

Canada and 9/11: Ten Years On

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Did, as was frequently claimed in the following months and years, everything change on September 11, 2001? The following four articles focus on parts of Canada's security environment in the ten years since 2001. Each describe significant developments in that time, whether in perceptions of threat or in the responses that were pursued in reply but, for the most part, these changes are best characterized as evolutionary rather than revolutionary. The changes occurred and may have reflected radical shifts in emphasis, but they often represented dynamics that were present before September 2001.

Arguably, the most noticeable long-term change that resulted from 9/11 was the broadening of the security agenda, in Canada as elsewhere. In 2011, as in 2001, Canada's most important economic and political relationship was with the United States. The latter continued to account for between two-thirds and three-quarters of all trade (the sum of imports and exports) with Canada in the period.¹ However, as a result of 9/11, the dominant dynamic in the relationship shifted: even sympathetic US politicians such as Senator (now US Secretary of State) Hilary Clinton were adamant that "security trumps trade", a point echoed by US Ambassador to Canada Paul Cellucci in 2003.² In the aftermath of the attacks, while Canada's chief concern remained

¹ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-402-x/2010000/chap/international/international-eng.htm>

² National Post, "Cellucci's Message", March 26, 2003.

disruption of the cross-border trade that was so crucial to the Canadian economy and businesses, the US focus increasingly moved to alleviating the potential for Canada to be a source of vulnerability to the United States. The latter's fears reflected a combination of perception, misunderstanding and the emergence of a US doctrine that suggested that high impact, low likelihood threats to the United States were intolerable and needed to be addressed. In this context, Canada's "lax immigration policies" were regularly cited as of concern, as was the case of Ahmed Ressam who entered the United States from Canada in December 1999, intent on attacking Los Angeles International Airport, as justifications for the belief that an attack on the United States might be launched from within Canada. The mistaken claim that some of the 9/11 hijackers had arrived from Canada fueled such beliefs and proved hard to eliminate, despite the best efforts of Canadian officials. As such, cross-border movement became enmeshed with issues of how best to combine security and efficiency. On land, programs such as the Smart Border Action Plan (SBAP) or the trilateral Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) were developed. At airports, passenger screening became increasingly rigorous (obviously reflecting a reaction to the tactic employed by the 9/11 hijackers) and Canadian passenger lists would ultimately be shared with US authorities. A security perimeter framework became increasingly prevalent, with Canada seeking to align key policies more closely with those of the United States. While increased cooperation predated 9/11, the speed of such integration accelerated since that time with Canada trying to show the United States that it was a reliable neighbour that could be trusted to safeguard the US' northern border and thus warranted continued special access for its people, goods and services into the United States.

Securitization had other unpredictable consequences, not all of them so clearly to Canada's disadvantage. For example, the political instability of the decade made the United States increasingly aware of energy security as an issue and of Canada as a "stable and steady and reliable" source of oil imports to the United States.³ This, along with the close integration of the US and Canadian sectors, arguably made the Obama

³ Shawn McCarthy, "Obama signals new reliance on oil sands", *The Globe and Mail*, March 30, 2011, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/energy-and-resources/obama-signals-new-reliance-on-oil-sands/article1963575/>

Administration more ambivalent about pressing environmental concerns over the Alberta oil sands than it might otherwise have been.

The decade after 9/11 also saw a heightened role and budget given to Canada's military. Although the recovery began before 2001, after the doldrums of the early 1990s, the importance of the military in leading Canada's response to the terrorist attacks represented a major shift. While the Canadian government remained unconvinced by the rationale for war in Iraq in 2003, so declined to send Canadian forces there, in Afghanistan the Canadian contribution was significant and at the time of writing represents the longest Canadian military commitment made in any war. Less than a month after the September 11 attacks, the federal government announced that Canada would send both naval and land forces to Afghanistan to participate in the UN-mandated mission against al Qaeda and the Taliban in that country. Canadian ships rapidly deployed to the Persian Gulf as part of Operation Apollo. Soldiers from JTF-2 were in Afghanistan by December 2001; regular forces from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) arrived in January 2002. In July 2003, Canadian forces were assigned to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, tasked with providing security for presidential and parliamentary elections. In 2005, Canadian forces again moved, to the more unstable Kandahar province, where they assumed a leading role in driving out al Qaeda and Taliban forces and in forming the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team (KPRT) along with the Canadian International Development Agency, Foreign Affairs and RCMP. In May 2006 and March 2008, Canada's commitment to the Afghan mission was extended, until 2009 and 2011, respectively, and in November 2010, Prime Minister Harper announced that Canada's forces would remain in a non-combat role in Afghanistan until 2014.

