

## Canada, Quebec, Anti-Americanism and Our Leadership Vacuum

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We all know that the needs of the Canadian Forces are great—the shortfalls in personnel and equipment have been well-documented. The February 23, 2005 budget offered some small—pathetically small—and totally inadequate immediate increases in funding, with many paper promises for the next 5 years. But defence spending in 2005, adjusted for inflation, is still 6.8 percent below the total in 1993, the year the Liberals came to power. It's jam tomorrow, the same as always. Moreover the defence policy review has yet to appear and, I suspect, may not until after another election.

Policy reviews are important, but the real question is why a succession of Canadian governments have allowed the decay of the CF as a fighting force to go on unchecked.

While there are many reasons for this, including the public's peacekeeping fixation, in my view, there are two major factors that shape our defence policy, to factors about which we never speak. Certainly, the defence policy review when and if it appears will say nothing about them, even though I believe its policy line will be shaped by them.

The first of these factors is Canadian anti-Americanism—a persistent and pervasive disease that has strong historical roots. We have suffered from recurring waves of anti-Americanism throughout our history, but the most notable recent examples were during the Vietnam War and the connected economic nationalism fostered by Walter Gordon; during the Free Trade debate and the election of 1988; and finally during the George W. Bush presidency where issues such as anti-globalization, anti-Iraq War, and anti-BMD took the lead.

There are two notable things to be said about the Bush period: for the first time a modern Canadian government did not try to counter popular anti-Americanism. Indeed the Chretien government or

many of its ministers, M.P.s, and officials fed it. That was unusual and dangerous. Prime Minister Paul Martin in the past has sounded as if he was more pro-American than his predecessor; in office, however, he has said and done nothing to check anti-Americanism. Martin might be very, very concerned about improving relations with the United States, but he has done nothing much to confront or even discourage anti-American attitudes in his caucus and the country.

Moreover, although in 1988 Quebec had been very strongly positive about free trade, by the time of the Iraq War in 2003 Quebec opinion was the most hostile to US and Bush, the most anti-American attitude in Canada. Opinion polls leave no doubt of this. This fact—and the fact that the Quebec election of 2003 was held at the time the federal government was taking its decision not to join in the War on Iraq, might explain what occurred. I believe Quebec opinion and the Quebec election determined the Chretien government's course.

There is no doubt that anti-Americanism has had major impacts on our defence policy. Consider the BMD decision, the decision to stay out of Iraq. Or Foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy's human security policies which included the land mine ban. These positions may make sense—in an ideal world. Do they make sense when 87 percent of our trade is with U.S.; 85 percent of our exports go to or pass through the U.S.; when \$1.9 billion in trade crosses the border each day; when one-third of our jobs depend on exports as well as more than 40 percent of our GDP; when 35,000 trucks each day cross the border and 500,000 individuals do so each day? It is one matter to disagree with the U.S. when Canada's national interests are at stake. It makes no sense to try to score cheap points that get cheers at the U.N. or in Paris or in the Toronto Star if they threaten our economic survival. Anti-Americanism, I believe, translates directly into the pub's belief that if we have troops, the U.S. will use them or want to, and Canadians don't seem to want this. The U.S. makes war and we keep peace—that is the Canadian attitude, though we have not yet realized that

the CF can no longer do much peacekeeping. Anti-Americanism, I would argue, has had and is having a calamitous effect on Canadian defence and on the CF.

The second great factor in the Canadian Forces' decline is Quebec's negative attitude to the military and to military spending. To say this is, most emphatically, not a statement of anti-Quebecois feelings. A history that dates back 250 yrs through the Conquest, the 1837 rebellions, the South African War, two great conscription crises, and an "anglo" army that used to discriminate against French Canadians account for the negative attitudes of Quebec. It's all there in the textbooks, and Quebec also has a long history of anti-imperialism (first British, then American) and anti-militarism. Yes, I know R22eR does well in recruiting today and has on its advisory board such luminaries as Guy St Pierre, Paul Tellier, and Jean Pelletier. I know that Les Voltigeurs de Quebec consistently rank in the top three in militia recruiting and have among its honoraries Andre Desmarais of Power Corporation.

But opinion polls demonstrate consistently that Quebec is the least supportive region when it comes to government taking steps to fix the CF. An Ipsos-Reid poll in February 2003 found only 3 percent of francophones who considered military spending a high priority. A Compas poll in February 2005 found that Quebecois were three-to-one against BMD, vastly more oppositional than English Canadians. Moreover, one in three Quebecois also believed Canada should have no CF at all.

