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Orders and borders: Unipolarity and the issue of homeland security

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Much has been written about "unipolarity", the systemic ordering principle that serves as the conceptual and theoretical focus of so many of the articles in this special theme issue, my own included. In what follows, that ordering principle will be linked to contemporary discussions regarding homeland security, especially as the latter appertains to the management of the Canada–United States border. Now, for many people, the topic of unipolarity can be a "hot-button" issue, and the next two sections will comment upon the controversy attending this topic. Subsequent to that commentary, the article will suggest the manner in which international systemic "structure" comes to bear upon the management of the Canada–United States border. Although the focus of the analysis will largely be on America's northern border, there will also be some discussion of management of its border to the south, with Mexico.

What's in a word? Geostrategic U and non-U[1]

In the mid-1950s, English writer Nancy Mitford gave wide circulation to a linguistic coin that had only a short while earlier been minted by a British linguist named Alan S.C. Ross, who argued that in the United Kingdom clear class distinctions could best, perhaps only, be identified by differences in the way the classes used the English language – differences that Ross dichotomized (and Mitford popularized) as "U" for upper-class usages and "non-U" for non-upper-class usages (Ross 1954; Mitford 1956). With apologies to the two Britons, their categories will be appropriated with the objective of making a point about the controversy that has swirled (and indeed continues to swirl) around our organizing concept, unipolarity.

That controversy was touched off by the phenomenon of "systemic change",[2] pursuant to the collapse of the Soviet Union. It flared over a matter of appropriateness: should we be encouraged (some held, allowed) to characterize the new era as one whose dominant structural feature was

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unipolarity? In this debate, the geopolitical enthusiasts of U and non-U split over both how we should comprehend the new structural arrangement, and what it implied for the foreign policy of the United States. For many in the U fold, what was on offer was not simply unipolarity, but also the prospect of a new American "unilateralism" in foreign policy. For their non-U counterparts, the new era's ominous prospects needed to be combated by stressing the virtues of "multipolarity", which was often (and sloppily) associated with another non-U term, "multilateralism". Not surprisingly, since few could be found (outside of the United States, at least) to express favorable views on unilateralism in foreign policy, the U category in general took on a bad odor, with that foreign-policy dispensation becoming dependent upon, or so it was said, the structural ordering principle. Thus it seemed to follow that if one wanted multilateralism, one must plump for multipolarity. Hence the controversy over how we should label the international systemic structure following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Somehow, if you reckoned that the system *could* be conceptualized as "unipolar", you came to be regarded as acquiescing in (or possibly even celebrating) the misuse of American power, not to say endorsing a "triumphalism" bound to result in "empire" and its handmaiden, unilateralism.

In so many ways, the debate was an artificial one, fuelled by paired sets of category error, discussed later in this article. After all, the international systemic structure that had been in place between 1945 and 1991, so easily styled back then as a "bipolar" on, had engendered few *quantitative* quibbles, in the sense that while analysts of IR might have differed regarding the consequences of bipolarity, few bothered to challenge the arithmetic: after 1945 there were two, and only two, superpowers. But once the events associated with the Soviet implosion ran their course, a surprising divergence appeared over the arithmetic, with many not wishing to acknowledge that $2 - 1 = 1$. Where there had once been two superpowers, the collapse of one should have led to the deduction that only one superpower remained, and that the system had to be regarded, structurally and by definition, as a unipolar one. But because of the above-mentioned conflation of two unrelated categories into geostrategic U, the equally unrelated properties lumped together into geostrategic non-U loomed as a more appealing vision of international politics, to those who insisted on doing the lumping.

Although it is becoming commonplace to assert that the events of 9/11 changed fundamentally the "path" along which international security policies would henceforth be conducted by the United States and its allies, it was really the events of a decade or so earlier, commencing with the unraveling of the Soviet Union in late December 1991, that would be of greater structural importance for our purposes here. Throughout the 1990s, a period of time some recall nostalgically as being the "post-Cold War era", tension was building over the relative virtues of geostrategic U and non-U. The malaise was widespread, touching the very heart of America's network of allies, NATO. It reflected a structural anxiety within the international system. While it probably had no single identifiable source in terms of actual policies adopted by the United States, the anxiety spawned myriad declarations, notions, and even theories about the contemporary global balance of power, or lack thereof. In a word, even before the presidency of George W. Bush, America was being regarded by many, friend and foe alike, as "hegemonic". And hegemony, said many (though by no means all) analysts and policy-makers, was inconsistent with, and fundamentally corrosive of, the norms and institutions associated with post-Second World War geostrategic non-U, especially if by the latter one evoked "multilateralism". As William Pfaff put it more than a decade ago, in respect of an otherwise obscure dispute over the use of depleted-uranium ordnance during the recently concluded Kosovo war, the:

> ... emotional charge of the controversy reflects a certain European anti-Americanism... The United States is unwilling to yield the economic and commercial advantages that can be drawn from its political-military preponderance. The Europeans resent that advantage and have an interest in overcoming or reversing it. (Pfaff 2001, p. 6)

Those Europeans (and others) who thought this way had a point. That non-U dispensation known as American multilateralism had certainly been taking on a more "instrumentalist" coloration as early as the first term of Bill Clinton (Vaïsse 2003). However, and notwithstanding what candidate George W. Bush said during the presidential campaign about the need for America to show itself more "humble" in its dealing with allies, meaning that it should be more willing to consult with them,[3] the instrumentalist tone established during Clinton's years became even more prominent during the first nine months of the Bush administration – that is, prior to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Not surprisingly, those Europeans who had gotten used to expecting an America that regarded its allies as partners and not irritants (or partners *first*, and only after that irritants) expressed consternation over the prospect that they were about to lose the America they had come to accept, if only grudgingly in some cases, as a constituent element of their own strategic identity.[4] Nor would their consternation dissipate after 9/11, once it became apparent that Washington intended to fight the war against the Taliban without the support of the alliance writ large (though certain NATO allies such as Canada, along with non-NATO partners, were welcomed participants in a "coalition of the willing" from the opening stages of the American counterattack).