The Afghan mission has not been without controversy or opposition. Although it is difficult to compare various polls, all asking different questions, it has been clear for the latter half of the decade that the majority of Canadians opposed further extensions of the mission or additional deployments of Canadian troops to Afghanistan. In some parts of the country, most notably Quebec, the proportion of people opposed to the war appears closer to 75% than to half. Reasons for growing skepticism include doubts over the feasibility of a successful conclusion to the mission, the escalating financial cost (the precise figure is unclear, but is almost certainly above \$20 billion) and the human cost

(157 Canadian forces personnel have been killed in Afghanistan since 2002, along with four Canadian civilians and one Foreign Affairs official). However, while opposition to the Afghan mission has increased over time, the military continued to be held in high regard by the Canadian public throughout the post-9/11 decade.

There has also been a significant opportunity cost from Canada's response to 9/11, whether that is in terms of military roles that the Canadian Forces have been unable to fulfill due to its commitments in Afghanistan, or the legislative and bureaucratic efforts that had to be devoted to security measures. The complexity of the threat and the international political environment both served as drivers to review and reinforce existing measures to combat terrorism. For example, in common with many other countries, in the wake of 9/11 Canada passed more rigorous anti-terrorism legislation, the 2001 Anti-Terrorism Act, along with a range of other security-related measures. Canada's foreign policy since 2001 has been dominated by combating terrorism and by the consequences and relationships that have developed from that, potentially at the expense of other goals or agenda that might have been pursued. For much of the latter half of the twentieth century, Canada sought to establish itself as a middle power, close to the dominant Western power yet able to act as an honest broker or intermediary in dealing with the rest of the world. In the decade after 2001, that role has been much harder to maintain, in large part because in the enforced international duality that prevailed particularly shortly after 9/11, Canada's commitment in Afghanistan and strong support for the United States' international position (albeit with significant deviances over issues such as Iraq and Ballistic Missile Defense) firmly established it in one camp. Bureaucratically, although the legislation to create Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (now Public Safety Canada) in 2003 predated 9/11, those events gave fresh impetus to the widespread reorganization of government entailed in the change. However, the nature of the threat also compelled new thinking about the nature of security and how security might be pursued. For example, while Canada's traditional security organizations such as CSIS retained their dominance within the community, the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre (ITAC), operational since 2004, included not only units such as CSIS or CSE, but also first responders such as major law enforcement organizations. This reflected a recognition that there has been a broadening not only of consumers of intelligence, but also

potentially of suppliers of such intelligence, a widening process that is likely to progress still further.

The post-9/11 era has also compelled Canada to consider how to balance issues of security and liberty and by extension, to some extent, the type of country in which Canadians wish to live. The public response to the Maher Arar case (and to a lesser extent Omar Khadr's more ambiguous situation) showed a profound reluctance to trade away individual justice to enhance collective security. The 2001 Anti-Terrorism Act contained measures that significantly increased the state's powers for countering terrorism, some of which were widely perceived to be incompatible with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. By 2007, the "sunset clauses" of the Act, those relating primarily to investigative hearings and preventative arrests, were allowed to expire. Although that choice reflects the growing distance from the ATA's passage in the aftermath of 9/11, it also occurred in spite of a series of terrorist plots in Canada and continued warnings from CSIS and others about the threat terrorism continued to pose to Canada and Canadian interests. Instead, the emphasis shifted increasingly towards means of preventing radicalization whilst protecting and reinforcing multiculturalism in the country. Other shifts towards the liberty side of the dichotomy were driven by judicial decisions. The most notable of these was the Supreme Court of Canada's 2007 decision in *Charkaoui v Canada*, striking down the security certificate legislation (which permitted detention without charge or trial and deportation if there was a suspicion that a non-Canadian citizen posed a threat to national security) as a violation of the Charter. The legislation was amended in 2008, but the government has lost two subsequent security certificate cases in the Federal Court since then.

The following articles examine several aspects of Canada's experience with the shifting security climate over the past ten years. Greg Fyffe considers intelligence changes, David Haglund assesses Canada's evolving relationship with NATO, Chris Madsen writes on the Canadian military and Michael Zekulin discusses the changing threat of terrorism in Canada.