

# Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall

## *AUKUS and the Question of a “Special” Canada–US Defence Relationship*

DAVID G. HAGLUND AND WESLEY NICOL

### Is Canada the Fairest Ally of Them All?

In words almost always misquoted (deliberately so by us in this chapter’s title), the Evil Queen in a 1937 Disney film classic seeks reassurance about her looks from the slave residing in her wall mirror. The kind of reassurance sought would have a familiar ring to many analysts of Canada–US defence and security relations in our own time, for what the queen was endeavouring to have ratified was her number one status in a beauty contest that, in her own mind at least, pitted her against a lowly and unworthy challenger who had the added demerit of keeping company with a squadron of diminutive coal miners, from whom the movie took its name, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The Evil Queen’s question, “Magic mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?” seems particularly apt when thoughts turn from Hollywood to the current state and future prospects of Canada–US defence cooperation, as well as to the Canada–US relationship in the variety of other dimensions explored in this volume.

Much attention has been accorded over the years to the idea that one of the US’s security and defence partners surely *must* be the fairest of them all, in the sense of being the most “special” partner of Washington. For many, should Canada *not* be deemed to hold this status, it becomes a matter calling for some lamentation and much remediation. Others, however, take a less alarmist attitude, holding the possible loss of perceived status associated with not being in a special relationship

with the US to be a matter of indifference, possibly even – to a few – a cause for celebration, signifying in their minds Canada’s autonomy in security and defence policy.

In this chapter, we use the recent debate that has swirled around an entity called AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom [UK], and the US) to contextualize and update the question of Canada–US defence relations. The acronym relates not to some exotic ornithological species but to a trilateral defence accord announced in September 2021 between the three countries. Significantly (perhaps), Canada was not included in this arrangement, an omission that has rekindled in some minds the kind of soul-searching that intermittently takes place in scholarly and policy-making circles in this country, so well reflected in the editors’ introductory chapter in this volume. In what follows, we use the AUKUS accord as a vehicle for elaborating upon what we take to be the essential features of Canada–US defence and security cooperation. We will argue, in the chapter’s next section, that in some non-trivial empirical sense, the Canadian–US relationship really *does* deserve to be considered a behaviourally “special” one. Following this conceptual and theoretical section come two further sections, respectively, a discussion of the details of the September 2021 arrangement and a conclusion that queries what, if anything, AUKUS tells us about the status of Canada–US defence cooperation.

### “Special Relationships” in Theoretical and Comparative Context

Ever since Britain’s once and future prime minister Winston Churchill baptized the Anglo-American relationship a “special” one in a March 1946 speech in Fulton, Missouri, there has been an endless outpouring of scholarly writing on the generic topic, to say nothing of the particular variants of this genre of interstate relationship, said to be unusual because of its presumption that states, like people, can be “friends.” Churchill’s speech is mostly remembered for his insertion of a powerful metaphor into debates about the post–Second World War security environment. He evoked that metaphor, the “Iron Curtain,” to draw attention to the urgency of Western countries’ adopting a robust response to what was looking very much like an attempt by the recent Soviet ally to reserve for itself as much of Central and Eastern Europe as it was capable of bringing into its political and military orbit. Although we invariably

recall Churchill as the originator of this figure of speech, others had in fact used it before him (Ryan 1979, 897–8).

No less significant, but definitely more original, was a second figure of speech employed in that same 1946 address: the “special relationship.” Although usually interpreted as calling for a particularly close security and defence partnership between the US and *the UK*, Churchill’s vision was not simply a bilateral one. He advocated a “fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples. This means a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States” (Reynolds 1989, 94). This time, no one appears to have beaten Churchill to the semantic punch, for unlike the Iron Curtain, this second metaphor truly was “a Churchillian invention” (Edelman 2010, 29). More than that, it expressed, as we know, a vision geographically commodious enough to embrace Canada. Its origins can be traced to late 1945, when Churchill, now a member of the Opposition, saw fit to instruct his Downing Street successor, Clement Attlee, about to make a trip to the US, that “we should fortify in every way our special and friendly connections with the United States,” and that “we should not abandon our special relationship with the United States *and Canada* about the atomic bomb” (Rasmussen and McCormick 1993, 516).

