering neo-isolationism as a grand strategy option, must make a determination of which state and non-state actors present a credible threat to Canadian vital interests. In doing so, it can then decide how much risk is being assumed in adopting a neo-isolationist policy.

Although there does not appear to be any direct state rival to Canada, an unstable international order, or an event that affected the US economy, could have a dramatic affect upon Canada's economy and global economic interests. Equally important are the possible effects of WMD proliferation and how this potentially crippling threat to security is viewed from both an offensive and defensive perspective. Its utility as a defensive weapon or as an overall deterrent cannot be underestimated. However, its use as an offensive weapon against Canada, from a state-to-state perspective, has to be considered extremely unlikely unless it is a byproduct of a US conflict with a rogue state. "There can be no politically rational motive for any country large or small to explode a nuclear weapon on North America. U.S. retaliation would be devastating."⁴¹ If this view of WMD is deemed correct, then it seems reasonable that Canadian homeland security is not likely to be threatened by WMD from another state, at least in the foreseeable future. However, what is acknowledged as possible is a terrorist WMD attack.

Bearing in mind that the security paradigm for neo-isolationism centers on national defence, and practically this means an attack on Canadian soil by conventional forces of an economically and militarily strong state, international security concerns become less relevant to Canadian foreign policy. As Posen and Ross suggest, international security entanglements based on, "The promotion of values such as democracy and human rights inspires ill-advised crusades that serve only to generate resentment . . . it is a poor guide to policy and strategy."⁴² Neo-isolationism utterly rejects the notion that Canada should be one of the world's policeman or assist the US in

⁴¹Posen and Ross, 13.

⁴²Ibid., 13.

this function. In fact, it is precisely this role that would tend to embroil Canada in conflicts and issues that have little bearing on Canadian homeland security. Operations in Somalia and Kosovo for instance would not have been undertaken under a neo-isolationist grand strategy. However, as a result of Canadian involvement or interference, depending on how its actions are viewed, homeland security can be threatened as a result of the involvement instead of by the specific issue itself. Canadian involvement in the Middle East is an example of this circumstance. Canada participated in Gulf War I and is presently active in Afghanistan. It is quite possible that these actions have increased the terrorist threat to Canada and could make Canada a potential target for a WMD attack. While this is an arguable point, it is a position that neo-isolationists would take in recommending a change in Canadian policy in the Middle East region.

Neo-isolationists would make a very strong argument that Canada threatens its homeland security by taking on causes and fights that are not relevant to Canadian security and are issues that should be addressed by other states or organizations. As a middle power, Canada has no reason or business to shoulder this burden at the expense of its limited resources. Promotion of world order and democratic values are not considered vital interests, and as such, Canada should not commit forces to their furtherance. The problems experienced in the Balkans would be considered a European problem that should be handled by European countries and institutions. Humanitarian efforts, such as those mounted in Somalia and Rwanda, would in no way impact upon national defence, therefore they have no impact on vital interests and should be handled by other states or in a manner that would not lead to the deployment of troops. They are not worth fighting

for, “. . . intervention of any kind during wars would be viewed as a mistake, since at least one side is likely to be disadvantaged by humanitarian assistance to the others.”⁴³

If Canada adopted a non-interventionist policy this would have an obvious impact on Canadian relations both with and within the UN. However, it would allow Canada to make decisions without always having to defer or refer to UN decision-making. Recent events in Gulf War II illustrate how Canada was unwilling to make a policy decision with regards to Iraq without first knowing clearly what the UN was prepared to condone or authorize. While this may or may not have been a ruse on Canada’s part to delay having to make a decision, it is illustrative of the grip UN decision-making presently has on Canadian policy decisions. As it stands now, it appears that Canada is incapable of making a policy decision without first seeing what the UN’s position is going to be.

In dealing with the UN, it is possible that due to its wealth and international reputation, Canada is being asked to assume a much larger peacekeeping burden when it comes to solving international crises. This suits other nations well as they can take advantage of Canadian legitimacy while pursuing their own specific interests.

Conversely, Canada expends resources and potentially gains enemies in trying to promote world order. Neo-isolationists would argue that the UN benefits greatly from active Canadian participation while Canada loses flexibility, consumes resources and over-stretches its military capability. In light of this, neo-isolationists would argue that Canada must re-evaluate its relationship with the UN so that Canada only becomes involved in those issues that affect its vital interests, which from a neo-isolationist perspective, would be very narrowly defined. In fact, a very passive, non-interventionist

⁴³Ibid., 14.

role would be advocated that would result in a greater share of the economic and military peacekeeping burden being shared by other states.

