

From Parkman to Pearson: Historical context and the transformation of Quebec's strategic culture

International Journal
0(0) 1–13

© The Author(s) 2020

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/0020702020979297

journals.sagepub.com/home/ijx**David G. Haglund**Department of Political Studies, Queen's University,
Kingston (Ontario), Canada**Stéphane Roussel**Department of Political Studies, Ecole Nationale
d'Administration Publique, Montreal (Quebec), Canada**Abstract**

“Strategic culture” is one of those conceptual bridges that link history with political science because, among other reasons, it reminds us of the hold that memories of past events can continue to exercise upon contemporary reality. But those memories are always subjective, sometimes downplayed to the point of nearly being forgotten altogether, at other times so overstated as to yield a highly distorted sense of the past and of its relationship to the present. This article constitutes a revisit of contemporary Quebec strategic culture, from the perspective of historical memory. That strategic culture has of late been so strongly stamped with the impress of a “Pearsonian internationalism” that it becomes easy for analysts to confuse it with “pacifism.” Yet it has also been a strategic culture that stems from a great deal of historical amnesia. What has been effaced from the collective memory is the long period in which war was endemic in New France—the period that gives the lie to the notion of Quebecers somehow being a “pacifistic” folk. This was the sanguinary era upon which the historian

Corresponding author:

David G. Haglund, Mackintosh-Corry Hall C329, Queen's University, 68 University Avenue, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, K7L 3N6.

Email: david.haglund@queensu.ca

Francis Parkman focused such a large share of his prodigious intellectual energies. Only the closing act of this era seems to have escaped erasure from Quebec's collective memory. Indeed, that act, which took place on the Plains of Abraham, has been "remembered" only too well. So well has it been recollected, in fact, that it has fostered within Quebec society the unshakable conviction that, for Quebeckers, war must always be a risky undertaking susceptible of leading to catastrophe.

Keywords

Quebec, Parkman, Pearson, Canadian Foreign Policy, strategic culture

Introduction

Those who knew Greg Donaghy know that he was a historian who very much appreciated the chance to collaborate with political scientists, ourselves included.¹ And we very much appreciated Greg's tolerance of the likes of us, for it is not always the case that members of the "senior" discipline (history) take such a benignant attitude toward specialists in International Relations (IR) who hail from the ranks of social science. While in recent years there has been a growing recognition on the part of many scholars that mutually beneficial collaboration really is the way forward, there remain pockets of resistance to the idea of breaking down disciplinary silos.² Political scientists, it is well known, sometimes adopt a supercilious air when reflecting upon the contributions historians make to IR, deeming them to be so focused upon individual trees as to be incapable of comprehending the meaning of a forest. And historians have not been shy about returning fire,³ often sensing that political scientists are so addicted to theorizing reality as to be unable to recognize it when they see it. To more than a few historians, we can appear to be a bunch of sloppy, baffle-gabbing pretenders, who suffer from an added defect that stems from a proclivity to "apply" history to the contemplation of contemporary problems—a proclivity sometimes denounced as "presentism," "historicism," or, much worse, "Whiggism."⁴

-
1. See, for one instance of our collaboration, David G. Haglund and Stéphane Roussel, "Escott Reid, the North Atlantic Treaty, and Canadian Strategic Culture," in Greg Donaghy and Stéphane Roussel, eds., *Escott Reid: Diplomat and Scholar* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 44–66.
 2. The case for interdisciplinary reconciliation has been made in Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, eds., *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001). For an intriguing critique of this book, see Ian Clark, "International Relations: Divided by a common language?" *Government and Opposition* 37, no. 2 (April 2002): 271–279.
 3. For one delightfully witty critique of political scientists, see John Lewis Gaddis, "History, theory, and common ground," *International Security* 22, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 75–85.
 4. There are two manners of construing the nature of "Whig" history. In one usage, past events are analyzed from the vantage point not of their own era but of the present; in another, the present is construed as the unavoidable outcome of past events, with a normative imputation, viz., that

Fortunately for us, Greg was not like that. Just the opposite: he enjoyed disciplinary “silo-busting” every bit as much as we do. Moreover, it was crucial for Greg to tell a story that was significant for francophones and to make sure that their perspective was always taken into account.