It was not just the French who were objecting, as the 1990s dragged on, to what they took to be a slackening in America's multilateralist instincts. Increasingly, by the end of the 1990s it appeared as if the congenitally *ur*-multilateralist Germans, heretofore among the best students in the atlanticist classroom, were grumbling the most about the quality of American leadership, some to the extent that they began to doubt whether America's erstwhile commitment to multilateralism ever *did* reflect anything other than "instrumental multilateralism [in which] international institutions are useful as long as they help to reduce costs, lend legitimacy to foreign policy actions, and do not constrain the United States" (Rudolf 2000, p. 152; Rudolf 2001; Kubbig et al. 2000). The German mood was hardly improved in the early months of 2001 when American policy-makers and policy analysts sympathetic to the new, Republican, administration began to extol the virtues of Washington's "à la carte" multilateralism, and even of its "consultative unilateralism" (Patrick 2001, p. 2; Safire 2001).[5]

The Germans who were fretting about life, first under Clinton and much more so under Bush, did so because they suspected that the United States was abandoning the practice of "strategic restraint" that had served as the pillar of the "constitutional order" within which Germany and Europe had restored to economic and moral health after the Second World War (Ikenberry 1998/1999). For those who regarded matters in this fashion, what was needed was not so much a weaker America, but rather an America that was better-behaved, one that understood that forging *collective* decisions on what was important (or not) worked to advance both its *own* interests and those of its allies.

The French, by contrast, offered a critique of America that was much more structural in nature. As expressed so memorably by Hubert Védrine, the foreign minister who attached the label "hyperpower" to the United States, the crux of the problem was not so much American *behavior* (held to be epiphenomenal), but rather American *power* – power, that is, relative to others in the international system. For the French, it was simply inconceivable that America might be enjoined, cajoled, or hectored into behaving in a more satisfactory manner so long as the principal determinant of that behavior (relative capability) was not somehow adjusted, so that the system could become "balanced". To his credit, Védrine did acknowledge that were Paris to possess as much power as Washington did, it would probably behave in a manner judged by allies to be even more insufferable than American behavior (Védrine 2000, p. 50). Ironically, those in France (and elsewhere) who would turn their gaze first and foremost toward one feature of the international system, relative capability, might with good reason have been labeled "structural realists," save for the fact that this variant of realist

theory (often annoying misnamed "neorealism") conjures up a perspective on global politics that is considered to be decidedly *American* – or at least does so to those who have not thought through the logical implications of Kenneth Waltz's 1979 opus, *Theory of international politics* (Waltz 1979).

What unipolarity is – and is *not*

Relative capability, however essential it may be as a conditioning variable of international politics, possesses only an indeterminate ability, at best, to "cause" particular foreign policies ("outputs") to be the way they are. Which brings us back to the need to delve further into the imputed significance of geopolitical U and non-U. This section highlights two category errors that stemmed from mistaken inferences associated with both unipolarity and multipolarity. The first of these concerns the confusion attending the overlapping usage of two terms of contemporary art: unipolarity and "hegemony".

As noted in the preceding section, unipolarity is simply a name used to describe a particular international order, one in which states continue to be regarded as the central actors (even if few analysts are so silly as to dispute the influence of nonstate actors). In other words, it is *quantitative shorthand* for taking the measure of one configuration of a qualitative system, the latter being the Westphalian order that dates from around 1648 and continues in existence today, premature reports of its death to the contrary notwithstanding. Logically, there can be three and only three quantitative shorthand renderings of such an order.

The first, by far the most frequent dispensation since 1648, has been *multipolarity*, taken to mean that there exist three or more great powers, each possessing roughly comparable amounts of "power" as construed in some measurable fashion, usually branded "aggregate capability".[6] The second structural arrangement is *bipolarity*, a period of time (as was the Cold War) when two ("super") powers so stood out from the rest of the pack that their bilateral competition came to reflect as well as to define the system's structure. And the third is *unipolarity*. As we know, this is the most contentious of the quantitative shorthand descriptors, for reasons hinted at in the preceding section.

What policy *outputs* (and maybe even "outcomes") must flow from this third structural arrangement, continue to be the subjects of endless debate. One might have thought that employing unipolarity merely as a descriptive, not a prescriptive, device would have sown hardly any controversy; alas, that has never been the case with this word – a word that today has attained the added notoriety of not simply being geopolitically incorrect, but also of being obsolete. Indeed, so fixated these days are the globe's punditry on the obsolescence charge, in a world increasingly thought to be "post-American" (Zakaria 2009), that memories have dimmed regarding the earlier attainder, associated with unipolarity's apparent lack of decorum. Given that earlier distaste that a few scholars were known to have evinced regarding our volume's organizing concept, it is useful at this juncture to establish the constitutive elements of unipolarity; we can leave aside for another day the related issue of whether unipolarity has simply become passé with the declared slippage in America's power and the ongoing "rise" of China's (Lieber and Alexander 2005; Brooks and Wohlforth 2005).