“Special relationship” may have been a Churchillian term of wartime provenance, but the idea intended to be advanced by its invocation had a considerably longer pedigree than that. Visions of “special” security relations between the two leading English-speaking powers had been dancing in the heads of quite a few intellectuals and policy elites on both sides of the Atlantic since the late nineteenth century. These visions were grandiose ones, aimed at preparing the ground for nothing less than the establishment of a “universal peace” predicated on close political and military bonds between the “Anglo-Saxon” peoples (Anderson 1981; Bell 2014; Vucetic 2017). Over time, those bonds would materialize in the form of an Anglo-American special relationship (AASR), regularly taken to represent the platinum standard for close bilateral ties between sovereign states on matters appertaining to defence and security. True, not all analysts buy into this assertion, rejecting outright claims about the relevance (some hold, even the existence!) of the AASR.<sup>1</sup> The critics to the contrary notwithstanding, however, we believe this platinum standard to be of heuristic value; with it as a template, we assess, in this section, the quality of the Canada–US defence and security relationship, which we think clearly constitutes a special relationship.

Before we proceed to that demonstration, we need to define “special,” for if we fail to specify what we take this adjective to imply, we will not get terribly far in our bid to determine the impact (if any) of AUKUS upon the Canada–US defence and security relationship. International relations (IR) scholars have long tended to give a wide berth to the supposition that states might actually be, or become, “friends,”<sup>2</sup> and since it is friendship that many take routinely to be the most relevant marker of “specialness,” it follows that there is a natural basis for the skepticism expressed by many, in Canada and elsewhere, as to the utility of the term special relationship. We find this skepticism about the term’s utility to be misguided, for while it may indeed be the case that friendship is a somewhat anomalous category in world politics, it hardly follows that for a relationship to be deemed a special one it must also be a regularly amicable one. While countries can certainly have cordial relations with any number of other countries – and might even be considered “friends” with some of these – amicability in and of itself does *not* a special relationship make. Something else is involved in this business of identifying and analyzing special relationships.

The place to begin looking for that “something else” is with the meaning of specialness, which, as used in IR, is a concept whose definition is anything but self-evident. Notwithstanding all the scholarly attention lavished, understandably so, upon the US–UK tandem, this is far from representing the sole instance of the US’s being connected with another country in a manner so noteworthy as to merit employment of the adjective *special*. Not too many years ago, President George H.W. Bush was proclaiming Germany to be the US’s emergent “partner in leadership.”<sup>3</sup> But the mood changed so radically with the passage of time that during the tumultuous Trump years, few would have wished to wager their life savings on Berlin–Washington replacing London–Washington as the *ne plus ultra*<sup>4</sup> of special partnerships!

Besides the UK and Germany, in recent decades various other countries have been nominated as special security and defence partners of the US. This list, hardly an exhaustive one, could include Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Israel (Dumbrell and Schäfer 2009). But before we can figure out what, if anything, such a qualitatively distinctive partnership must entail, we need to return to this chore of definition. Standard dictionary renderings of the adjective tend to treat it in one of two ways, as either an affective concept or a behavioural

one. In the case of the first usage, special conveys a *normative* judgment, usually a positive such judgment (as in the assertion that people or states can be each other's "best" friend). In the case of the latter usage, special can be understood as referring to a particular quality that sets whatever is being assessed apart descriptively from other cases, especially from those that can, at first glance, be taken to be so comparable as to be virtually identical. The emphasis here gets placed upon observable *behavioural* differences among comparable cases. In the words of a leading British expert on this kind of relationship, "'special' is an obvious marker of something beyond the ordinary; the mundane is elevated discursively to a higher significance" (Marsh 2020, 38).