So with the aim of honouring his life’s work in this article, we are going to demolish a few silos of our own and revisit a period when Canada was called New France, by tapping into “historical context” in a bid to shed light on some of the peculiarities of Quebec’s “strategic culture” (a concept we elaborate upon in our next section). Perhaps the most peculiar of those peculiarities is to be found in the historical-contextual dimension of *memory*. In this season of racial and societal disquiet, many in the US, Canada, and elsewhere have found poignancy in Faulkner’s oft-cited aphorism about the enduring presence of the past, expressed in Stevens’ remark to Temple, that “the past is never dead. It’s not even past.”⁵ Yet if this is so, we wonder how Quebec’s history has been allowed to become so effectively redacted (to use a contemporary euphemism) as to lead many if not most observers, both English- and French-speaking, to stumble terribly when they try to come to grips with its strategic culture.

For Quebec, as a society in North America, was very much born into, and for generations remained an active practitioner of, warfare. It was not just any kind of warfare that featured so centrally in Quebec’s past. It was the particularly brutal variant of fighting to which more recent generations would affix the label, “ethnic conflict.” And yet, such is the absence of any collective memory of the province’s “deep” past that Quebecers, and others, are sometimes prone to idealize that past in terms bearing absolutely no correspondence with empirical reality. *Mutatis mutandis*, we might characterize the historical absence of memory about Quebec’s formative period of existence in the way that Gore Vidal once summed up his fellow Americans’ understanding of their own history: “We are the United States of Amnesia.”⁶

Hence the title we have chosen for our article. “Parkman” represents the amnesia surrounding that formative period, when Quebec was so centrally involved in that generations-long global struggle for empire many scholars refer to as the period of the intercolonial wars (though there were other instances of conflict involving New France outside of these wars).⁷ It was upon the four intercolonial

history connotes the notion of a march of progress. See Cameron G. Thies, “A pragmatic guide to qualitative historical analysis in the study of International Relations,” *International Studies Perspectives* 3, no. 4 (November 2002): 351–372, at 360.

5. William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Random House, 1951), 92.

6. Jeremy Ravinsky, “12 Gore Vidal Foreign Policy Quotes,” *GlobalPost*, 1 August 2012, available at <https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-08-01/12-gore-vidal-foreign-policy-quotes>.

7. These were the War of the League of Augsburg (1689–97), the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–13); the War of the Austrian Succession (1744–48), and the Seven Years’ War (1756–63). See Howard H. Peckham, *The Colonial Wars, 1689–1762* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); and Ian Kenneth Steele, *Guerillas and Grenadiers: The Struggle for Canada, 1689-1760* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969).

wars that the famous, and fecund, American historian, Francis Parkman, focused the lion's share of his own scholarly curiosity.⁸ "Pearson" conjures up quite a different image—of Quebec as a society given, if not to "pacifism," then certainly committed to the principles of multilateralism and peaceful resolution of conflict.⁹ How, we wonder, did it come about that such a selective memory could make such a mark upon Quebec strategic culture? In so framing our research question, we do not mean to judge (though our preferences would obviously be for a world more in keeping with Pearsonian than Parkmanian norms). Instead, we want to do something else: to utilize historical context in a bid to bring a bit of clarification to debates about Quebec's strategic culture. We want to know what it is that Quebecers have chosen to remember about their strategic past, and why they have done so, when it comes to the manner in which their strategic present and future is contemplated.