Quebec opinion used to be isolationist but is not any longer. It favours trade, generally looks positively on aid, and most favour benign blue beret Peacekeeping. Quebec was grateful to CF during the Oka crisis and after the ice storm. But Quebec is persistently cold to more spending on the CF except for UN operations. And it's not just ordinary francophones. So too are our politicians and especially our prime ministers over the last four decades:—  
Trudeau, Mulroney, Chretien, and Martin--all Quebecois, whether anglophone or francophone, and all shaped by their upbringing and exquisitely sensitive to Quebec attitudes. These are the leaders

who, since 1968, slashed the CF to the cheers of their Quebec M.P.s and voters (and to be honest many English-speaking M.P.s too). With a minority government in place today, with the Liberals believing that Quebec is only place in which they have much possibility of making electoral gains, I would suggest there is no reason to expect much help for the CF soon beyond the immediate pittance promised in the budget on February 23.

The same attitudinal problem shaped the BMD issue—which was opposed sharply by the Quebec Liberal caucus and on which Stephen Harper, Jack Layton and Gilles Duceppe, all trying to gain or hold Quebec votes, either wobbled badly or engaged in outright anti-Americanism and misrepresentation about missile defence. Certainly, opinion polls indicate they are right to think Quebec opposed BMD.

What was in the BMD debate was any leadership from Paul Martin who said nothing to support his earlier position that participation in BMD was necessary to get Canada a place at the table where the decisions would be made. Nor did Martin do or say

anything to counter the outright lies about weaponization of space, BMD as a clone of Star Wars, etc., etc. It is clear that the Martin government, even if it said no to BMD, had in fact moved to endorse it in negotiations with the U.S. But in the total absence of leadership from the Prime Minister, in the absence even of any effort to counter the lies and misrepresentations about BMD, it is not surprising Canadian majorities opposed joining in BMD.

It is, I think, important to note that it was not always like this in Canada. Louis St Laurent was in power from 1948 to 1957, the period in which Canada joined NATO, fought in Korea, and raised the military toward 120,000 and spent more than 7% percent of GDP on defence. How could this be, just four or five years after the conscription crisis of 1944? A Quebecois, St Laurent was a leader, a Prime Minister who went around the country and especially into Quebec and spoke of the need for defence, for Canada to work with its allies and to resist Communism. He did not get huge support in Quebec for his military policies in opinion polls, but he won almost all the seats in the three elections he

fought—68 of 73 seats in 1949; 66 of 75 in 1953; and 62 of 75 in 1957. Why? There are many reasons, but I would argue that the main reason was that he led, he talked straight to Quebec and Canadian voters, and he argued and persuaded. He was a leader, arguably the most underrated of our prime ministers.

That's what we need now. We need leadership from our politicians. No prime minister since St Laurent has offered any lead on defence and that, I suggest, explains much of our present problem. We need a leader, no matter his province of origin, his party, or his maternal language, who will use his bully pulpit to educate, to talk about our national interests (and talk less about our squishy values), to argue against pernicious, mindless anti-Americanism, and especially to work to persuade francophones that their interests, like all Canadians interests, will be better served by a robust CF that can protect Canada's friends, sovereignty, and people in a dangerous world.

But it's not up to the politicians alone. The CDA has played a major role in turning public opinion to support for the CF, or at

least English-Canadian opinion. The campaign has worked so well that it is now a truism in public discourse that the CF is underfunded, undermanned, ill-equipped—a truism in all Canada except Quebec.

I suggest that the CDA is uniquely well placed to give a lead in Quebec. It is directed by able francophones, and the CDA and the Council of Honoraries have a cadre of francophones of great distinction in their ranks.

Why has the CDA not led in Quebec? Why are there no regular meetings with editorial boards of the great French-language newspapers? Why no frequent talks to service clubs by generals and supportive business leaders, some of whom are honoraries? Why no hard lobbying of Quebec politicians? Why is there no sustained campaign of articles and interviews in the francophone media?

Very simply, I believe that unless there is a change in public and political attitudes in Quebec, we can kiss any ideas of an effective, properly funded, robust CF goodbye forever. With poll numbers in

Quebec as they are and have been, no government attuned to its political self-interest and to the need for Quebec seats can really be blamed for not moving to spend much more on defence or to counter anti-Americanism.

What must be done is to begin to change Quebec's attitudes, to move the pro-defence numbers up and the anti-American numbers down. The CDA needs to turn its efforts to Quebec, to focus them en francais on francophone Canada. Then, if we can make some headway, maybe the pols and the polls will follow. If not, there is, to be blunt, no hope at all of Canada ever again having a real military.