It is the behavioural, or empirical, sense of special that guides our analysis in this chapter, although we do not deny or intend to minimize the idea that "history" might have made Canada and the US the kind of friends that President John F. Kennedy's words quoted in this volume's title suggest they have become.<sup>5</sup> Still, Canada and the US have their own rosters of other friends, with these days Germany looming more and more, in some minds, as Canada's very own partner in leadership.<sup>6</sup> So to heed the implied injunction of Steve Marsh, we need to specify what it is about the quality of Canada–US security and defence cooperation that warrants it being regarded as special because it bespeaks, in his words, "something beyond the ordinary." We think that there are, objectively, three things that do set Canada–US defence and security relations apart from other otherwise comparable relations either state has with any other ally.

The first of these is the nature of the North American "security community." By security community we mean an order in which the use of force as a means of conflict resolution between members of the group has simply become inconceivable, so that they neither go to war against one another nor even consider doing so. Whatever problems arise between them, they undertake to resolve peacefully. With neither organized armed conflict nor the threat of such conflict playing a part in the resolution of intra-group problems, policy-makers and other policy elites are able to entertain "dependable expectations" that peaceful change will be the only kind of change that occurs (Adler and Barnett 1957).

There are, of course, any number of security communities in existence, but the Canada–US dyad can be taken to be special in two senses. It is remarkably stable, with few if any sentient observers prepared to

risk their reputation (or sanity) worrying out loud about a war erupting between the two countries (Adler and Barnett 1998; Deutsch 1957).<sup>7</sup> Even more singular is the longevity of the Canada–US security community, thought by many to be special because it is often held to be the first pluralistic security community ever to have come into existence between neighbours *anywhere* in the world. Admittedly, some scholars accord the honour of being first to another region, Scandinavia, where following Norway's 1905 separation from Sweden a long period of peaceful conflict resolution came to characterize their bilateral relationship.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, if we were to date the definitive arrival of the Canada–US tandem into the “zone of peace” from the two states' abandonment of war plans against each other, then it would seem the Scandinavians did beat the North Americans off the mark, since it was not until the second half of the 1930s that Washington ceased wasting taxpayers' dollars paying military officers to plan the use of force against the neighbour – something Ottawa had ceased doing early in the 1920s.

By contrast, the Scandinavians stopped this wasteful and pointless activity a few years ahead of the North Americans, the 1920s being the years in which both Oslo and Stockholm abandoned planning for military contingencies against each other (Ericson 2000). However, they could not manage to sustain their security community unbroken over the years, for the Nazi conquest of Norway in April 1940 suspended, for a time, the latter's sovereign status, effectively placing into suspension as well the Scandinavian security community. So even if, as some scholars maintain, the two regional security communities came into existence more or less at the same time and independently of each other,<sup>9</sup> there can be no question that only one of those, the Canada–US security community, has enjoyed an unbroken existence since its origins. This has to be considered impressive, all the more so in light of recent developments in Europe and elsewhere that highlight how being a country's neighbour is no guarantee that “neighbourliness” invariably corresponds with peacefulness. It might even, if Russia is to be our guide, be regarded as an invitation to military aggression.

The second way in which Canada and the US can be said to be behaviourally special relates to their alliance, both its longevity and its multidimensional nature. Unlike with the Canada–US security community, the starting date of which remains a matter of legitimate debate, it is easy to specify when the Canada–US alliance came into existence and to say what makes it so special empirically. It dates from

an agreement struck by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King in the upstate New York town of Ogdensburg on 18 August 1940 (Gibson and Rossie 1993). Significantly, it remains to this day the US's oldest unbroken alliance, notwithstanding the mistaken view of so many that the accolade really belongs to the 1778 alliance the US struck with France – an alliance that so many tend to forget expired in 1800.

In time, the first institutional embodiment of that August 1940 alliance, the Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD) (Conliffe 1989), would be supplemented with, and to an extent eclipsed by, newer institutional means of strengthening North American defence cooperation, among the most important of these being the Military Cooperation Committee (MCC) of 1946 and the North American Air (now Aerospace) Defense Command (NORAD) of 1958. To these must be added a thick network of other accords, committees, and arrangements pertaining to North American defence, whose numbers are no easy matter to keep count of, which testifies to the “complex interdependence” of Canada–US security and defence relations. Thus, in a manner different from most of the US's transatlantic relations, the US and Canada were solidly allied (if not always in total agreement when it came to perceiving and responding to threats) nine years before the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and would almost certainly still be allied had the latter organization never come into existence.