Our article is divided into three substantive sections and a conclusion. The section immediately following this introduction is a theoretical inquiry into the manner in which historical context and strategic culture might be said to be inter-related. We are each currently wrestling with this fascinating but vexing interrelationship between history and culture in respective research programs, Haglund's on the France–US relationship and Roussel's on Quebec's strategic culture. Section three turns to an examination of the deep past, that "Parkmanian" period in Quebec history. This period—until its final act, at least—might be considered the great absentee from Quebecers' historical memory. Evidence of this absence can be glimpsed in a remarkable claim made in 1990, five years before the most recent referendum on sovereignty. Just as at the time of the previous decade's referendum on sovereignty, when some observers had been hoping that a Scandinavian-style "civilized" breakup of Canada might be managed,¹⁰ so too, this second time around, analogical recourse was had to the experience of the European Nordics. Philosopher Jacques Dufresne took heart from the peaceful fashion in which Norway had arranged to separate from Sweden in 1905 and saw a powerful message therein, one from which sovereigntists could draw great succour. "When they are consumed with self-doubt concerning the legitimacy of their claim to be a sovereign people," he reminded them, "Quebeckers would do well to recall . . . that in the great family of nations there exist some, rare to be sure, in which national sentiment is unblemished by any criminal violence, and thus possesses a perfect legitimacy. In Europe, Norway . . . comes closest to this ideal. And were we

8. See Laurence Cros, "Histoire, lyrisme et mythe: La Nouvelle-France et la Nouvelle-Angleterre dans l'œuvre de Francis Parkman," *Écrire l'histoire* 2 (Autumn 2008): 131–140; Mason Wade, *Francis Parkman: Heroic Historian* (New York: Viking, 1942); and Wilbur R. Jacobs, *Francis Parkman: Historian as Hero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991).

9. See Stéphane Roussel and Jean-Christophe Boucher, "The myth of the pacific society: Quebec's contemporary strategic culture," in Duane Bratt and Christopher J. Kukucha, eds., *Readings in Canadian Foreign Policy: Classic Debates and New Ideas*, 308–325 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2015).

10. For this aspiration, see Jane Jacobs, *The Question of Separation: Quebec and the Struggle Over Sovereignty* (New York: Random House, 1980), 51.

to rank nations according to their possession of an innocent past, distant as well as recent, then Quebec, too, would figure at the head of the list.”¹¹

We will refrain from dwelling on the irony of anyone imagining that the Norwegians, whose ancestors were *Vikings*, might be regarded as paragons of historical innocence. But we do want to spend some time showing why Dufresne’s comment about Quebec’s “unblemished” past is so shocking. Following our examination of the deep (and very blemished) past, we turn in our penultimate section to a different past—the one that has never died in the collective memory of Quebecers—and in this section we ask, provocatively to be sure, whether the obsession with the Conquest has contributed to a certain style of strategic culture? Is there, to put it somewhat crassly, something to the claim that Quebec has developed a strategic culture for losers?

Prior to embarking on our search for the cause(s) of the selective amnesia that envelops Quebec’s strategic culture, we need to inject some theory (we are, after all, political scientists) and contextualizing analysis. To that task, we now turn.

A bit of theorizing and historical contextualizing

We intend in these pages to treat strategic culture more as cause than as effect, seeing it as an “independent variable” (in social-science speak) capable of influencing strategic choice—choice that, in its own right, might also bear a “cultural” impress. Admittedly, our doing so renders us susceptible to tautological reasoning of the sort that holds culture to be the source of culture. Nevertheless, we will follow the lead of Alistair Iain Johnston and regard culture to be, as he puts it,

an integrated system of symbols (i.e., argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors, etc.) that acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting grand strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious.¹²

It will be our claim in this article that the “lessons of history” as they have been assimilated by public intellectuals and popular opinion—and not just in Quebec—constitute precisely the kind of “integrated system of symbols” about which Johnston writes, in his own work on strategic culture (in his case, that of China). Our objective will be to show what it is that these figures choose to remember, what it is they choose to forget, and what the purpose of their choices has been.

11. Jacques Dufresne, *Le Courage et la lucidité: Essai sur la constitution du Québec souverain* (Sillery: Septentrion, 1990), 28 (unless otherwise specified, all translations from the French are ours).

12. Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 36–37.