If the Canadian relationship with the UN needs to be redefined under the neo-isolationist paradigm, then so would Canadian involvement with NATO. It is quite likely that NATO could be seen as dispensable given its relatively small impact on Canadian homeland security and concerns that NATO has become irrelevant since the end of the Cold War. It is granted that it contributes to European stability, but this stability could be maintained without NATO involvement. Countries such as Britain, France and Germany, with the US as an offshore balancer, are capable of militarily protecting the region and providing the appropriate deterrent to any aggressive power. A withdrawal from NATO, like a change in its role within the UN, could in fact increase Canadian flexibility and strategic independence as long as its strong relations with the US could be preserved. Precious resources and energy that Canada presently commits to NATO could be redirected to either combined US/Canada initiatives or diverted to other programs that offer Canada more security profit from its investment. Given the US position as the sole remaining superpower, Canada could tie itself to the US and not worry about loss of influence within NATO.

It is important to note that these neo-isolationist viewpoints of Canadian relationship with the UN and NATO do not imply an isolated Canada. Canada would still be very much involved in world affairs, both politically and economically. However, what would definitively change would be the number and types of military interventions throughout the world that have stretched the Canadian military to its limits. "It is entirely feasible to have extensive economic and cultural relations with the rest of the world--and

have an active and creative diplomacy--without playing the role of world policeman.”⁴⁴

While this quote was delivered in a US context, Canada, in placing peacekeepers throughout the world, while not acting as a world policeman, certainly contributes to the safety of the neighbourhood and does so at a considerable cost to its own resources and capabilities. Neo-isolationism, unlike isolationism, does not recommend shutting off Canada from the rest of the world. Indeed, it can be granted almost without debate, that the world has become so globally connected that true isolationism would be next to impossible.

Neo-isolationism, by virtue of its emphasis on homeland defence, would require a relatively small force structure that could lead to economic savings while still resulting in a strong and capable force. If Canadian forces no longer needed to be employed abroad in numerous security missions and in support of outdated alliance structures, Canadian forces could be trained and structured to meet the prime mission of homeland defence. It would be possible to envision a very large force structure within this construct to completely insulate Canada from any external threat, but as has been argued earlier, Canadian security guarantees with the US would seem to preclude this from being a likely option.

The arguments for neo-isolationism tend to focus on a narrow definition of vital interest that is concerned mainly with homeland security. This premise implies that a reduction of Canadian military intervention throughout the world will in fact lead to greater stability and security for Canada. However, is this necessarily true? It is possible that the complete opposite could occur. Canadian disengagement could lead to reduced

⁴⁴Ibid., 12.

influence on the world stage and make Canada's voice small to non-existent in Europe and other important regions. This could create a situation of instability that could in fact reduce Canadian security rather than improve it. Critics of neo-isolationism would assert that it is naively optimistic to think that Canada could withdraw its military support from NATO and peacekeeping operations and maintain the level of influence it has now.

While it might be true that there would be economic savings from a non-expeditionary neo-isolationist force structure, this economic benefit would have to be compared to the extreme reduction in Canadian international influence.

Neo-isolationism is an attractive grand strategy for those policymakers who feel that the Canada is over-engaged in world affairs and is reducing its security rather than improving it by this engagement. They have a narrow view of Canadian vital interests and are interested in the economic benefits of a smaller non-expeditionary force structure. Neo-isolationism is a realist strategy that is not directly concerned with WMD proliferation and favors withdrawing from NATO and greatly reducing Canadian support for UN activities. Neo-isolationism is not concerned with promoting world order and tends to turn a blind eye to ethnic conflicts that may or may not have a moral dimension. Use of military forces should be for defence only and should be structured to have a robust capability that is optimized for defence of North America.⁴⁵ It recognizes the potential threat of terrorism but believes that less engagement in world affairs would in fact reduce this threat.

Neo-isolationism is not a grand strategy choice that Canada would be very likely to choose given its historical engagement in international affairs. As David Dewitt

⁴⁵Ibid., 6.

pointed out in 1994, “It is fair to note that successive Canadian governments have been actively concerned with our roles and responsibilities in support of worldwide peace and security.”⁴⁶ This comment remains germane given the actions of the liberal government during the last decade. However, it is an option for Canada that can be taken either by specific choice, or by default, if due to lack of economic and military resources it is unable to commit forces towards international security situations. It also can be asserted that even though the world is less stable, Canada might feel more secure within this environment if it disengaged and focused almost exclusively on its relationship with the US and other key trading partners. Canadian policymakers, in looking at neo-isolationism as a choice for Canada, must accurately determine the second and third order effects of such a policy both from a domestic and foreign perspective to see if it provides the appropriate amount of security for Canada’s interests.

SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Selective engagement is a grand strategy that is also based on realist ideas but has room for liberalist goals in its hierarchy of interests. Selective engagement has a clear Canadian context that is different from neo-isolationism in terms of its greater support for internationalism. However, internationalism as practiced under selective engagement must be carefully considered as evidenced by Janice Stein’s argument that:

Canada cannot be everywhere and do everything. If it attempts to do so, it risks dissipating its resources and sliding into mediocrity. Canada must define its priorities, identify areas of comparative

⁴⁶David B. Dewitt, “Cooperative Security: A Canadian Appr

advantage, develop 'niche' policies, and focus its resources so that Canada contributes distinctively across the broad spectrum of common security.⁴⁷

Stein's view for Canada fits nicely with selective engagement because it acknowledges that Canada cannot "be everywhere and do everything," but at the same time allows for internationalism. As Nossal points out, some scholars believe that one option for Canada would be to continue to reduce its internationalism but still be involved at an appropriately determined level by being "more selective about its international activity."⁴⁸ Jean-Francois Rioux and Robin Hay argue that "Canada is, de facto, practicing 'selective internationalism,' an approach to foreign policy that has been encouraged by several influential commentators who insist that since the end of the cold war the promotion of Canadian interests no longer requires broad international commitments and initiatives."⁴⁹ As can be seen, just as some scholars believe Canada is already acting in isolationist manner, others see Canada moving in that direction or already pursuing a path of selective engagement. This suggests that selective engagement is clearly a grand strategy choice for Canada.

Like neo-isolationism, selective engagement ranks homeland security as its highest vital interest. However, unlike neo-isolationism, selective engagement has a wider albeit parochial perspective on what constitutes national interest. As a result:

This would still entail a major and continuing decline in Canada's significance in world affairs, and in the short term there will be

⁴⁷Janice Gross Stein, "Canada 21: a moment and a model," *Canadian Foreign Policy* 2 (Spring 1994): 11.

⁴⁸Nossal, 90. He writes this remark in reference to the thoughts of scholars such as Janice Stein, Andrew F. Cooper, and Evan Potter.

⁴⁹Jean-Francois Rioux and Robin Hay, "Canadian Foreign Policy: From Internationalism to Isolationism?" *International Journal* 54, no. 1 (Winter 1998-99): 57-58.

howls of protest from those at home and abroad who lose out in the re-definition of priorities. But once the dust has settled, the results would almost certainly be an advance over the reactive strategy of drift that we are following now.⁵⁰

In addition to prioritizing interests, selective engagement places more of an emphasis on secondary interests that may or may not warrant military involvement. Even though military action might be used or considered, the decision not to intervene would not have overly detrimental consequences to Canadian interests but would impact on projection of values. These lesser interests might include the promotion of world order in terms of democracy or human rights or the prevention of genocide and would be in reality a reflection of the importance Canadian's place on values such that they become interests.

Robert J. Art defines selective engagement as follows:

It steers the middle course between an isolationist, unilateralist course, on the one hand, and a world policeman, highly interventionist role, on the other. It avoids both an overly restrictive and an overly expansive definition of . . . [Canada's] interests, and it strikes a balance between doing too much and too little militarily to support them.⁵¹

This strategy, by definition, is more forward looking and sees the utility in adopting measures at an early stage to prevent undesirable outcomes in the future even if it means military intervention. In support of this goal, active involvement in institutions is seen as a desirable method for securing Canadian interests. NATO would remain an important alliance structure while the UN would continue to provide a venue for furthering Canadian interests within the international system.

⁵⁰Stairs, et al, 11.

⁵¹Robert J. Art, "Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement," *International Security* 23, no. 3 (Winter 1998/99): 80.

Selective engagement, while embracing a broader number of interests than neo-isolationism, still has a restricted view of what rises high enough in the national interest to be considered vital. However, it does recognize the asymmetric threats of terrorist organizations or rogue states as being significant and something that must be considered seriously when WMD are a part of the equation. “For selective engagers, the threat to worry about today is rogue states or fanatical terrorists (or both) armed with NBC weapons, not conventional attacks from strong states or nuclear threats from “normal” states.”⁵² Selective engagement acknowledges that state actors are the primary players in the international system, but it grimly recognizes that the potential threat posed by terrorist organizations or rogue states cannot be ignored.

In dealing with this problem, selective engagers would advocate active and robust action against the spread of weapons of mass destruction. One of the best ways that Canada could do this would be to support a US no-exceptions policy that is backed up by “a graded punishment regime that distinguishes between normal states, on the one hand, and rogue states and terrorists, on the other.”⁵³ This policy would include the possibility of military action to stop preemptively terrorist or rogue states from gaining this capability. As can be seen, this policy would differ greatly from a neo-isolationist strategy that would see the spread of weapons of mass destruction as outside its conception of what constitutes a vital Canadian interest and would be satisfied if other states addressed the issue without Canadian military support. In a sense, this was the position Canada took with regards to Iraq, the veracity of the US claims aside; Canada

⁵²Ibid., 84.

⁵³Ibid., 88.

was content to let the US and others deal with the potential presence of WMD in Iraq.

Protecting the peace amongst the great powers would be another interest that selective engagers would deem vital. This would include deterring an outbreak of a war between any of the great powers as well as discouraging security competitions that could lead to instability either militarily or economically. If a great power war occurred, Canada could be directly affected either by the nature of its alliances or by the economic fallout. It can also be suggested that great power security competitions and conflicts could make the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction more likely. “These are bound to spur the acquisition and perhaps even the threatened use of NBC weapons, thereby making NBC limitation harder, not easier.”⁵⁴ In order to prevent Canada from becoming involved in a costly great power war or from being negatively impacted by a security competition, selective engagers would advocate a forward military presence that would reinforce regional stability in both Europe and the Middle East.