So, at the risk of oversimplifying, let us say what unipolarity means, descriptively. It has a simple connotation, best expressed by William Wohlforth more than a decade ago: "Unipolarity is a structure in which one state's capabilities are too great to be counterbalanced" (Wohlforth 1999, p. 9). By this he meant counterbalanced by a single "peer competitor", either on its own or at the head of a counter-hegemonic grouping actively pursuing a balancing strategy. Clearly, the United States in and of itself does not possess more than 50 per cent of the planet's aggregate capabilities across the broad range of what might be considered the "elements

of power". As such, it is conceivable that it could be balanced through (a) the robust and sustained growth of an existing state; (b) the establishment of a new and powerful entity possessed of statist features and with outsized geopolitical aspirations; or (c) an unambiguously counterbalancing alliance of states that, on their own, hold no prospect of becoming America's "peer competitor".

At the same time, Wohlforth does believe (and here he has plenty of company) that America has been (and may still be) a "hegemonic" power, construed in the sense that it is capable of imposing – by coercion or persuasion but ideally by the latter – its will upon others, getting them to follow where it wishes to lead, all the while by providing essential public goods to the international system that only it can supply (Kindleberger 1981). For many scholars, hegemony exists and it is durable, so that the term, "unipolar moment" suffers from prolepsis in its stated anticipation of unipolarity's impending disappearance. Others, however, believe hegemony must lead to its own undoing, and this sooner rather than later, on the basis of an iron law of international politics, namely power "balancing" (Layne 1998).

It is possible, though not common, to make the claim that while the system has really been unipolar (and continues, at least for the time being, so to be), the United States itself is *not* a hegemon, benign or otherwise. Indeed, to David Wilkinson, this is exactly what the system had become once the Soviets dropped out of the game: unipolarity of a nonhegemonic nature. To Wilkinson, hegemony might connote, on a bilateral basis, an unequal relationship (though not necessarily a coercive one) between two differently proportioned states occupying the same neighborhood; but on the more important *global* basis, it must connote, if it is to connote anything at all, a dispensation in which unipolar influence matches unipolar capability. If the first (bilateral) kind of hegemony might find applicability in today's world, the latter does not: there are simply too many instances of great powers (e.g., China, Russia, for a time even France) either defying the United States, or simply abstaining from following it, for anyone to conclude that hegemony possesses global meaning (Wilkinson 1999).

Wilkinson was clearly on to something back in 1999, when he made this observation. John Mearsheimer also agrees that system-wide hegemony simply cannot and does not exist: only regional hegemony exists, and even in this category there is only one such hegemon, the United States (Mearsheimer 2001). However, he parts company from Wilkinson when it comes to assessing the prospects of unipolarity's persisting. For Wilkinson, nonhegemonic unipolarity can endure for a considerable length of time, while for Mearsheimer, its days are clearly numbered. Which is right, who can say? Certainly, Wilkinson called things more accurately in respect of the mooted peer competitor of the early post-Cold War period, namely the entity known as "Europe". But whether his argument stands the test of time in respect of today's "riser", China, is a different matter. The European case is apposite, because of what it tells us about the two category errors associated with geostrategic U and non-U.

Both errors, so central to the non-U calculus, stemmed from the conflation of unipolarity with unilateralism, or to put it differently, they arose from the conviction that a unipolar era could not help being characterized as a time of American unilateralism, and that the only antidote to this latter species of policy misbehavior would be structural change, to wit a re-jigging of the balance of power so that a different dispensation could arise. On the geostrategic non-U wish list for such a new dispensation, one structure was held to represent the ideal, multipolarity. There were, however, a couple of major problems with this ideal. One concerned its historical track record, and the other involved the means by which it could be brought about. Let us start with the second of these problems.

For most of the time during the 1990s the business of championing multipolarity looked to be a French monopoly, so consistently and ardently did French policy-makers and policy analysts tout this ideal. And, for a brief while during that decade, it really did begin to look as if the

most serious challenge to America was going to issue, improbable as it might seem today, from the very heart of the transatlantic alliance, and would do so because of French instigation; this is what so worried Samuel Huntington, for instance, as the 1990s were drawing to a close (Huntington 1999). We now realize how overstated those concerns were, for not only has there been no "counter-hegemonic balancing" of America stemming from Europe, but the very weight of the latter in the international system has been so diminished that even if "Europe" wanted to, it would be very incapable of initiating a return to multipolarity.

More interestingly, and again with the French in mind, one might ask why anyone in that country should have been cheerleading a return to multipolarity. After all, if any structural alternative to unipolarity could be said to have showered benefits upon France it was rather more bipolarity than multipolarity that qualified as a "benefactor". It is apparent from the historical record that France did not derive net benefit from its centuries'-long experience with multipolarity. To be sure, things started promisingly enough for it; within a decade of the ending of the Thirty Years' War in 1648, which effectively ushered in the international (Westphalian) order we know today, France had supplanted Spain as the world's ranking power. But as time went on during that long multipolar era stretching from the Peace of Westphalia to the Second World War, things went downhill for France, with decline being glimpsed as early as its naval defeat by the British and Dutch at La Hogue, in 1692 (Thompson 1992; Luard 1992).

A series of global contests in the eighteenth century would leave Britain as the dominant world power by 1763, though France continued to be the preeminent land power in Europe (Dorn 1940). As bad as the eighteenth century was for France, the nineteenth would be worse, for following a short-lived uptick in its status in 1805, the rot once more set in, symbolized early in the century by Waterloo and later in the century by Sedan. But this was nothing as compared with the curse multipolarity would lay on France in the twentieth century, culminating in June 1940 (Adamthwaite 1995; Wolfers 1966). So depressing had that secular experience been that by the midpoint of the twentieth century a "rational" analyst could have been forgiven for drawing the conclusion that this country in particular should never again wish to be so unfortunate as to live in a multipolar world.