The third and final distinctive behavioural aspect of Canada–US defence and security cooperation concerns “homeland security,” broadly construed as continental defence. This third aspect, call it the “Kingston dispensation” (Haglund 2023), is the most noteworthy of all. It sets the Canada–US defence relationship so behaviourally apart from either state's other bilateral relationships as to warrant, even in the absence of the two other attributes discussed above, Canada–US relations being deemed special. It is not to be equated with either security community or alliance, although it clearly relates to both. Instead, this “dispensation” establishes the relationship between the two North American countries on a distinctly different plane from any of the defence and security linkages either has with allies elsewhere. It does so because it sets out the boundary conditions for the two countries' participation in continental security: neither is permitted, nor permits itself, the luxury of believing that defending North America can be its exclusive responsibility.

The norm dates from the August 1938 Sudetenland crisis, which presaged the imminent outbreak of another European war. During this crisis atmosphere, President Roosevelt told an audience at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, that America would “not stand idly by” were the physical security of Canada threatened by a European adversary as a consequence of the country's participation in a European war. This was the first time ever that an American leader extended a commitment to safeguard Canadian physical security against a foreign aggressor (not named, but clearly Germany). For his part, Prime Minister Mackenzie King, speaking a few days later in Woodbridge, Ontario, made a reciprocal commitment: he pledged that Canada would ensure that nothing it did would jeopardize the physical security of the US. Taken together, the two leaders' remarks reflected a new dispensation that would constitute the unalterable normative core of North American security: henceforth, each country understood that it had a “neighbourly” obligation to the other not only to refrain from any activities that might imperil the security of the other but also to demonstrate nearly as much solicitude for the other's physical security needs as for its own (MacCormac 1940).

For more than eight decades, the Kingston dispensation has represented the most important constitutive norm in the realm of Canada–US defence and security cooperation. It, along with the two other features of Canada–US security and defence cooperation we have discussed in this section, provides the empirical (behavioural) baseline for assessing what it means when we refer to the bilateral relationship as a special one. Indeed, in light of the evidence mustered in this section, it would be difficult to avoid concluding that if the Canada–US defence and security relationship is not a “special” one, then no such relationship, not even the AASR, can be said to exist.

Against this empirical backdrop, in the next section we assess the challenge that some argue AUKUS presents to the Canada–US special relationship.

### The AUKUS “Challenge”

In mid-September 2021, President Joseph R. Biden Jr was joined by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison in a virtual unveiling of a new trilateral security arrangement, AUKUS (Cambridge University Press 2022). This quickly



dominated the headlines, for several reasons. First and foremost was the news that the US had agreed to share its nuclear submarine technology with Australia so that it could possess and operate nuclear-powered attack submarines for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). Nuclear-powered attack submarines, or SSNs in American military classification, constitute a formidable military platform, even though they are not intended to carry nuclear weaponry (and thus should never be confused with a related acronym, SSBN, standing for nuclear-propelled ballistic missile submarine).

What distinguishes SSNs from conventionally powered submarines is that the latter are propelled by a more finite energy supply (diesel), which limits their operational capabilities and ranges. SSNs, by contrast, are powered by nuclear reactors that do not require refuelling for years (possibly as many as twenty-five), which allows them to stay on station for a greater length of time (US Environmental Protection Agency 2018). Furthermore, SSNs are far stealthier than diesel-electric submarines, whose combustion engines generate more noise because they make significant demands on air intake, associated with their frequent need to recharge batteries. SSNs are also faster than diesel-electric submarines. This means that SSNs contribute to deterrence even though they do not deploy weapons of mass destruction, by dint of their ability greatly to complicate the decisions and calculations of a foe. And should deterrence fail and fighting break out, they can attack enemy targets at sea and even, in some cases, on shore (if equipped with cruise missiles) (Szondy 2017).