Canadian military relationships with both NATO as a whole and the US specifically are excellent examples of how Canada, through these alliances and relationships, adds to international stability in regions of the world that Canada under a neo-isolationist strategy might ignore. Selective engagers would argue that a neo-isolationist posture would be far more risky in that it would weaken Canada’s influence within the international community and could potentially sour relations with key trading partners. By staying actively engaged in key regional areas, Canada would be perceived as doing its share on the international scene which adds weight to its international voice.

⁵⁴Ibid., 90.

In addition to the vital interests that selective engagement deems worth protecting, there are secondary interests that may require military action but do not necessarily demand it (as they are not vital), and indeed may be better addressed by non-military means. These secondary interests are largely associated with the promotion of world order, international development and human security and can be expanded to include protection for the environment and ensuring international economic stability. However, while Canada has often used the UN as its measuring tool for assessing when action is required, selective engagement would advocate a strategy more closely aligned to national interests rather than international will:

Canadians by and large still venerate the United Nations; the preferred option for most Canadians is to send their troops on 'peace' operations with the UN, not on 'war' missions with US-led 'coalitions of the willing.' That view simply does not accord with the realities of the post-cold war world or with Canada's national interests.⁵⁵

Selective engagement proposes a policy that allows room for multilateral action but suggests that national interest be the overriding factor and that multilateralism not become an end in itself, "Canada must stop defending multilateralism – including the multilateralism embodied in the United Nations – as an end in itself."⁵⁶ Additionally, "in the context of evaluating alternatives, Canadian officials should be willing to engage the mounting evidence that exclusive reliance on multilateralism has failed."⁵⁷ In contrast, neo-isolationists would firmly refrain from using military action to support the protection

⁵⁵Stairs, et al, 29.

⁵⁶Ibid., 8.

⁵⁷Frank P. Harvey, "Dispelling the Myth of Multilateral Security After 11 September and the Implications for Canada," in *Canada Among Nations 2003: Coping with the American Colossus*, ed. David Carment, Fen O. Hampson and Norman Hillmer (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003), 212.

of secondary interests as their resultant force structure would not support it and these interests would be seen as having a low impact upon homeland security.

A particularly thorny issue for selective engagers is deciding when a world event or crisis, which clearly falls inside the realm of a secondary interest, is still important enough to warrant military action. This is where international pressure to act is felt most acutely. In these situations policymakers are placed solidly on the horns of a dilemma. They most likely have the military power to assist in resolving the situation, but they must decide what risk and price they are willing to pay achieve this end. This decision becomes even more difficult when continued human suffering is the possible or likely result of inaction. Selective engagers would advocate other methods to solve these situations but in the end they may decide that the situation is dire enough that military action is required. Interestingly, the issue then becomes more about what the Canadian Public values as opposed to what is specifically in the Canadian interest. However, selective engagers, in trying to decide the appropriate reaction to a crisis, usually assess the problem relative to its potential to balloon and impact one of the state's vital interests. An example of this would be where a regional ethnic conflict has the potential to expand to involve more than one great power. Unfortunately, in these cases "there is no clear strategic guide that tells which interventions are worth pursuing and which are not."⁵⁸

From a force structure perspective, a grand strategy of selective engagement would require significantly more forces than a neo-isolationist strategy and would therefore be an economically more expensive proposition. In addition to m



prepared to keep significant number of these forces deployed to maintain regional stability in both Eurasia and the Middle East.

Selective engagement, like the other grand strategy choices, is subject to criticism and has both strengths and weaknesses. How valid these criticisms are can almost directly be correlated to how accurately an observer thinks a selective engagement strategy has assessed Canada's vital and secondary interests. In other words, how interest is defined largely determines how appropriate any given strategy is relative to protecting those interests. If policymakers cannot agree on what constitutes Canadian vital interests, then it becomes extremely difficult to decide upon an appropriate grand strategy.

Selective engagement is faulted because it is not easy to determine second and third order effects that make it difficult to determine what world events require Canadian involvement. In selectively deciding Canadian involvement, caution must be exercised so that seemingly meaningless events do not escape unnoticed or relatively small conflagrations do not expand to an unacceptable level. While Canada will not be acting in isolation, how it influences the handling of events can have an impact upon their speedy or slow resolution. If Canada waits too long to engage itself in a pressing situation, believing that its interests are not threatened, it is possible that when it finally does have to intervene the commitment will be much more complex and lengthy and its interests that much more insecure. However, while this criticism does present a problem that would need to be carefully addressed, all grand strategies to some extent would have to deal with this issue. Determining second and third order effects are never easy and could not be solved by early engagement in every conflict.