In contrast, the four decades of bipolarity were beneficial ones for France, even though this does not receive the attention it should from that country's analysts and policy-makers, who seem taken with the myth of "Yalta", which holds that France was betrayed and diminished by the division of Europe into a Soviet sphere of influence and an American one back in February 1945.[7] As for the current structure of international power, whatever else might be claimed about the impact of the Soviet Union's demise upon French status and interests, it is hard to sustain any meaningful comparison between the negative (if that it what it has been) impact of unipolarity's two first decades and that of multipolarity's final *century*.

The second of the category errors associated with geostrategic non-U is nearly as shocking as the first: it is the belief that, if the "problem" in international security really is American "unilateralism", then the remedy for this policy shortcoming is a structural one. To wit, say the geostrategic non-U claimants, all one needs to do, to get the United States back on a multilateralist trajectory, is end unipolarity, because they believe that if U = U, then the non-U of multipolarity must equal the non-U of multilateralism. Is there any basis in logic or evidence for believing that a structural remedy awaits? Certainly not, if history is to be any guide – and especially the diplomatic history of the United States. If that historical record demonstrates one thing, it is that unilateralism as a foreign-policy orientation can be entirely consistent with multipolarity. Unilateralism, as Walter McDougall reminds us (McDougall 1997), is a time-honored American diplomatic doctrine born of a relentless quest for "liberty", and it has only been fairly recently (i.e., since the onset of the post-Second World War era), that American leaders have been known openly to sing the praises of "multilateral" economic and security arrangements (Foot

et al. 2002). Prior to that period, eschewing the "entanglements" of multilateralism became the closest thing to an iron law of American diplomatic wisdom as it is possible to imagine.

Indeed, to those who want to believe that multipolarity must rein in America's unilateralist instincts, the diplomatic record of the interwar period is particularly sobering. For American policies during those two decades demonstrated not only that unilateralism in its most extreme form of "isolationism" could flourish during a period of multipolarity, but that unilateralism might itself have been a required *response* to multipolarity, in an era in which great political significance was attached to America's geographical setting (Whitaker 1954; Staley 1941; Henrikson 1980).

To sum up to this point: unipolarity as a descriptive term need not be particularly controversial (though room certainly exists to ask whether the system in 2012 continues to be fundamentally characterized by the term). What *is* problematical, however, is the slipshod tendency of so many analysts to assume that structural remedies exist for unit-level problems. Does it follow, though, that there are no structural conditioning forces at work on the Canada–United States bilateral relationship? Hardly. It simply means that extreme caution is in order when one sets out to "prove" how those structural forces exert their impact. The effect of unipolarity can most clearly be glimpsed in one bilateral issue-area, broadly in the area of homeland security, and specifically in the regime for management of the Canada–United States border. The next two sections will address that specific focus, looking first at how and why policy discourses on the border have been changing, and then probing the policy challenges facing America and its Canadian and Mexican neighbors, as they grapple with the problem of managing their respective borders.

As we are going to see, there is a credible link between unipolarity and the management of the Canada–United States border, for that structural ordering principle carries in its train one clear systemic marker: it sets up the United States as the principal target for forces seeking to revise the international status quo. Systemic predominance perhaps has its benefits, but it also has its drawbacks. In the words of Richard Maher, "predominance... makes one a tempting target, and a scapegoat for other countries' own problems and unrealized ambitions" (Maher 2011, p. 55).

Unipolarity and borders, "real" and imagined

One of the consequences of the terrorist challenge to America in recent years has been the "hardening" of its border with Canada. There are some obvious reasons for this, even if one can overstate the degree to which the border has become a more significant barrier to economic and societal interchange than it used to be. But there would seem to be one obvious *structural* source of the contemporary problem, and that, ironically, is unipolarity. Now, it might be objected that unipolarity, especially if one assumes hegemony to be its necessary accompaniment, would *ceteris paribus* have resulted in the Canada–United States border becoming even less of an impediment to interchange than it was even in the "golden age," when the border could be imagined as a geopolitical fiction, a "mere tariff" in the words of one prominent scholar (Scott 1932, p. 618). The logic would be that since Canada was a virtual strategic appendage of the hegemon, there should have been as little need of a significant border between the two North American neighbors as there was of such a border between, say, Vermont and New York.

That golden age has been rhapsodized as a long period in which the Canada–United States boundary constituted, effectively, the world's longest "undefended" frontier – a rhapsody that reached its height during the early years of the Second World War, a time in history when the contrast between North America's irenic frontier and Europe's bloody ones could not have been greater (Preston 1977; Stacey 1950). If a picture is worth a thousand words, then perhaps a motion picture can be invoked to symbolize that full flowering of border mythologizing. In

the summer of 1941, movie audiences in North America were being treated to a stirring depiction of what was billed as the most remarkable frontier in the world – and perhaps one of the most remarkable ever to have existed in the history of the world, the famous (if unfortunately mis-named)[8] 49th parallel separating so peacefully and gently two cognate peoples, the Canadians and the Americans.

In the American market, the film was released under the title *The invaders*, in reference to a plot featuring the efforts of surviving crewmembers of a Nazi U-boat sunk in Hudson Bay to make their way south to a still-neutral America, and from there back into combat. But in the United Kingdom and Canada, the film was called *The 49th parallel*, and its prologue, narrated by Vincent Massey, Canada's high commissioner in London, eloquently summed up the excep-tional nature of the border between the North American neighbors:

> I see a long, straight line athwart a continent.
> No chain of forts, or deep flowing river, or mountain range,
> but a line drawn by men upon a map, nearly a century ago,
> accepted with a handshake, and kept ever since.
> A boundary which divides two nations, yet marks their friendly meeting ground.
> The 49th parallel: the only undefended frontier in the world.