The much-commented “cultural” turn in IR that occurred around the time of the Cold War’s ending is sometimes said to be, as well, a “historical” turn.¹³ Importantly, it is also said that history “constitutes” identity, which is a core concept for constructivists, many of whom have figured largely in the evolving scholarly corpus on strategic culture. To know who you now are, you must have some idea about what you think you once were; hence, you must canvass the past for clues. But in doing so, you import into that past very current ideas (or desires) about contemporary realities; in a word, you sift through the past in a bid to discover the most “usable” history for your present purposes, retrofitting past events in such a way as to render them meaningful for articulating and advancing current policy desires. In this fashion, as Jonathan Friedman explains, history matters because “[m]aking history is a way of producing identity.” Phrased differently, “history is an imprinting of the present onto the past.”¹⁴

So here is expressed one means of interpreting historical context in the abovementioned Faulknerian sense: history creates contemporary social meaning, even though this meaning is necessarily shrouded in myth (not necessarily to be confused with outright falsehoods).¹⁵ History cannot stay dead because we need it to be alive. But as a result of this presentist impulse, so much of the contextualization of Quebec’s past suffers from selection bias; the part of that past that happens to fortify the desired contemporary message about Quebec’s strategic culture is stressed and recycled, while that part of the past that confutes or otherwise embarrasses the contemporary message can be conveniently written off as of no account. In this view, then, the events of the intercolonial wars, the setting for what in French is sometimes called *la Petite Guerre*, mainly serve as a mere afterthought for what truly matters, which is the closing chapter of those long-running conflicts, memorialized in the “Conquest.”

Contemplating Quebec’s strategic culture as we propose to do allows us to put the emphasis more on *change* than on continuity. This is in keeping with recent trends among scholars interested in exploring strategic culture, irrespective of whose culture it may happen to be. These scholars want to understand transformation rather than stability.¹⁶ Our study of New France and the Conquest

13. On the divers “turns” the discipline of IR was said to be making, see Morten Valbjørn, “Before, during and after the cultural turn: A ‘Baedeker’ to IR’s cultural journey,” *International Review of Sociology/Revue Internationale de Sociologie* 18, no. 1 (March 2008): 55–82; Terrence J. McDonald, ed., *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); and Pedro Aires Oliviera, Bruno Cardoso Reis, and Patrick Finney, “The cultural turn and beyond in international history,” *International History Review* 40, no. 3 (June 2018): 573–575.

14. Jonathan Friedman, “The past in the future: History and the politics of identity,” *American Anthropologist* 94, no. 4 (December 1992): 837–859, at 837.

15. On the unavoidable reliance upon myth in historical reconstructions, see William H. McNeill, “Mythistory, or truth, myth, history, and historians,” *American Historical Review* 91, no. 1 (February 1986): 1–10; and Cyril Buffet and Beatrice Heuser, eds., *Haunted By History: Myths in International Relations* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1998).

16. Alan Bloomfield, “Time to move on: Reconceptualizing the strategic culture debate,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 33, no. 3 (December 2012): 437–461; and David G. Haglund, “What can strategic culture contribute to our understanding of security policies in the Asia-Pacific region?” *Contemporary Security Policy* 35, no. 2 (August 2014): 310–328.

provides a case in point, for what we explore is nothing other than the radical, even brutal, transformation of Quebec's strategic culture. In approaching things as we do, we part company from some current modes of analysis that shine the spotlight on "strategic subcultures"; instead, we return to an older, more classical, analytic perspective, in which the focus is placed upon the notion of a "traumatizing shock" so powerful as effectively to erase older cultural tropes and replace those with substantially new and opposing ones.

The "Parkmanian" roots of contemporary Quebec's strategic culture

The place to begin this section is with the record of the four intercolonial wars introduced earlier.

Those wars, which have to be considered as instances of ethnic conflict *avant la lettre*,¹⁷ have been largely forgotten in the construction of the myth(s) surrounding Quebec's strategic culture, just as they have escaped from memory in English Canada and the US. But if ethnic conflict implies trying to "cleanse" a territory of a certain ethnic groups or to prevent a non-desired ethnic group from establishing a territorial presence in the first place, then this label assuredly applies to those early wars. It is easy to see why this is so: they were conflicts the stakes of which were territorial control, conducted through means that could easily, in today's context, be adjudged war crimes. But the amnesia surrounding those wars is less easy to excuse, for it has contributed to a distorted understanding of the present. Indeed, one of the most tenacious myths regarding Quebec holds that it is and has always been a place inhabited by a firmly pacifistic folk, not only refusing to pick up arms in their own behalf but also opposing efforts of Canadians in other parts of the country to support military interventions.¹⁸ This stance is sometimes associated with another security dispensation, dubbed "anti-imperialist internationalism."¹⁹ Some adherents to this latter version will tell us that Quebeckers are the very guardians of Pearsonian orthodoxy, with its emphasis upon commitments to international institutions, as well as its exaltation of disinterested peace-keeping and diplomatic activism.

