

Stephen Harper and Canada's Politics of Identity

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Abstract

The leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, Stephen Harper, led his party to victories in 2006 and 2008. Those historic victories ended a dominance of the Liberal Party that had persisted for most of the Twentieth Century. As a result, many questions have arisen regarding the future of the party system and the politics of Canada. What is Harper's vision of Canada and its future? Do other Canadians share his perspective? What are the long-term implications of Harper's government? We argue that a majority-seeking Harper aspires to wrest Canadian nationalism and identity politics from the left and reclaim them as conservative causes like they are elsewhere.

Introduction

Canada's Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper secured re-election and a second consecutive minority government in October 2008 with an enhanced share of popular votes and parliamentary seats, leaving him just twelve MPs short of the 155 needed for a majority. Harper's first minority had lasted a record-setting thirty-one months. An economist from Calgary, Alberta, Harper holds right-wing views on Canada's identity by honoring individual responsibility, limited government and decentralized federalism. Michael Ignatieff, the opposition Liberal party leader and Harper's possible successor, perceives Canada's identity very differently. Ignatieff has embraced a rights discourse arising from Canada's cultural diversities. We survey the identity politics context in which they operate. He wishes to change the perception that

his party is “the only conservative party of the world that isn’t the party of patriotism” (Simpson and Laghi 2008). By contrast, Harper’s vision for Canada may not be as clear, raising many questions about the direction in which he seeks to take the country.

To help us address these questions, we describe and analyze three identity models currently on offer for Canadians’ consideration: Canada as a decentralized federation of relatively autonomous individuals and provinces which operates in world affairs as a faithful ally of the United States (Harper’s position); Canada as a diverse multicultural society defined by mutual respect for rights (Ignatieff’s position); and Canada as a North American alternative to the United States whose identity arises partly from its superiority.

The Harper Model: Canada as a Decentralized Federation and Faithful Ally

Harper has accelerated the ongoing trend towards increased provincial power with his “open federalism” policy. Besides Harper, this model has supporters in Paul Romney and in Mike Harris and Preston Manning. Romney, a historian, argues that Canada’s 1867 Confederation was a deal between autonomy-minded Quebecers and equally autonomist Ontario Reformers which founded a federal-provincial “coordinate sovereignty.” For example, Reform leader George Brown’s *Globe* newspaper endorsed giving the new Dominion’s provinces ample powers and full control over them (Romney 1999, 91-94). Confederation represented the marriage of distinct but complementary Upper and Lower Canada compact theories (Romney 1999, 283). Romney denounces certain English Canadian historians, notably Donald Creighton, for their “biased history” exaggerating John A. Macdonald’s importance and his well-known preference for a centralized state (Romney 1999, 83-108). According to Romney, this inaccurate and damaging interpretation has emboldened successive federal governments to violate provincial autonomy and precipitate threats to national survival like Quebec’s sovereignty movement. English Canadian nationalism and centralist historians have impeded English Canadians’ appreciation of

coordinate sovereignty's historical basis. But coordinate sovereignty still prevails amongst Quebecers (Romney 1999, 277). For Romney, there can be no national unity until all Canadians respect the same history—in this case, coordinate sovereignty. Romney quotes Bishop Desmond Tutu that “if you don't have some accepted history the chances are you will not gel as a community” (Romney 1999, 277).

Beyond question, Romney is correct about Quebecers' firmly entrenched view of Confederation. Quebec's pro-Confederation leaders of the time proclaimed that the provinces “will be sovereign in all matters which are specifically assigned to them,” as Joseph Cauchon put it (Ajzenstat et al. 1999, 312). George-Etienne Cartier, Quebec's “father of autonomy” (LeBlanc 2008), assured Quebecers that their “particular rights and interests should be properly guarded and protected” (Ajzenstat et al. 1999, 285). The 1956 “Tremblay” Quebec Royal Commission Report declared flatly that Canada's 1867 constitution “made the Province of Quebec...the French-Canadian centre *par excellence*, and the accredited guardian for French-Canadian civilization” (Royal Commission into Constitutional Problems 1956, I: 66). Quebec's subsequent “Quiet Revolution” built upon this constitutional foundation with its demands for freedom from federal interference. English Canadian historians' familiar argument that Cartier and his fellow *bleus* willingly founded a “highly centralized state” despite their rhetoric still enjoys currency elsewhere, but not in Quebec (Dickinson and Young 2008, 190).