The line whose praises were being sung by the Canadian diplomat hardly seemed a border at all, certainly not when contrasted with the contemporary version of the Canada–United States boundary – or the potential future version, if one can take seriously declarations of officials such as Janet Napolitano, who heads America's Department of Homeland Security, and who in a speech in Washington in late March 2009 called for a "real" border to be constructed between the United States and its two continental neighbors, Canada and Mexico (Ibbitson 2009; Gotlieb 2009). Instead of today's rigidifying symbol of distrust, the border eulogized in the film was more like a connecting tissue between two like-minded peoples, facilitating rather than hindering easy passage through their "friendly meeting ground".

What has changed, and in particular how can we say that the new reality is related to this special issue's *problématique*, of unipolarity? To begin with, it is not accurate to imagine that the Canada–United States border was never a "real" border, if by that term we mean a boundary possessed of geopolitical significance – i.e., not simply that "mere tariff" of Frank Scott's imagin-ing. "Real," or geopolitical, borders are hardly a new phenomenon in North America, not even in the northernmost reaches of the continent. Instead, as between today's Canada and United States, a geopolitical, if indeterminate, border had existed that was nearly as old as the Europeans' pres-ence on the continent itself, as demonstrated by the waging between 1689 and 1763 of four inter-colonial wars along and across it, pitting English against French (each side backed by its aboriginal allies).[9] Threat assessment and policy responses thereto do not get any more differentiated than when on either side of a border, no matter how ambiguous its contours, there is a widespread sense that the "enemy" is the neighbor, and the neighbor, the enemy – a sense that reflected the North American status quo for close to a century, with French and English battling for supre-macy over the continent during most of the time from the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth.

Nor did America's winning its independence change things much, at least not at the outset. There was another war, this time pitting it against Britain (and Canada) between 1812 and 1814 (Taylor 2011), as well as a few infamous cross-border raids during mid-century, first on the part of Confederate bank robbers striking northern Vermont from Québec during the American Civil War, and shortly thereafter by United States-based Irish radicals (the "Fenians") utilizing Amer-ican soil as a launching pad from which they hoped to seize Canada, holding it hostage until such

time as the British would be prepared to grant Ireland its independence (Neidhardt 1975). Apart from adding to a preexisting store of Anglo-American ill-will that had been amply replenished by tensions related to the Civil War (Foreman 2010; W.D. Jones 1974; Bourne 1961; H. Jones 1992; Jenkins 1974), something else came of these mid-century cross-border incursions, as the Fenians willy-nilly helped to promote the unification of most of Britain's remaining North American colonies, starting in 1867 (Jenkins 1969). And the large Irish-American ethnic diaspora would try its best by "lobbying", then and later, to keep Washington and London (and by extension, Ottawa) from developing closer strategic relations – an endeavor in which they were able, by the early years of the twentieth century, to count upon the support of America's even larger German diaspora (App 1967; Child 1939; Haglund and McNeil-Hay 2011).

As the twentieth century progressed, much of the earlier geopolitical significance of the Canada–United States border would dissipate, but it would never vanish completely, "The 49th Parallel" to the contrary notwithstanding. Still, there can be no disputing that the border-management regime did alter after 9/11. Importantly, for this theme issue, is the connection between unipolarity and the change in that regime. It is not such a difficult connection to grasp: once the Soviet Union disappeared and America remained as the undisputed top dog in the international system, it invariably became the principal target of anyone with a revisionist bent. It could not have been otherwise. Hence the double irony of unipolarity: not only did this structural dispensation *not* lead to effective American hegemony globally, but it virtually guaranteed that the United States homeland was going to be the target of any number of terrorist attempts on behalf of an increasingly aggrieved group of Islamists who had convinced themselves that they had brought an end to one superpower's (the USSR's) rule in Afghanistan, and that they would therefore be able to erase another superpower's (America's) strategic footprint in the Middle East.

From the standpoint of homeland security, the "unipolar moment" was to prove less exhilaration than menace. Nor would physical security woes be the only contributor to the heightened anxiety regarding America's borders at a time when the country's power and its image were still on the ascendant. An economic dynamo such as the United States, during the mid to late 1990s, was bound to attract immigrants, and attract them it did, some legally, others not so legally, but all in great numbers, mainly from Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. Not surprisingly, a reaction set in on the part of an American public and political class that was coming to grips with new challenges to what has been dubbed "societal security". This term suggests that the objective of border management, at least on America's frontier with Mexico, has increasingly become the safeguarding of the country's "collective identity" (Eisenstadt and Giesen 1995). According to theorists of societal security, there can exist three principal threats to collective identity: (1) migration in such volumes that a country's "core values" are held to be at risk of profound alteration (much of the current European angst today, especially in the Netherlands, would fall under this category); (2) "horizontal competition", i.e., the linguistic and cultural pull exerted by a powerful neighbor on one's own identity (viz., longstanding Canadian anxieties about American cultural weight); and (3) "vertical competition", with the threat here coming from within a country, where one collective identity with a regional base sets itself apart from the dominant identity (again, a familiar story in Canada, given the seemingly never-ending discussion over Québec's place in the federation) (Buzan et al. 1998). For our purposes here, it is only the first of these threats that is of relevance, for the risk exists that the management of the Canada–United States border may become complicated by growing American anxieties about the border with Mexico.