For sure, Quebeckers were hardly the sole champions, much less the originators, of Pearsonianism. English Canadians also have cultivated strong leanings in this

17. For a critique of the very concept of "ethnic conflict," see Bruce Gilley, "Against the concept of ethnic conflict," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 6 (September 2004): 1155–1166. For a defence of the concept, cf. Jerry Z. Muller, "Us and them: The enduring power of ethnic nationalism," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 2 (March/April 2008): 18–35.

18. Serge Mongeau, *Pour un pays sans armée* (Montréal: Éd. Écosociété, 1993), 81–89. For commentaries on this and other similar claims, see Antoine Robitaille, "Quebeckers: A pacifist people?" *Inroads* 14 (Winter/Spring 2004): 62–75; and J. L. Granatstein, *Whose War is It? How Canada Can Survive in the Post-9/11 World* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2007), 136–163.

19. Justin Massie and Jean-Christophe Boucher, "Militaristes et anti-impérialistes: Les Québécois face à la sécurité internationale," *Études internationales* 64, no. 3 (September 2013): 359–85; Roussel and Boucher, "Myth of the pacific society."

direction over the course of several decades. But what most sets Quebec strategic culture apart from versions popular in the rest of Canada is a function of history—more properly, of the way in which historical events have been remembered and *forgotten* in collective consciousness. To be good today, it helps to have had the kind of good (as in unblemished) past that Jacques Dufresne and others believe existed. And nothing puts a greater moral seal of approval upon a collectivity's past than the fact of its victimhood, which is an easy (and not inaccurate) way of interpreting the consequences of the Conquest.

Those consequences, it is held, go a long way to explaining why it is that Quebecers had been on such different pages from their co-citizens elsewhere in Canada when it came to such issues as participation in the Boer War as well as the First and Second World Wars. Some argue that this memory of victimization, with its strong “anti-imperialist” overtones, is also responsible for engendering within Quebec a heightened degree of opposition to interventions mounted by the US, in comparison with levels of opposition elsewhere in Canada.

One scholar has even suggested that Quebec's strategic culture is marked by a “small-nation code.”²⁰ If it does bear the impress of such a code, however, it can be owing only partly to a very selective (and empirically egregious) rendering of Quebec's past. By definition, Quebec's history as having been “born” a precinct of the French empire sets it apart from the historical roots of English Canada, embedded as those have been in the soil of a different (British) empire. So to understand more completely Quebec's strategic culture, it will not do simply to look at those more recent instances highlighted above, in which Quebecers seem to have cut a distinct figure for themselves within the context of global interventions involving the British, and more latterly, the American empires. Instead, we propose to deepen the historical inquiry into Quebec strategic culture by turning to the part of the past that has mainly been erased from collective consciousness and to try to glean therefrom some insights appertaining to Quebec's strategic culture. Specifically, we want to ask: what has been the consequence for Quebec's strategic culture of the era when it was “New France”? In other words, what is the legacy of Quebec's “Parkmanian” period of existence?

This period extended from the very beginnings of the seventeenth century to the Peace of Paris of 1763, ending the last of the intercolonial wars. During this long span of years, peace was an anomaly and warfare was the norm. As is well known, this period ended with what, for Quebecers, was a catastrophe that would set them on a future course decidedly different from that of their recent past, to such an extent that Quebec society would “finesse” the collective recollection of its history so effectively as to expunge, with notable exceptions, most memories of its bellicose past, in favour of a reading of that history focusing like a laser beam upon one event almost to the exclusiveness of all other happenings. That event, of course, was the Conquest, the “meaning” of which has entailed a never-ending

20. See Paul C. Adams, “The September 11 attacks as viewed from Quebec: The small-nation code in geopolitical discourse,” *Political Geography* 23, no. 6 (August 2004): 765–795.

process of political introspection, out of which would develop, in the popular mind, a much different image of Quebec as having been a peaceful land in full resonance with what would become the Pearsonian “imaginary.”