A related problem to the issue of what events require Canadian intervention is how well the policy responds to dealing with domestic public opinion. Canadian values and culture cannot be ignored when selecting an appropriate grand strategy. As mentioned earlier, values and interests are different, but Canadian interests will be based on what the public values. Like neo-isolationism, selective engagement would have difficulty dealing with situations where the domestic outcry for action, over issues such as ethnic cleansing or the threat from terrorism, could conflict with an adopted strategy. It would be difficult for the government to ignore domestic outrage at a world event if it were possible for Canada to support an international response either through an ad hoc coalition or through a UN mandate. However, reconciling these engagements with Canadian interests would be easier within a selective engagement policy than it would be within a neo-isolationist strategy.

Perhaps the strongest criticism of selective engagement would come from the neo-isolationist theory. It would strongly assert that this type of policy would hurt Canadian interests rather than help because it would increase the amount of conflict that Canada would be involved in and thus create more enemies of Canada and perhaps reduce Canada's legitimacy internationally. They would argue "if you want to avoid war, you must stay out of the affairs of others."⁵⁹ Selective engagers, in seeking to prevent war by early involvement, could in fact precipitate more action against Canada, from terrorists for instance, and thus increase the threat to its interests and reduce its security.

As a grand strategy choice, selective engagement remains a predominately realist alternative and it has a broader conception of vital interest than neo-isolationism, it has a

⁵⁹Ibid., 23.

relatively narrow focus when compared with cooperative security. It sees peace amongst the major powers as a key vital interest and would advocate keeping Canadian alliances in tact while recognizing the limits of multila

interconnected in such a manner that conflictual events usually have transnational consequences that cannot be ignored. As Ramesh Thakur postulates:

In today's seamless world, political frontiers have become less salient both for national governments whose responsibilities within borders can be held up to international scrutiny, and for international organizations whose rights and duties can extend beyond borders. The gradual erosion of the once sacrosanct principle of national sovereignty is rooted today in the reality of global interdependence: no country is an island unto itself any more.⁶²

Globalization and its effects cannot be rolled back and as a result the world is an extremely connected place where second and third order effects are likely to impact upon Canadian vital interests. Cooperative security traditionally is less concerned with great power rivalries and instead is more focused on the consequences of undeterred aggression from state actors in a world where proliferation of WMD could lead to attacks that could have global consequences. This traditional view could easily be expanded to approach the same problem of undeterred aggression from non-state actors such as Al Qaeda.

From a Canadian perspective, cooperative security could be conceived as envisaged by Joe Clark in 1990, "inclusive in approach by seeking to engage adversaries and non-like-minded actors as well as putative friends."⁶³ In addition it would imagine "a more gradual approach to developing multilateral institutions," and remain a "flexible concept as it recognizes the value of existing balance-of-power arrangements in contributing to regional security . . . allowing multilateralism to develop from more ad

⁶²Ramesh Thakur, "Security in the New Millennium," *Canadian Foreign Policy* 10, no. 1 (Fall 2002): 57.

⁶³Dewitt, 14.

hoc, informal, and flexible processes”⁶⁴ By its nature, cooperative security would have to have great power support of its objectives and the remaining states would have to understand the ramifications of this paradigm on the international system.

For cooperative security to work, it must be understood that the great powers will not fracture according to individual interests when considering how to deal with an act of aggression. This of course is the great difficulty in any international crisis; that individual states will put their own interest above the good of the international community as a whole. This is not just multilateralism, but multilateralism with a cost. This optimistic reliance on states subjugating their national interest in favour of the international community is precisely what realists take issue with. Realists would argue that this is an unrealistic expectation that would not be borne out in the actual conduct of international affairs. States will simply not act against their own interest, especially if it affects their relative power position. Therefore they would argue, this approach is flawed at its conception and is doomed to failure. Liberalists would counter these assertions by arguing as Dewitt has that cooperative security “is not based on assumptions of strategic global relations in a zero-sum world;” but instead provides a mechanism “for transcending the barriers of sectarian and national interests.”⁶⁵ Ramesh Thakur argues further that “The reconciliation of divergent interests by the UN has procedural as well as representational legitimacy: it is authenticated by the procedures that have been freely

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵David B. Dewitt, “Common, Comprehensive, and Cooperative Security,” *The Pacific Review* 7, no. 1 (1994): 8.

accepted by the authorized representatives of world society.”⁶⁶ As can be seen, which view Canadian policymakers take on this issue can be instrumental in influencing what grand strategy choice they adopt.

In examining cooperative security it is important to delineate the differences between it and collective security. While not mutually exclusive, the terms represent different and perhaps even complimentary approaches to dealing with the problem of aggression. Cooperative security seeks to set up a situation where the preparation for aggression is thwarted while collective security attempts to deter aggression.