In contrast to the concerns evinced about its southern border, the United States has had a different kind of security in mind when attention turns toward its northern border: "physical security", a more straightforward concept that refers to the safeguarding of people, institutions,

and infrastructure as tangible, material entities, not simply as carriers or expressions of ideals and values. By extension, an agenda dominated by concerns about physical security must be one replete with suggestions for deterring and defending against the use of violence against one's own territory and all contained therein, and a logical – albeit not necessarily the most logical – place at which to mount the defense is a country's international frontiers. Either variant of security concern, societal or physical, can and does give rise to a rather sweeping panoply of perceived threats, but it is important to make the distinction, if we are going to understand how and why the management of America's northern border differs from that of its southern border.

The crux of the societal security challenge of today is to be found in the nightmare scenario of the nativists – to wit, of the United States becoming, in effect, the Disunited States, and doing so as a result of the replacement of a unifying assimilationist ethic by a divisive multiculturalist one. This vision has been adumbrated in fairly recent statements about the impact of ethnic politics upon America's future. In this fissiparous perspective, shared inter alios by the late Samuel Huntington and the very extant Patrick Buchanan, it is the country's large and growing Mexican diaspora that proves particularly troublesome (Huntington 2004). Whatever the basis of the concern about America's future ability to assimilate immigrants, it bears emphasizing that there has been very little focus upon a "terrorist" (as opposed to "criminal") threat emanating from the southern border of the United States.

Canada and the "dilemma" of homeland security

And this gets us to what one scholar, Frank Harvey, has labeled the "homeland security dilemma", the essence of which he summarizes epigrammatically as "the more security you have, the more security you will need" (Harvey 2007, pp. 283–284; 2008). As he sees things, the implication of this dilemma, for Canada as much as for the United States, is that government efforts to resolve the problem of terrorism hitting North America will ultimately fall short of what the public demands, for the public demands perfection and no matter how successful counterterrorism campaigns may prove to be, if they do not achieve the impossible – perfection in checking terrorist attacks – they will be deemed to have failed. Harvey ends on a somber note, concluding that there is no apparent way out of the security dilemma, and that therefore serious negative consequences for Canada are inevitable. Even though Ottawa has expended more than $11 billion on homeland security measures of its own since 9/11, and more than that amount on the Afghanistan mission, the crucial question, says Harvey, remains not whether Canadian efforts have enhanced North American security; rather it is "whether it really matters *even if they have*". By this he means to suggest that none of the Canadian efforts will count for much in Washington "after the next failure" (Harvey 2007, pp. 309–310).

Frank Harvey has not been alone in imagining dire implications for Canada: in the post-9/11 climate, some analysts have even begun to speculate upon the integrity of the longstanding zone of peace between the two North American neighbors, precisely because of an apprehension that a Canada-based terrorist attack on American soil could result in a response from Washington sufficiently robust as to threaten Canada's sovereign jurisdiction over its own territory. It is not just policy analysts who have had such thoughts; policy-makers have as well, and occasionally an official will publicly acknowledge such forebodings. One such was Jean Lapierre, who while serving as Canada's minister of transport disclosed what he termed his "worst nightmare", namely that of a devastating terrorist attack mounted against American soil emanating from Canada (quoted in Allison 2005, p. 717). But scholars have been willing to spell out, both more often and more clearly, that which politicians prefer only to adumbrate. For instance, Patrick Lennox has recently argued that Canada's own tougher response to terrorism in the

period since 9/11 must fundamentally be understood as a preemptive measure not so much against terrorists as against *the United States* – and he is far from the only analyst to have made the claim that Canada acts against terrorism largely if not entirely because it fears the wrath of its powerful neighbor if it fails "to do so"?. Canada's own values, and its own political interests, are almost beside the point; what counts is that Ottawa do what is necessary to avoid the danger of severe American reprisals against it. As Lennox declares, Canada:

> ... was compelled to take on the new security state form as defined and specified by its superordinate partner, the United States. Not mimicking the American response to the new transnational security threat in this way jeopardized Canada's economic and sovereign survival. (Lennox 2007, p. 1019; see also Lennox 2009)

Without wishing to trivialize the very real problems associated with Islamists' attacks on the United States from a Canadian base, we would do well to ask whether the concerns of a decade ago remain dominant today. In other words, is it possible to overstate the peril, and if so, might there be any way to connect unipolarity to *today's* discussion, in a second sense? To say again, unipolarity can certainly be implicated in the onset stage of the challenge, and therefore can be said to have generated the changes in border management discussed above. But can we also invoke unipolarity as a means of resolving the problem? The conclusion will revisit that second question, about resolution; for the moment, let us take a closer look at the contemporary "dilemma" (if that is what it is) of homeland security.

A decade ago, American security anxieties were focused much more on the United States northern border, with Canada, than upon its southern border, with Mexico, and those anxieties were primarily about physical security. This is because American officials were giving serious consideration to the implications for United States security of Canada's Islamic diaspora. Canadian officials in the immediate wake of 9/11 expended no little effort trying to debunk the rumor that some of the attackers had infiltrated the United States from Canada, and though this effort was rewarded with much success, it was not total success, for there still exists in the United States, more than a decade after 9/11, a group of diehards who believe Canada must, willy-nilly, have played a part in the catastrophic events of the day. The group probably is not as large as the number of Americans (the "birthers") who suspect their own president is not an American by birth, but it is hardly a negligible quantity. On the Canadian side, there are equally those who wonder why anyone should single Canada out in respect to the terrorist challenge to homeland security, and chalk up border-tightening measures to a "typical" American ignorance of Canadian realities and overreaction to perceived threats.