We hasten to add that this historical bowdlerizing has decidedly *not* been the doing of Quebec’s historians. As one of the most prominent of this group, Jean-Yves Gravel, has observed of the long Parkmanian era, “it was the most troubled period in our entire history.” New France, which resembled nothing so much as a gigantic, if thinly populated, military encampment, experienced scarcely fifty years of peace between its founding and the Conquest more than a century and a half later. In a memorable passage, Gravel left us with the indelible imagery of the daily life of the sturdy yeoman farmer, “tilling his fields with the musket strapped to the plow.”²¹ Instead, popular historical memories have reflected an ontological itch to seat Quebec at the side of the angels. Nothing captured this desire better than the song, “La Sainte Paix,” whose lyrics tell of a blessed place where peace had only rarely been disturbed and in which militarist passions had never managed to establish their nefarious presence:

J’viens d’un pays tranquille

Qui n’a jamais vu de missiles

Icette du temps quand on s’ battait

C’était à coups de mousquets²²

Admittedly, the lyricist’s mention of muskets does signal the realization that some denizens of this blessed place must once have borne arms, but the context in which the reference appears, with the marked normative differentiation of one means of killing (muskets) from another means of killing (missiles), serves merely to further the angelic thesis. And while it is obvious that muskets are not in the same destructive category of missiles, the invocation of this contrast produces the result the lyricist desired: it is hard to take seriously the idea that people armed so lightly could ever have been particularly warlike.

As noted above, the reality of New France was radically different from the irenic imagery of the song. War—engaging in it, preparing for it, thinking about it—was ever present in the daily existence of the inhabitants of New France.²³ Their way of life depended upon willingness to resort to force and skillfulness in employing it. The fur trade, which was at the centre of the colony’s economy, was

21. Jean-Yves Gravel, “Présentation,” *Le Québec et la guerre* (Montréal: Éd. Boréal, 1974), 5. Also see Louise Dechêne, *Le Peuple, l’État et la guerre au Canada sous le Régime français* (Montréal: Éd. Boréal, 2008), 61–92.

22. Les Cowboys fringants, *La sainte paix*, 2002.

23. Dechêne, *Le Peuple*; W.J. Eccles, “The social, economic, and political significance of the military establishment in New France,” *Canadian Historical Review* 52, no. 1 (March 1971): 1–22.

one reason that conflict came to play such a leading role. It not only exacerbated pre-existing rivalries among Indigenous groups eager to gain control of the richest zones of the trade, it also drew the French colonizers deeper into the North American continent, where they could establish a string of forts intended to defend their commercial and other interests.

War, of course, had already been a reality in North America prior to the arrival of the Europeans; the latter were able to exploit tribal rivalries by a bit of alliance-building. A case in point is the *Grande Alliance* arranged by Samuel de Champlain after his arrival in May 1603, by which the French sealed a commercial and military agreement between themselves and the Innu and their allies, at the “tabagie de Tadoussac.”²⁴ This entente was to have enormous significance because, in providing the newly arrived French with a built-in network of allies (the Abenaki, Algonquin, Etchemin, Huron, Montagnais, and Outaouais), it also endowed them with a suite of powerful enemies among the members of the Iroquois Confederation (the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca). Rivalry between New France and the Iroquois would recur over the course of a century and more, and it would serve to reinforce the bonds created in 1603 with the Indigenous foes of the Iroquois.