Granting Australia access to this military technology is politically significant, for two important reasons. The first is that the US has only shared this type of technology with one other country. That country is the UK, starting in 1958, when Washington amended the Atomic Energy Act and gave Britain, in the words of two scholars, “what had been refused almost a decade earlier: a free exchange of nuclear information” (Dawson and Rosecrance 1966, 49–50). For this reason alone, AUKUS represents a highly exclusive club – one whose membership doubled overnight, with two American allies now being deemed worthy of such cooperation and technology sharing.

Second, prior to the announcement of AUKUS Australia had agreed to buy from France some AUS\$66 billion worth of conventionally powered submarines, in what would have been France’s largest-ever sale of military equipment. The sudden and abrupt cancellation of

the deal angered France so deeply that it recalled for consultation its ambassadors to both Australia and the US. And while ties between the latter country and France had known far greater strains in recent years – including and especially tensions occasioned by the 2003 invasion of Iraq<sup>10</sup> – relations between Paris and Canberra plummeted to their lowest point ever. For France, the loss of this submarine deal represented more than the cancellation of a lucrative contract; it also struck at the very heart of national pride by calling into question its status as a global power with important political, military, and territorial interests of its own in the Indo-Pacific. France considers itself, and in many ways is, a resident power in the Indo-Pacific due its territorial holdings (especially New Caledonia) and naval bases in the region. Accordingly, it had been fashioning its own Indo-Pacific strategy within which Australia was envisioned as a key pillar of France’s enduring presence. By cutting France out of its submarine deal, Washington and its two partners were partly cutting France off from Indo-Pacific affairs. As well, they were certainly annoying their important ally (Kauffmann 2021).

AUKUS is not simply about SSNs, as important as those submarines are. The second major feature of the September 2021 announcement was its commitment to trilateral cooperation across a broader range of domains including cyber security, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, hypersonic missile technology, and unmanned underwater vehicles. While some observers, including Canada’s prime minister, Justin Trudeau, initially branded AUKUS a mere submarine purchasing deal for Australia (Connolly 2022), it is actually much more than that.

This gets us to the third notable feature of the announcement of AUKUS: it is less about what should be done than it is about whom it should be done *against*. While press releases from the White House did not list any specific adversary AUKUS is intended to counter, one does not need to be a soothsayer to realize that the other areas of cooperation included in the pact bespeak a desire by the US and its partners to parry Chinese efforts to attain dominance over the “commanding heights” of global technology, with all the implications that such dominance would have for the future of an international system in which the currency of military capability is technological capability.

The two dimensions of AUKUS – military with the SSNs and technological with the other elements of the package – converge on the question of Taiwan’s future, which very much has to be considered

the Banquo's ghost lurking in the background of this pact. The White House's affirmation, in April 2022, of AUKUS as reflecting a commitment to a "free and open Indo-Pacific, and more broadly to an international system that respects human rights, the rule of law, and the peaceful resolution of disputes free from coercion," may not have singled out Taiwan, but one would have had to have been extremely obtuse to miss the affirmation's meaning (White House 2022). Yet, it was not just Taiwan that AUKUS was intended to safeguard. The agreement is aimed at strengthening an American bulwark against Chinese military power more generally in the Indo-Pacific; as such, it marks a major step in the "pivot to Asia" strategy first introduced during the administration of Barack Obama.<sup>11</sup> While China, to no one's surprise, condemned the announcement of AUKUS in its customary bombastic manner (Girard 2021), other countries in the Indo-Pacific region, including some American allies, had concerns of their own.

Those concerns tended to be focused on two possibilities. The first is the prospect that AUKUS might trigger a regional arms race. The second, related to the first, adds *nuclear* weaponry to the mix, the argument being that somehow Australia's acquisition of SSNs will encourage nuclear proliferation. According to those who fret about this second possibility, it is unrealistic to imagine that Australia will long remain the only country in the world to operate SSNs without at the same time possessing nuclear weapons of its own. Those entertaining this fear think it will only be a matter of time before the highly enriched uranium (HEU) needed by the RAN to fuel its boats is slightly further enriched so as to enable the development of nuclear weapons.