There was, at the time, a very rational basis to the American concerns about Canada as a complicating factor in homeland security. As noted above, Canadian officials could not convince Americans that the border was secure in the weeks and months following the attacks on 9/11. Partly the inability to take solace from Canadian assurances was owing to Americans' realization of how incapable their *own* border authorities had been of preventing terrorists from entering the United States directly from overseas, with the implication being that if the sprawling United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), coupled with the vaunted and well-funded American intelligence services, could not have prevented the establishment of Al Qaeda sleeper cells in America, then it was at least as likely, and probably much more likely, that relatively "laid-back" Canada, with its propensity chronically to underspend on defense as well as to minimize the gravity of threats, would be a place terrorists would find to their liking – perhaps not as a target, but certainly as a staging area and support base for operations directed against American targets (Jones 2003). Making it even more to their liking, it was argued, was the difference both in Canadian refugee-processing and judicial practices, together

simplifying the job of slipping into Canada, and once there, to avoid either detection or deportation.

Added to the hypothetico-deductive case for anxiety was a widely publicized empirical reality, the saga of the so-called "Millennium bomber", Ahmed Ressam, whose own New Year's eve plans for 2000 called for the detonation of a powerful explosive at the Los Angeles airport. He never did get to wreak this havoc, as he was apprehended by the INS on 14 December 1999 trying to enter the state of Washington from the province of British Columbia, by ferry from Vancouver Island – with materials to make a bomb hidden in the trunk of his rented car. On the assumption that Canadian and American intelligence had not been trailing him all along, it was a very close call. Almost as disturbing as the mayhem he was intending to unleash were the circumstances surrounding his presence in North America. Details came out during Ressam's trial in the spring of 2000, and were recounted in a very hard-hitting documentary produced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, called "Trail of a Terrorist", which was aired both in Canada and the United States in the late summer and early autumn of 2001. To put it mildly, the details were alarming, and revealed a shockingly easy manner in which North American security could be breached.

But a great deal has changed in the decade since Ressam was tried and convicted, and today a different aspect of the Islamist threat has been occupying minds on both sides of the Canada–United States border, the phenomenon of "homegrown" terrorism. It is not that the older fear of terrorists slipping into North America via Canada and then crossing the border to strike at the United States has disappeared; to the contrary, as an example of how persistent the suspicion of Canadian laxity can be, American security officials on the eve of Barack Obama's inauguration in January 2009 were alarmed about reports (later proved baseless) that "a group of Somali extremists was. . . coming across the border from Canada to detonate explosives as the new president took the oath of office" (Baker 2010). It is rather that the older fear has been eclipsed by the prospect that Islamists born and raised in North America might choose to perpetrate terrorist attacks on their native soil.

Such was the case in the autumn of 2009 when a United States Army psychiatrist, Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, a Virginia-born Muslim, went on a murderous shooting spree at Fort Hood, Texas, killing a dozen of his army comrades and wounding another 30 – and this, apparently, because he dreaded being deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, where he might have to be involved, if only in a support capacity, in combat against fellow Muslims (McFadden 2009). The following month, the arrest in Pakistan of five Islamic-Americans suspected of having gone to that country "seeking jihad" against American forces in Afghanistan, caused many in the United States to begin to question what had hitherto been a widespread assumption – namely that compared with Europe's Islamic diaspora, America's was too well-assimilated to serve as any breeding ground for radicalization.[10] Those two incidents, occurring so closely together, brought about a re-examination of the "notion that the United States has some immunity against homegrown terrorists" (Shane 2009). This re-examination would continue subsequent to the failed Times Square bombing in May 2010, and carries on today, as evidenced by the congressional hearings launched in March 2011 by the chairman of the house committee on homeland security, Rep. Peter King, into the mooted radicalization of America's Islamic community (Shane 2011).

Canada, as well, has had its experience with "homegrowns", albeit not on the same bloody scale as the United States. The most notorious such episode was the foiled bid, during the summer of 2006, to detonate bombs in the downtown core of the country's largest city, Toronto, as well as at an undisclosed Canadian Forces base located along the Highway 401 corridor, the major east–west axis in the southern part of Ontario (Freeze 2009). The scheme included the detonation by cell phones of powerful fertilizer bombs packed into U-Haul trucks, with the intent being to kill and maim at a high enough level so as to generate sufficient

public outrage to lead the Canadian government to end its military involvement in Afghanistan, with the model for the operation being the Madrid bombings of March 2004, which led to the new Spanish government's decision to withdraw from Iraq. The alleged financial mastermind of the plot, Shareef Abdelhaleem, has been described as "a new kind of terrorism suspect: An educated and affluent thirty-something entrepreneur – born in the Middle East but raised in Canada – who allegedly saw an opportunity to profit from the chaos he would cause" (Freeze 2010).

How the homegrown phenomenon will play out has to be anyone's guess at this stage. On the one hand, America's own homegrowns should, ironically perhaps, lead to a further reduction of anxiety about the northern border, because who needs a Canadian "gateway" to the United States if the problem stems from within America itself? On the other hand, homegrowns anywhere in North America serve to remind security analysts that vigilance must remain the order of the day. Whether vigilance becomes most effectively exercised *at* the border or "beyond" it is, of course, a matter being discussed very much these days by Washington and Ottawa, and it is hardly a coincidence that the entity carrying out these discussions bears the name, "Beyond the Border Working Group", which released in early December 2011 its long-awaited report on the evolving border-management regime. At this juncture, it seems a safe bet to conclude that so long as there exists the real possibility of terrorist plotting conducted by North American Islamists born (or raised) in the respective countries, we can expect to see a continued concern for physical security prominent in whatever new border-management arrangements eventually unfold within the mooted Canada–United States "security perimeter" (Clark 2011).