“Cooperative security is designed to ensure that organized aggression cannot start on any large scale. Collective security, however, is an arrangement for deterring aggression through counter threat and defeating it if it occurs.”⁶⁷ As can be seen, one situation does not preclude the other, they just take different approaches to achieving security.

Cooperative security, unlike neo-isolationism and selective engagement, embraces a greater variety of vital interests and a greater will to project these interests. Great power rivalries are seen as less likely due to the predominately democratic nature of great power governments. This assessment would be based upon the premise that democracies tend not to fight each other. Other great powers such as Russia and China would still be of concern, but as Posen and Ross argue “the answer there is to help them toward democracy.”⁶⁸ This presents a significant difference in perception between

⁶⁶Ramesh Thakur, “The United Nations and Human Security,” *Canadian Foreign Policy* 7, no. 1 (Fall 1999): 57.

⁶⁷Ashton B. Carter, William J. Perry and John D. Steinbruner, “A New Concept of Cooperative Security,” in *Strategy and Force Planning*, 3rd ed., ed. Strategy and Force Planning Faculty (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2000), 215.

⁶⁸Posen and Ross, 24.

cooperative security and selective engagement, which would be extremely concerned with great power competitions.

Like selective engagement, cooperative security is concerned with the proliferation of WMD. However, within cooperative security this concern is much greater and would be a significant factor in influencing policymakers to choose cooperative security over the other front running strategies. A cooperative security paradigm would predict that aggressors, when faced with the overwhelming strength of conventional US or international forces, might instead resort to WMD to achieve their ends. While states might use this strategy as a bargaining tool and might not be likely to use them, non-state actors such as terrorists, who have no interest in bargaining, could easily resort to WMD to complete their aim. This could have a direct impact upon Canada given its close ties to the US and its geographic location. While there might be physical effects to Canada from a WMD attack on US soil, there is no question that the economic effects would be significant. In recognition that some states or terrorist organizations could come to these or similar conclusions, cooperative security would “place a high priority on actions designed to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction,”⁶⁹ Neo-isolationism would take a hands-off approach to this issue while selective engagement would limit its involvement to cases where it demonstrably impacted upon Canadian interests. Cooperative security sees proliferation as a major issue that would need to be aggressively prevented.

While being very concerned with WMD proliferation, cooperative security does not portend to end all violence or conflicts. “The focus is on preventing accumulation of

⁶⁹Carter, Perry and Steinbruner, 223.

the means for serious, deliberate, organized aggression. . . . Cooperative security provides a framework — indeed, a necessary framework — for the international community to organize responses to civil violence.”⁷⁰ This “framework” would obviously have to address the fundamental concerns over trust and mutual understanding that would have to be the basis for any workable international cooperation. Additionally, it must be understood that cooperative security does not imply any single over-arching agreement that would dictate international action. Instead, it would rely upon existing international agreements and institutions to form the basis for the required trust and mutual understanding that would lead to appropriate measures to prevent aggression.

If these conditions for cooperative security could be met, there would need to be a complete reassessment of how military forces should be structured and measures taken to ensure compliance. The preferred result would be forces that are capable of defence but would not be suited to offensive operations. However, given the nature of weapons systems, this kind of distinction would be extremely difficult to determine. Additionally, catching cheaters and maintaining an effective verification system on a global scale would present its own challenges. As a result, “an integral part of any cooperative security regime must be the capability to organize multinational forces to defeat aggression should it occur.”⁷¹ Like a collective security system, there would have to be a mechanism for responding to violators whose actions could not be prevented by the extant cooperative security structure.

⁷⁰Ibid., 217.

⁷¹Ibid., 222.

Ideally, a UN type of structure that had the broad base support of its membership would lead any military response within a cooperative security system. In unique cases, the US, as the only remaining superpower, might be forced to form *ad hoc* coalitions to solve international problems when the UN is stymied by the conflicting interests of its members. However, for Canada, there would have to be a recognition that Canada's vital interests are so intertwined with the US, that in only extreme cases would Canada not agree to be part of a US coalition.

If Canada chose a cooperative security strategy, it would imply an acceptance of US leadership and involvement in resolving international conflicts. In fact, the US would remain the major world player and would rely heavily upon its military power as a guarantor of cooperative security success. In acting to first prevent and then deter if required, the US would be required to actively use its military forces throughout the world, with Canada providing military support and legitimacy as suitable in any given circumstance. "In this view of cooperative security, the special military capability of the United States would be used to give coalition forces an advantage that not only insured a military victory, but one that could be achieved with minimal losses to coalition forces. Therefore it should provide maximum deterrent to any potential aggressor."⁷²

While it is generally agreed that a cooperative security arrangement should be able to respond to cases of ethnic conflict, for instance ethnic cleansing, how this would be achieved is extremely problematic and would be difficult to address within a cooperative security environment. State to state conflict is easy to deal with because it violates the central principal of aggression. However, internal disturbances present their

⁷²Ibid., 223.

own set of unique problems that are more vulnerable to great power disagreement and regional sympathies. This is a particularly sensitive issue for the Canada, which has a morally sensitive public that is uncomfortable with extreme domestic violence no matter where it occurs, or for what reason. While cooperative security does not provide a ready mechanism to address this problem, it “would certainly provide the context for creating such force when it was required.”⁷³ This context is important because it provides an institutional means to develop consensus and to take action if it is deemed appropriate. While *ad hoc* solutions can solve specific problems, they are not reliable methods for conflict resolution and risk stressing the cooperative security arrangement because it is entirely possible that great powers will disagree on the appropriate response to civil conflicts.