Harris and Manning, in their “Canada Strong and Free” project with Vancouver's free-market Fraser Institute, implicitly apply Romney's history lesson to the federal-provincial relationship. They appeal for a “rebalanced federalism” of equal provinces and equal Canadians. Under rebalanced federalism, Ottawa will stop its intrusions into provincial jurisdictions so resented in Quebec and the West. This will relieve the “dis-unifying tensions that afflict Canada” which federal energy policies and social programs in

provincial fields like health, welfare, and education have aggravated (Harris and Manning 2007a, 223-224). These reforms will unleash the free market, enhance every Canadian's quality of life, and strengthen national unity by reducing federal taxes, regulation, and spending, all of which have grown much faster in Canada than in the United States since the late 1960s (Harris and Manning 2007a, 118-123).¹ In their conservative manifesto, Tasha Kheiriddin and Adam Daifallah similarly propose that the federal government promote personal responsibility, self-reliance, and freedom in a more competitive, entrepreneurial, and achievement-oriented society (Kheiriddin and Daifallah 2005, 247). Harris and Manning insist that their Canada can maintain unity. A rebalanced federation can identify and pursue common interests through inter-provincial "memorandums of understanding." These "flexible bonds woven among the provinces" can ensure each province's commitment to national objectives without Ottawa's involvement or interference (Harris and Manning 2007a, 225).

In foreign policy, Harris and Manning assert that the economic prosperity needed for national identity and unity requires a high level of cooperation and even integration between Canada and the United States. Even such sensitive matters as refugee acceptance policies and domestic cultural programs should be harmonized between the two countries (Harris and Manning 2007b, 46). Besides, Harris and Manning imply that these countries' national values and priorities construe the world around them similarly. It is their global *roles* that differ (Harris and Manning 2007b, 47). So, deeper integration need not endanger Canada's values, which they do not identify anyway (Harris and Manning 2007b, 63). Moreover, Canadians must be effective players in Washington to advance their security and prosperity (Harris and Manning 2007b, 67). Historian J. L. Granatstein agrees. Deploring Canada's failure to support the Iraq invasion, Granatstein argues that public disagreement with the United States "hurts us immeasurably with Congress, the administration, and the American media"

¹ Note the table at 121 on trends in Canadian and American government spending.

(Granatstein 2007, 90-93). Because “Canada simply cannot afford to alienate its largest customer, best friend, and ultimate defender”, Canadians must end their hostility to the United States and “get on with that country” –especially given the growing ill will towards Canada which Granatstein detects in the American political class and media (Granatstein 2007, 107-108).

Harper, who was once Manning’s protégé in the Reform party, evidently accepts the preceding four paragraphs’ arguments. Under Harper’s open federalism, Ottawa leaves provincial responsibilities alone. Moreover, our holder of two University of Calgary degrees in Economics endorses the philosophy of Austrian Friedrich Hayek. Hayek rejected government intervention in the economy for threatening personal freedom, but also because it interferes with the “spontaneous order” which prevails when people are left free to make their own choices in the marketplace and take the consequences of those decisions (Johnson 2006, 47). Because economies are self-correcting when left alone, and because state intrusion into economic decisions represents “the road to serfdom”, Hayek explicitly repudiated Keynesian economics (Johnson 2006, 46-48).² Harper admires the neo-liberal policies of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. He regrets that Canada’s leaders of their day, notably Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, failed to follow their tax- and regulation-cutting example (Johnson 2006, 49). But Harper surely appreciates that Mulroney’s record, which Kheiriddin and Daifallah criticize for lacking fiscal restraint, raising taxes, and more than doubling the national debt, suggests that Canada’s conservative heritage has handed a free-marketeer something of a poisoned chalice (Kheiriddin and Daifallah 2005, 21). Indeed, Kheiriddin and Daifallah denounce John A. Macdonald, the father of Canadian conservatism, as a non-ideological centralist, a supporter of government spending, and a drunk besides

² The expression “we are all Keynesians now” does *not* apply to Stephen Harper.