What is even more certain is that compared to the situation a decade ago, in the United States today there is much greater anxiety about the country's *southern* border than about its northern one. Not too long ago, border-management expert Edward Alden wrote a book not only lamenting the increased "hardening" of America's border with Canada, but also emphasizing that "there was a real terrorist threat from Canada". Alden had in mind more than simply the Ressam case; the threat he took also to be a function both of the porosity of the Canada–United States border and of the reality that "virtually every known terrorist organization in the world had some presence in Canada" – a country, he added, that had served as an organizational and financial hub for several terror attacks worldwide, and one whose "extremely liberal policy on refugees meant that almost anyone could show up, claim political persecution, and be released to live freely in the country for months until a hearing could be held" (Alden 2008, p. 129). Illustratively, this same expert, in a co-authored article published in a fairly recent issue of *Foreign Affairs*, managed to cover his topic without a *single* reference to America's northern border, ratifying the impression that, these days, when American security anxieties focus upon border management, they do so almost exclusively in respect of the Mexican–American border (Alden and Roberts 2011).

Conclusions

Three conclusions stem from the analysis in this paper. The first, and easiest, concerns our organizing concept, unipolarity. It is far from evident that the concept, as a *descriptive* tool, has lost whatever utility it once possessed, notwithstanding all that has been and written lately about American "decline". More to the point, although the implications of unipolarity for United States foreign policy have been variously debated – often, on the basis of ill-constructed analogies – in one issue-area, it can be claimed that unipolarity has had an impact. That issue-area is the border-management regime as between the United States and its two North American neighbors.

More contentious is the second conclusion to this paper, one that is perhaps of more relevance to the Canada–United States border than to the United States–Mexican one, though if it is a sound conclusion, it may even have implications for the latter. To the extent that earlier

"diasporic"-related instances of security pressures upon the Canada–United States border are of any relevance to the contemporary setting, then we might observe that problem-solving depended much more upon developments beyond the border than it did upon initiatives focused *at* the border. Consider the earlier Irish–American challenge, taken in its broadest sense to mean not just the threat of incursions into Canadian territory from the United States but also the decades'-long political agitation ("lobbying") within the American domestic political system on behalf of policy agendas bound to redound negatively – at least for as long as Canada's fate was intertwined with that of Great Britain – upon Canadian strategic interests (to say nothing of the shorter-lived agitation to similar effect on the part of German-Americans). Both problems in Canada–United States relations ended up being "solved" far from North America, and therefore what at one time had posed border challenges ended up simply disappearing from the bilateral agenda, with little of real curative importance actually taking place *at* the border. So the thought occurs – a thought to which unipolarity is apposite – that it will be America's *power* that must lead to the effective nullification of the earlier challenge posed by Al Qaeda.

There will always be terrorists, but it is more than conceivable, it is likely, that the corner has been turned in the global campaign to unwind Al Qaeda, rendering it significantly less of a challenge to homeland security than it so palpably was a decade ago. And this leads us directly to the third conclusion: to the extent North America will continue to confront regional security challenges, it is probable that the terrorism issue will become secondary to what is now menacing the future of Mexico. Although a conclusion is hardly the moment to introduce such an important new dimension to the argument, I would be wrong to end this article without a reference to what is at stake, mainly for the United States but also for Canada, in the ongoing drug wars wreaking so much havoc in Mexico. In February 2011, at a time when drug-related violence in that country was spiking even by Mexican standards, the then commander of both NORTHCOM and NORAD, Admiral James A. (Sandy) Winnefeld, commented that Mexico was not only fighting for its own future security, but for that of all of North America (quoted in Hernández and Otero 2011).

Overstatement? Possibly. But when one considers the implications for homeland security of Mexico's continuing to confront a challenge that has already claimed 45,000 lives over the past half-decade (a span of time that has only seen *14* terrorist-related deaths in all of the United States) it may well be that terrorism has already become, in terms of border-management priorities, yesterday's issue, and that a continued emphasis upon it will obscure the more fundamental challenges associated with homeland security – i.e., taken in the broad sense of the "homeland" being North America – over the coming decade.

Notes

1. This section draws on Haglund, D.G. "Western Europe and the Challenge of the 'Unipolar Moment': Is Multipolarity the Answer?", published in the *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* in 2004.
2. On "systemic" versus "systems" change, see Gilpin (1981, pp. 39–43).
3. As he stated on 11 October 2000, during the second presidential debate with his Democratic rival, Vice-President Al Gore.
4. For the claim that the Western allies share a "collective identity", see Risse-Kappen (1995).
5. The first expression was attributed to Richard Haass, director of policy planning at the State Department; the second sprang from the keyboard of William Safire.
6. This is not the only manner in which power can be assessed; a major competing usage has power as a synonym for influence, the expression of which is rendered in the familiar formula of "A's ability to get B to do that which B would not ordinarily wish to do". For this alternative, see Baldwin (1989, chapter 7).
7. For a rare exception, see Mamère and Warin (1999, p. 12). For a brilliant critique of Yalta myths (France's and others') see Plokhy (2010).

8. Misnamed, because of course most of Canada's population back then lived, just as it does today, *south* of the fabled 49th, so that whatever else this parallel of latitude is supposed to conjure up, it should never be taken to represent the most accurate line of *demographic* division between Canadians and their southern neighbors.
9. Those were the War of the League of Augsburg (1689–1697), brought to a close with the treaty of Ryswick, and known in North America as King William's War; the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713), ending with the treaty of Utrecht, called in North America Queen Anne's War; the War of the Austrian Succession (1744–1748), ending with the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, known in North America as King George's War; and the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), better remembered in North America as the French and Indian War, and terminated with the treaty of Paris, ceding Canada to England. See Duroselle (1976, pp. 11–12).
10. For alarmist perspectives on the threat of Europe-based Islamists, see Lebl (2010), Bawer (2006), Broder (2006) and Laqueur (2007).

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