There is some disagreement as to the required force structure that would be needed to support a cooperative security strategy. It is true that a defensive posture would initially seem to allow for a small number of forces. However, the active involvement of Canada in support of resolving international disputes and the concurrent requirement to provide for its own self-defence might in fact lead to a greater force structure than either a neo-isolationism or selective engagement grand strategy. It is possible that Canada could become involved “in several simultaneous military actions,” and “at least initially, the United States would have to provide disproportionate military power to launch a global cooperative security regime.”⁷⁴ Fortunately, the US has the disproportionate military power today that would allow Canada to pursue a cooperative

⁷³Ibid., 226.

⁷⁴Posen and Ross, 30.

security strategy. However, even with an overwhelming US presence in most conflict resolution commitments, it would still appear that a greater force structure would be required.

The strongest critiques of cooperative security come from the realists who doubt cooperative security's liberalist assumptions. For instance, the supposition that states will forgo their national interest in support of a cooperative security agenda, from a realist perspective, seems doubtful. States will have great difficulty hedging on short-term interests in favor of long-term security unless the guarantees are close to absolute. Additionally, convincing cooperative security partners to engage in military conflict over any aggression regardless of how far it is removed from a state's national interest would also be very complex. For democracies, the additional problem of domestic support, in the face of casualties from military intervention, might be hard to sustain. The US in particular may be vulnerable to this problem while Canada has yet to deal with it in any significant way since the end of the Korean War. Whether the public could be educated well enough to understand the merits of a cooperative security strategy remains unclear and would be something that policymakers would have to carefully consider in pursuing such a policy.

Another major critique of cooperative security is the difficulty it would have in establishing "sufficient general multilateral credibility to deter a series of new and different potential aggressors."⁷⁵ This is not something that would happen immediately upon embarking on such a strategy. Credibility would have to be earned by stringent

⁷⁵Ibid., 31.

enforcement of agreements on controlling the spread of WMD followed by appropriate preventative actions and successful military interventions when required.

preventative posture that also has a deterrent effect and a fast-acting mechanism to authorize and then deploy military forces as required.

A NEW GRAND STRATEGY FOR CANADA

As the foregoing discussion has illustrated, Canada needs to make a grand strategy choice that is consistent with Canadian interests in response to the changing, post-9/11 security dynamic. This paper has outlined some options available to Canada to illustrate the range of choice and has also analyzed the perspectives of realism and liberalism to demonstrate how they can impact upon grand strategy decision making. In making the assertion that Canada needs a new international security policy, it would be naïve not to acknowledge the present political systems in both the US and Canada and how the present governments would approach grand strategy decision making differently. The US position is important because US foreign policy has such a large impact upon both the international community as a whole and Canada in particular.

This paper has argued that Canada and the US see the international system from fundamentally different perspectives. The US, as the sole remaining superpower, has a realist bent that is almost exclusively focused on national interest, security and relative power. Not surprisingly, given its middle power status, Canada sees the international system from a liberalist perspective. This leads to a troubling dynamic between the two countries that could have a profound impact upon Canadian grand strategy decision making. Given Canada's liberalist view of the international system, its focus on interests and values, and its close relations to the US, the best grand strategy choice for Canada

would be cooperative security. While this might seem an obvious choice, what might not be so clear for Canada is what form this cooperative security grand strategy might take. It is in formulating a new international security policy that Canada would be able to define how it sees cooperative security working to protect Canadian interests.

This new international security policy would not just be a new defence policy based upon a deliberate cooperative security grand strategy choice:

Defence policy, as one aspect of security policy, should constitute those military activities and capabilities which are utilized to promote national and international security from military-strategic perspectives. Security policy thus encompasses defence policy and includes those political instruments which are employed to enhance the security interests of the state. In theory, security policy serves as a bridge between foreign and defence policy.⁷⁷

Instead, it would be a policy that connected foreign and defence policy into a coherent whole that would serve Canada in a synergistic fashion to safeguard Canada's interests.

This new international security policy would allow Canada to formulate integrated foreign and defence policies that were based upon a conscious grand strategy choice instead of being "derived not from a balanced assessment of our values, interests, and strengths, but from a balanced assessment of our weaknesses."⁷⁸

It is possible to conjecture that Canada has already chosen a grand strategy of cooperative security and that Canada's international security policy already reflects this

⁷⁷R.B. Byers, *Canadian Security and Defence: The Legacy and the Challenges*, Adelphi Paper 214 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1986), 4.