Of course, for Australia to make the transition from reactor-grade uranium to weapons-grade HEU, it would need to possess its own enrichment facilities rather than simply purchase the fuel from allies with those facilities, France possibly among them. Australia is the world's third-leading exporter of natural uranium, but it does not enrich the metal, nor does it have any plans to do so. But, say the worriers, even if Australia never enters the enrichment business, its acquisition of SSNs will set a precedent for other countries to pursue SSN development by breaking norms surrounding arms control and encouraging other US allies to lobby for access to the technology (Kapetas 2021).

These concerns are largely overblown and echo similar objections that had been registered a generation earlier, when Canada was thinking

of acquiring SSNs, a desire that had been showcased with the publication of the 1987 white paper on defence (Government of Canada 1987, 52–5). In the end, Canada never did purchase the SSNs, which, in an ironic twist on the AUKUS imbroglio, would likely have been French boats of the *Améthyste/Rubis* class, because the US Navy (USN) did not at the time look with favour upon Canada's acquiring SSNs, thus it could veto, and likely would have vetoed, any British transfer of *Trafalgar*-class SSNs to Canada (Haglund 1989). Yet neither the USN nor the disarmament community managed to accomplish what budgetary realities, coupled with the fortuitous ending of the Cold War, were able to do, which was to convince Ottawa to scupper the project altogether.

Still, the AUKUS announcement is not without implications. We have already noted China's displeasure with the pact, as well as that of France. Each of these countries could not reasonably have been expected to be pleased with AUKUS. But what of those two allies who, along with the AUKUS trio, constitute the exclusive intelligence sharing club known as the Five Eyes? Presumably, they might feel a bit annoyed at having been cut out of the action? Those countries are New Zealand and Canada. Since it is only the latter that is of interest to us in this chapter, we will simply note apropos of the former that, from where we sit, there does not seem to have been any palpable wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth on the part of the Kiwis. Besides, Wellington has had a long-standing and well-publicized allergy to anyone's using nuclear technology for military purposes, so it cannot be imagined that policy-makers in the capital have lost too much sleep about the apparent "snub," if that is what it is (see McClure 2021).<sup>12</sup>

The case of Canada, however, is different. In theory, AUKUS's formation should concern Ottawa, not least because Canada is much more of a Pacific Rim country than the UK and shares with the latter an interest in salvaging as much as possible of what remains of the American-led liberal international order in our current era of "deglobalization" (see Ripsman 2021). Moreover, any great power war that arises in this region would almost certainly place Canada in a bind, even if it were not directly involved, because it is so closely aligned with the US. China's "wolf warrior" (and self-defeating) diplomacy of recent years has certainly not made a practice of sparing Canadian sensibilities, with the country being disparaged for being "America's lapdog" (Hopper 2019) as well as being castigated for a host of other failings.<sup>13</sup>

So, it might have been supposed that Justin Trudeau's government would have taken umbrage not just at Beijing for its insulting behaviour but also at Washington, London, and Canberra for not bringing Canada into an arrangement that, whatever Trudeau happens to believe, is about much more than nuclear-propelled submarines. This is all the more so given that some analysts believe, possibly correctly, that the formation of AUKUS constitutes the most significant American alliance development in the Indo-Pacific region since the Second World War (Mix and Vaughn 2022). Whether or not AUKUS is more significant than America's post-Second World War bilateral defence treaties with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and even (for a time) Taiwan – to say nothing of its trilateral alliance with Australia and New Zealand – there can be little question that Canada was taken as much by surprise as was France by the announcement of the pact (Fife and Chase 2021). But does it also follow that Canada's not being in AUKUS constitutes a reason for us to join the lengthening line of analysts who, approvingly or not, have been reading the last rites for the Canada-US special relationship for as long as anyone can remember? We think not, for reasons we explain in the next, concluding, section of our chapter.