(Kheiriddin and Daifallah 2005, 5).³ Macdonald's successors as Conservative Prime Ministers, including John Diefenbaker and Joe Clark, fare scarcely better, at least in their (non-)ideology and spending policies (Kheiriddin and Daifallah 2005, 12). All in all, Canada's conservatism affords Harper little collective memory and few identity markers to exploit when seeking public support.⁴

For Robin Sears, Harper's Canada differs strikingly from the "caring and sharing society of peacekeepers" asserted by many Liberals since the Lester Pearson-Pierre Trudeau era. Harper's policy agenda, a "heterodox blend of conservatism, populism, and nationalism", features proud membership in the "Anglosphere" and a status as loyal ally of the United States, whenever possible also serving alongside Australia and the United Kingdom; a strong and respected military willing and able to use force to defend Canada's national and security interests (*not* to serve as non-combatant peacekeepers); a decentralized federation where Ottawa does not impose federal programs on Canada's provinces or cities; and a diverse, multicultural society – *but* one with common goals, values, and institutions rather than a cultural mosaic that celebrates differences (Sears 2007, 18).

Harper has proceeded cautiously for the most part. He respects his precarious minority position. He also accepts the advice of his University of Calgary mentor Tom Flanagan, who observes that Canada is not yet a conservative country. Flanagan counsels that winning a majority requires incrementalism and "moving towards the position of the median voter" (Flanagan 2006, 82-83; Flanagan 2007).⁵ In his 1996 "Winds of Change" speech to

³ This description differs somewhat from American conservatives' hagiographic portrayals of their Founding Fathers.

⁴ For a recent defense of the moderate, less ideological "Red" Toryism which Harper is trying to extirpate from his party, see Hugh Segal, "Balance is Part of Tory History." *Globe and Mail*, March 11, 2009.

⁵ Harper agrees. He advises Conservatives to be "tough and pragmatic, not unrealistic or ideological" in dealing with the economic downturn, Chase and Curry (2008).

a conservative conference at Calgary, Harper suggested that conservatives can take and hold power in Ottawa only when they simultaneously appeal to Flanagan's "three sisters": Western populists then in the Reform party, traditional Progressive Conservatives primarily in Ontario and Atlantic Canada, and Quebec's "soft" nationalists then supporting the Bloc Quebecois (Johnson 2006, 263-265, 431). Like Harris and Manning, Harper believes that Ottawa can relieve alienation in Quebec and the West by largely withdrawing from Canadians' lives. In his Calgary address, Harper proposed that Quebecers outside Montreal resemble Westerners. He explained Quebec sovereignty's appeal to "voters who would not be out of place in Red Deer, except that they speak French rather than English. They are nationalist for the same reason that Albertans are populist—they care about their local identity and the culture that nourishes it, *and they see the federal government as a threat to their way of life*" (Johnson 2006, 264).⁶

On foreign policy, Harper was "unequivocal" in his support for the Iraq invasion, which he saw as a test of Canada's resolve, reliability as an ally, and capacity to meet its responsibilities which Canada failed disgracefully. But Harper has said little about Iraq since taking office (Iverson 2007). In 2006, he "enthusiastically embraced" the NATO mission in Afghanistan and rhetorically aligned Canada with then-President George W. Bush and then-Prime Ministers Tony Blair and John Howard in NATO-led operations enforcing (in his words) a "fundamental vision of civilization and human values" worldwide (Eagles 2006; Steward 2009). Harper has assured Australia's Parliament that Canada stands proudly with the United States, Britain, and Australia in their "noble and necessary" defense of democracy over tyranny (de Sousa 2007). For Harper, to whom Lawrence Martin assigns an us-versus-them "clash of civilizations template" (Martin 2009a), Canadians' identity and patriotism lie in respecting their regional diversities, but especially in honoring moral imperatives which

⁶ Emphasis added. Red Deer is a conservative city in central Alberta.

bind them to their Anglospheric principles and to the global responsibilities these principles impose (Iverson 2006).

To a large extent, Harper, who pledges to “stand up for Canada”, is grounding his view of patriotism and identity on Canada’s military. Support for the Canadian Forces, who have suffered some 120 fatalities to date in NATO’s Afghanistan mission, is “something emotional” for Harper (Simpson and Laghi 2008). For some, Canada enjoys a proud military history as “never one to back away from war (Editor 2008a).” “Diplomacy by missionary impulse” and Canadian moral idealism may have run their course in the 1960s, even if some Canadians still argue otherwise (Valpy 2008a).⁷ However this may be, we cannot ignore the military’s growing status and the flag-waving displays (as along Ontario’s Highway 401, Canada’s “Highway of Heroes”) which Canadians traditionally associate with Americans (Valpy 2008b). Harper may benefit from these developments, which respect his approach to Canadian patriotism and national identity.