Tribal hostilities flared up most notably in the 1640s, culminating in 1649 when Iroquois warriors laid waste to Huronia, and came close to wiping out their enemies. The French, too, found themselves constantly under Iroquois threat, with whom fighting would persist until 1667 and then, following an armistice of a decade and a half, would erupt once more in 1684, lasting until 1701. Significant incidents during the post-1640 decades included the stand made by Dollard des Ormeaux at Long-Sault in 1660, the Lachine massacre of August 1689, and, especially, the bloody reprisal raid mounted against the Dutch settlement of Schenectady, in New York’s Mohawk Valley, early in 1690. The latter can be considered the opening act of the lengthy period of the intercolonial wars, which concluded with the Conquest and the Treaty of Paris in 1763.²⁵

Whenever there was fighting in Europe involving England and France, there was bound to be fighting in North America, pitting New England and other regions against New France. Though there were episodes of raiding and skirmishing between the European foes that predated the onset of the intercolonial wars in 1689, for the most part we think of those latter conflicts as epitomizing ethnic conflict in North America.²⁶ All of this testifies to the reality that, whatever else may have characterized the existence of New France, it was decidedly not the haven of peace so routinely entertained in the popular imagination. The current denizens of Quebec may and do have a pronounced penchant for peace, but this is not something they inherited from their ancestors.

24. Éric Bédard, “La Grande Tabagie de 1603, vrai début de la présence française au Canada,” broadcast as part of Radio Canada’s *Aujourd’hui l’histoire*, 29 November 2019.

25. Thomas E. Burke Jr., *Mohawk Frontier: The Dutch Community of Schenectady, New York, 1661–1710* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

26. Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007).

It is not just *that* those ancestors fought; it is also *how* they waged war, alongside their Indigenous allies, and against a foe whose own appetite for ethnic conflict matched theirs. Frequently the objective of military campaigns was nothing other than to slaughter hapless civilians, with the intention of “cleansing” the adversary’s people from frontier zones of settlement. Both sides waged war in this same sanguinary fashion, adopting the pattern epitomized in the Lachine massacre. The pattern would continue throughout the ensuing conflicts. The way of war adopted in North America may not have been original with the continent, but it did mark a departure from what were thought of—by people who lacked any knowledge of the horror of the Thirty Years’ War—as being “traditional” European norms of “civilized” warfare.²⁷

And while the French and their Indigenous allies did not have a monopoly of this mode of warfare, there was no apparent aversion to practices such as torturing captives and annihilating civilian populations, to say nothing of kidnapping children and bringing them up among their captor’s communities. These practices might horrify us today, but they were rather normal back then, and they were considered the hallmark of the “Petite Guerre.” Thus, if one wants to investigate the deep origins of Quebec’s strategic culture, the place to begin is with this form of warfare, which has been well documented by historians, especially those with an interest in the history of military strategy.²⁸ Notwithstanding this admirable corpus of research, it has left hardly a trace on the collective imaginary of current generations of Quebecers. Why has this been so? We advance some explanations in our next section.

A strategic culture of the losers?

Above, we have hinted at some possible explanations for the exaltation of Pearsonianism over Parkmanianism. Pacifism, the “small-nation” code, or even the manner in which the study of history has evolved in Quebec and elsewhere, with an increased interest in social to the detriment of military history—all these reasons can be, and have been, invoked.²⁹ But there is also a very partial “Faulknerian” explanation, one that needs to efface most of the deep history so as to generate a usable history for contemporary identity purposes. This explanation is rarely vocalized, but when it is, it has been known to trigger a sense of malaise. Does Quebec have, to say again, a strategic culture of losers?

What we mean to imply through our use of this charged word, losers, is that the collective imaginary seems to have cherry-picked the closing act of the lengthy

27. See Simon Adams and Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years’ War, 1618–1648*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1997).

28. For example, see Arnaud Balvay, *L’épée et la plume: Amérindiens et soldats des troupes de la marine en Louisiane et au Pays d’en Haut (1683–1763)* (Quebec City: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 2006); and Laurent Nerich, *La petite guerre et la chute de la Nouvelle-France* (Montreal: Athéna Éd., 2009).

29. See, especially, Yves Tremblay, “L’enseignement de l’histoire militaire au Québec,” *L’action nationale* 99, no. 9–10 (November/December 2009): 178–189.