### Conclusion: Does Special Mean “Better”?

In this chapter we have advanced two major claims. The first is that there are important empirical differences that so set Canada's alliance with the US apart from America's other set of allies as to warrant its being regarded as a special relationship – one that might even be, with a nod to George Orwell's famous assessment of the status of the pigs on the revolutionary animal farm, regarded as “more special” than America's other special relationships (Orwell 1951).<sup>14</sup> But does it follow that special, or even “more special,” must also mean better, or even best, when it comes to assessing the affective qualities of the bilateral relationship? This question goes to the heart of the current angst expressed in some quarters by Canada's not being part of AUKUS and does so irrespective of whether Canada was excluded from the pact, or simply chose not to take part in it.

Our argument in this chapter has been that AUKUS in and of itself does not constitute a basis for anyone claiming that Canadian non-involvement has put paid to the notion of a special Canada-US

relationship in security and defence, at least when that category is measured in accordance with its empirically observable, behavioural attributes, as these have been made manifest in the two countries' security community, their alliance, and their embrace of the Kingston dispensation.

But, in closing, we could well ask whether Canada's non-involvement in AUKUS suggests that the US has, in the *affective* sense, "better" relations with both the UK and Australia than it does with Canada. In particular, we might wonder whether Australia has somehow outdistanced Canada in the category of a "good" ally, and we could note that if so, AUKUS would be the proof of that pudding. This focus on Australia rather than on the UK would be all the more relevant given that Canada and Australia, being more or less "equally" sized countries, make a more useful comparative dyad than Canada and the UK, for obvious reasons. To cite a leading work on the topic of Canada–Australia relations in security and defence, the two countries are nothing less than "strategic cousins" (Blaxland 2006), having more in common with each other than either has with anyone else.

To those who measure Canada against Australia, and find that the comparison does not flatter Canada, the problem exemplified by AUKUS is that Canada's not being part of the arrangement testifies to two apparent realities. The first is that Australia takes security more seriously than Canada does, a criticism made recently in a hard-hitting report on Canadian national security produced by the University of Ottawa, whose authors worry that Canada is basically asleep at the wheel in the current darkening global security environment (Task Force on National Security 2022). The second apparent reality, and the one of greater relevance for the theme of this volume and our chapter, is that Canadian non-involvement in AUKUS puts the lie to claims about the solidity of Canada–US defence and security, held to be special no more – if indeed it ever *had* been!

We have already stated our views on the Canada–US special relationship. In closing, two observations require being made about Canada–Australia comparison(s). The first is simply that AUKUS is a regional-security undertaking, and while Canada certainly does have security interests in the Indo-Pacific, these are not as significant as its interests in other regions of more immediate concern to it, namely North America and Europe, nor can they hold a candle to Australia's

own security interest in Asian regional security. Canada, yes, has some interests in the Asia-Pacific; Australia, by contrast, *lives* there. It makes a difference. Seen in this way, the surprise is not so much that Canada is outside of AUKUS as it is that anyone should have imagined it to have been an obvious candidate for inclusion. And while a case can be made that the non-SSN aspects of AUKUS suggest reasons for Canadian participation, the reality is that Ottawa is already involved with the US in a variety of those other spheres of defence technology identified above. Contemplated in this light, Canada's being "left out" of AUKUS turns out to be as unremarkable as Australia's being "left out" of NORAD or NATO.

And this gets us to our second, and last, comment. There is a reason why Australia does give the impression that it takes security more seriously than Canada. The very same conditions that we described above in discussing the Kingston dispensation – conditions that ensure (indeed, oblige) tight bilateral cooperation in matters of homeland security – ironically grant Canada a certain freedom from alliance constraint beyond the North American continent. For the Kingston dispensation testifies to the existence of what has been termed an American "involuntary" (sometimes "automatic") guarantee of Canada's own physical security. This guarantee can be perceived in a minatory way by some Canadians who ponder the cost – political but also economic – of securing for the country "defence against help" (Ørvik 1984).