⁷⁸Harvey, 211.

fact. However, statements about believing in multilateralism do not equate to a force structure and a cooperative security international security policy capable of living up to the underpinnings of what a cooperative security grand strategy constitutes. As Harvey argues, the truth is that Canada has resorted to a:

. . . kind of dishonest multilateralism that is vigorously supported by Canadian officials not because the approach maximizes Canadian security but because it maximizes the false impression that Canada has a meaningful contribution to make to global security by pushing for multilateral solutions.⁷⁹

This false support for multilateralism should be replaced by a renewed commitment to protect Canada's interests by developing an international security policy that recognizes the appropriate foreign policies Canada should follow backed up by a military force structure that is consistent with this grand strategy choice.

Cooperative security does not mean that Canada has to operate solely through institutions such as the UN and NATO. It just reflects the reality that Canada must do its share on the international scene in concert with its interests and perhaps a recognition that "on most issues our interests are the same as those of the US and we need to work with, not against, our southern neighbours."⁸⁰ A new international security policy would acknowledge that the international terrorist threat and the proliferation of WMD are not just a US problem. As a middle power Canada has both an interest and responsibility to do its share to ensure global security. The economics of this situation alone should

⁷⁹Harvey, 211-12.

⁸⁰Stairs, et al, 18.

compel Canada to act.

CONCLUSION

After examining the three main grand strategy choices it becomes clear that each option has its merits and drawbacks. Choosing the appropriate grand strategy depends greatly upon policymakers' conceptions of the international system and whether they ascribe to a realist or liberalist viewpoint. Policymakers must also specifically decide how they are going to approach the concept of national interest and how this relates to guaranteeing national security. This understanding of national interests, no matter how they are actually defined, must result in a vision of what interests Canada is willing to use military force to protect and which interests are not important enough to require a military response if threatened. It must also include a clear appreciation of how these latter interests can impact on the former.

Neo-isolationism and selective engagement offer distinctive guidance for separating interests into vital and secondary classifications that then make intervention decisions relatively easy. Unless the interest is vital in nature, it does not require a military response. Conversely, cooperative security has a broader conception of interest that blurs the distinction between the vital and secondary classifications and as a result requires more Canadian involvement and US engagement to guarantee security. Cooperative security is more concerned about indirect effects to Canadian security than neo-isolationism and selective engagement which tend to only relate interests to security that have a direct demonstrable link. In its simplest form, cooperative security considers

the majority of Canadian interests to be vital (potentially requiring a military response) while neo-isolationism and selective engagement are much more discriminating in what they consider a vital interest. Unfortunately, there is a problem with definitions when discussing the three different strategies, especially when it comes to national interest, as they all deal with different paradigms of the international system. To make this point clear, in a cooperative security arrangement, military action may be authorized even though the threatened issue is not considered vital. A critic might argue that the interest must have been vital by definition if it evoked a military response. This may be true, but it does not get to the heart of the differences between the three strategies. Conversely, in a neo-isolationist arrangement, military action would be authorized only if a vital interest was threatened.

A liberalist policymaker would be most likely attracted to a strategy of cooperative security as it emphasizes the role of institutions and allows other states to share in the security burden. Realists would consider the other three strategies as representative options for guaranteeing the security of Canadian interests as they are based on a realist understanding of the international system and how this relates to Canadian security. Again, how broadly Canadian interests are interpreted as being important enough to require protection, is critical in influencing the policymakers' decision.

Another pragmatic factor that must be considered is the economic impact of whatever choice is taken. The larger the required force structure, the greater the economic drain. The economic cost of a grand strategy choice might set up a conflict between the policymakers' conception of national interest and the cost it would take to

secure those interests. In this instance, policymakers might be forced to adopt a strategy that is less than desirable due to the economic implications.

Domestic opinion must also be considered in making any grand strategy choice. If the Canadian public would not support intervention abroad in support of humanitarian requirements or to prevent ethnic cleansing for example, then a particular grand strategy choice might have to be discarded as unworkable. While these are certainly not all the factors that policymakers have to consider, they are some of the most significant. In the end, a compromise between grand strategies might have to be adopted to find a middle ground that meets all the major requirements.

It is clear that the appropriate grand strategy choice for Canada will largely be decided by policymakers' conception of national interest, their perspective on the workings of the international system and whether it falls within the realist or liberalist paradigm. Additionally, the economic impact of force structure requirements, and the amount of domestic support they can gather for their decision will largely factor in to this decision-making. Based upon the foregoing factors, Canadian policymakers should make the grand strategy choice of cooperative security as this option best safeguards Canada's interests while integrating well with Canada's historical stance towards world affairs and the international system. It maximizes the utility of Canada's close relations to the US and is mindful of the challenges posed by the post-9/11 security environment. While other options are available to Canada, they do not meet the historical and post-9/11 security imperatives that will drive Canada's future security choices.

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