Parkmanian period of Quebec's history so as to highlight the Conquest as the first, and by far most important, of the two formative moments in Quebec's strategic culture (the second being the conscription crisis of 1917). The past that never dies in that collective consciousness is the one symbolized by the Plains of Abraham, with scant attention to all that went before. The painful memory of that fateful battle of 13 September 1759 has so "imprinted the present onto the past" (to borrow Jonathan Friedman's expression) as to constitute a central—indeed some would say, *the* central—referent of Quebec's strategic culture.

The Battle of the Plains of Abraham can be taken to represent the "zero hour" of Quebecers' strategic culture, the moment that effaced memory of all that had come before, insofar as concerned the part played by warfare in society's evolution. Making the defeat even more catastrophic was the manner in which it seemed to signal that there could never be any undoing of the trauma. For sure, there would be future resurgences of insurrectionary violence—that of the *Patriotes* in 1837–38, and again of the Métis in 1869–70, and 1885—but these served only to ratify the verdict of the Conquest: history could not be changed. But how history was remembered could be, and *was*, changed. An increasingly pacifistic past was being "remembered" by a society eager to convert an insufferable defeat into an unmistakable virtue.

In this new rendering of the past, the Conquest has even provided, for some, a second ontological boost, one focused not so much on defeat as on what they like to believe was the "real" cause of the defeat—the craven "abandonment" of New France by France. For a few of those who romanticize Quebec's deep history so as to wipe out all traces of the earlier warrior nation it had once been in favour of the more irenic place that it became, the French are to be blamed. After all, according to the redacted version of history, the defeat on the Plains of Abraham was really a *French* defeat, and not one of the *Canadiens*. Thus would the legacy of losing do double duty for Quebec strategic culture. It would enshrine a sense of having been victimized by history—a sense that could only redound to later efforts of self-validation, such as the one offered by the "Cowboys fringants." Perhaps even better, in positioning France as a significant Other in the collective imaginary, the Conquest sowed seeds that would later grow into another sustaining myth of strategic culture—the myth of "abandonment," which would endure well into the twentieth century.³⁰

This latter myth was fortified by the departure of French military elites after 1759, removing the last standard bearers of what had been the strategic culture of New France. Thus did war, along with the apparatus of war, disappear from the collective imaginary of French Canadians. Henceforth, war and its apparatus would be *English* affairs. Not until the last third of the twentieth century would

30. On this sustaining myth, see David G. Haglund and Justin Massie, "'Tout recommence en '40': Le retour de la France dans la culture stratégique du Québec et du Canada," in Stéphane Roussel and Greg Donaghy, eds., *Mission Paris: Les ambassadeurs du Canada en France et le triangle Ottawa-Québec-Paris*, 135–161 (Montréal: Hurtubise, 2012).

there take place any fundamental reassessment, on the part of Quebec society, of the role that force might play in international relations. And even then, the reassessing would be enshrined within a Pearsonian framework.

Conclusions

From our brief overview of a changing strategic culture in Quebec, we draw two chief conclusions. First, radically transforming a strategic culture requires that the actual past be kept dead, so that a counterfactual past might draw life.³¹ Not only must the historical past be prevented from living, but it must also be creatively reassessed so as to endow the present with a more tolerable reality. In the case of Quebec, we have argued, that creativity has yielded an image of an inherently peaceful folk, who have *always* been so irenically disposed.

Our second main conclusion is that Quebec's experience possesses significance for the study of how strategic cultures can and do change. Quebec's is one of those instances (rare, to be sure), in which we can say that traumatic events managed to dethrone the dominant strategic culture without at the same time summoning forth any suitable alternative strategic culture capable of generating a cognitive reconfiguration of the role that force might continue to have in foreign policy. Not surprisingly, until fairly recently, it was natural for Quebeckers to jettison altogether the military aspect of statecraft from their calculations and instead to embrace patterns of thought and of behaviour that some have linked (perhaps erroneously) to pacifism, antimilitarism, isolationism, and anti-imperialism.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Author biographies

David Haglund is Professor of Political Studies at Queen's University.

Stéphane Roussel is Professor of Political Science at École nationale d'Administration publique (ENAP).

31. Thomas U. Berger, *Culture of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).