Notwithstanding its alleged menacing aspects, to say nothing of the potential implications of such security (inter)dependence upon the national ego, the American guarantee does provide a temptation for Canadian leaders, no matter their political stripe, to seek to spend less on defence than would be the case in the absence of the guarantee. The temptation is a powerful one, and it proves all too easy for sentient policy-makers to succumb to it. Who can blame them, if political decisions are supposed to be a function of "rational" action, with rationality construed in terms of a sustainable match between the ends and means of policy? For if the end be that of defending Canada against attack by the US, no imaginable means could be conjured forth to attain it, should America decide to emulate Vladimir Putin and assault its neighbour. Conversely, if the US can be counted upon to safeguard Canada's physical security against anyone else (or *everyone* else, for that matter), then there exists an incentive to do no more than what is

minimally required to satisfy the Americans that Canada is pulling its weight (national dignity, on the other hand, might demand more than this minimum, but that is a different matter).

Joel Sokolsky has cogently summarized the ongoing challenge faced by Canadian leaders pondering which level of commitment is sufficient to keep Washington minimally satisfied: “The current policy,” he wrote at the start of the twenty-first century, “is very much in the Canadian tradition of asking *not* ‘How much is enough?’ but rather, ‘How much is just enough?’” (Sokolsky 2000, 31). That amount is easier to determine when it concerns North American security, harder to assess when global security is in question, for the good reason that Canadians, unlike geographically distant US allies, do not have to ask themselves, in the way for instance that Australians do, whether support for a US overseas endeavour (for instance, the 2003 invasion of Iraq) might make sense as a means of purchasing insurance for some future contingency, when an American reciprocal gesture would come in more than handy.

Canada, like it or not, *has* that insurance policy, as an entitlement established by propinquity. Australia lacks such an entitlement. And that, it seems to us, is the deeper meaning of AUKUS. Whatever else that arrangement does, it does not negate the very special Canada–US relationship in matters appertaining to security and defence.

### Notes

- 1 For some skeptical, not to say cynical, assessments of the AASR, see Lagadec (2012); Arnold (2014); Mumford (2017); and especially Ingram (1997).
- 2 For a thoughtful commentary on this tendency, see Berenskoetter (2007); and Oelsner and Vion (2011).
- 3 Bush made this claim in an early 1989 speech in Mainz and repeated it in Berlin late the following year; see Mensel (1992, 81–109).
- 4 To use the term employed by one scholar (Webb 2020, 296), who notes that, alone among special relationships, the Anglo-American one is regularly signified through employment of the definite article, signalling it is “*the* special relationship *ne plus ultra* [emphasis added].”
- 5 A competing, and oft-quoted, reference is the backhanded compliment to amicability uttered during the Diefenbaker era by Social Credit leader Robert Thomson that “the United States is our friend, whether we like it or not” (Thomson quoted in Azzi 2015, 162).



- 6 For one particularly hopeful expression of the potential gains from this partnership, see Kinsman and Rowswell (2022). The idea of a special Canada–Germany relationship is far from new. Contrasting perspectives on the validity of the trope are offered in Dolata-Kreutzkamp and Kitchen (2008); and Rempel (1996).
- 7 On the stability of the Canada–US security community see Roussel (2004).
- 8 On that breakup, see Stolleis (2005).
- 9 As argued by Lebow (1994).
- 10 The best source on the impact of Iraq upon Franco-American relations is Bozo (2017). Also see, more broadly, Gordon and Shapiro (2004).
- 11 On the origins of that strategy, see Dian (2015).
- 12 For an overview of the strains introduced by New Zealand’s anti-nuclear policy on its key alliance relations, see Janiewski (2009).
- 13 For two books chronicling the downward trajectory of Canada–China relations over the past decade, see Evans (2014); and Hampson and Blanchfield (2021).
- 14 The reference is to Orwell’s critique of the perpetuation of oppression under communism, expressed in the slogan painted on Farmer Jones’s barn by the revolutionary junta of pigs: “All the animals are equal, but some are more equal than others” (Orwell 1951, 114).

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