The Ignatieff Model: Canada as a Multicultural Mosaic

Our second identity model has been addressed by philosophers Will Kymlicka and Charles Taylor, and by Andrew Cohen and John Ibbitson as well as by Ignatieff. Kymlicka’s Canada is a federation of groups, some based on nationality (Quebecers, Aboriginals, and English Canadians) and some on territory (provinces and regions). Each group respects the others’ right to keep their distinct cultures viable (Kymlicka 1998a, 20-27). But only the three “nationality-based” groups, including English Canadians as a language community with shared interests, have “adopted a nationalist project.” They alone deserve self-rule, semi-detached from Ottawa, inside a redesigned asymmetric multinational federation (Kymlicka 1998b, 127-129, 155-166, 178-179,

⁷ Former Liberal Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy is appealing for Canada to end its fighting role in Afghanistan and emphasize peacekeeping and Responsibility to Protect, instead. But Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff may not agree, Axworthy (2008).

183). Historically disadvantaged groups like women, gays, and ethnic minorities merit guaranteed representation in Parliament, possibly through fixed quotas of seats (Kymlicka 1995, 47; Kymlicka 1998b, 114-120).

Taylor, unlike Kymlicka, proposes to extend equal recognition and status to all of Canada's "deep diversities." These include Kymlicka's identity groups like women and gays. Quebecers also need formal recognition of their distinctiveness (Taylor 1993, 191-195). But English Canadians maintain regional identities. They will accept Quebecers' recognition only if they *and* their regions secure a similar status. Whatever Canadians do, they must avert a sense of relative deprivation, or the "real heat...generated from the perception of recognition denied, the sense that one group counts for nothing or too little" (Kymlicka 1995, 195). Neither of these philosophers supplies a practical formula for carrying out the tasks he assigns.

Ignatieff's Canada is "simply a patchwork quilt of distinctive societies" (English Canadians, Quebecers, Aboriginals, and immigrants) which "do not inhabit the same historical reality" (Ignatieff 2000, 120, 134). Their founding mythologies are incompatible and will remain so (Johnson 2009). History will never be the same for Quebecers and English Canadians, who cannot agree on what the Plains of Abraham battle means (Ignatieff 2007, 25).⁸ Quebecers will continue to cherish their victimology with its "old memories of hurts and slights" (Ignatieff 2007, 39-40). Besides, for Quebecers "English Canada as a whole has become less and less relevant" while Quebec "has ceased to define itself in terms of Canada" (Ignatieff 1993, 123). So how can Canada survive with no common language, consensus on history, or sole identity for newcomers to integrate into? For Ignatieff, only "rights delivery...will hold us together." With a growing immigrant population speaking more than seventy languages in Toronto alone, Canada must define itself on civic nationalist (not ethnic-grounded) principles as a rights-based community where Canadians accept and respect each other, in all

⁸ On this 1759 battle's contested status to this day, see Anonymous (2009).

their diversities, as rights-bearing equals (Ignatieff 2000, 129-130). Ignatieff is currently encouraging Quebec nationalists to connect with Canada even as he implicitly accepts that their primary loyalty will remain with Quebec (MacDonald 2009). He does not reveal whether he could accept Taylor's Harper-like decentralization but he clearly believes that Canada's diversities will complicate national unity indefinitely.

Cohen defies a taboo which Ignatieff respects. He attacks the operation if not the principle of multiculturalism for turning Canada into "an ethnic archipelago with nothing in common." Canada offers immigrants only an "empty vessel" lacking the integrating political culture which any "united self-assured nation" needs (Cohen 2007, 157-163).⁹ In this setting, mass immigration and Harper-style power decentralization hold disintegrative potential, particularly in combination (Cohen 2007, 256). Cohen proposes socializing immigrants into a single interpretation of Canada's history, even as he effectively agrees with Ignatieff by calling Canada's history a "minefield, a clash of interpretations" (Cohen 2007, 51-92—the "minefield" reference can be found at 76). Yet Ibbitson maintains that Canada has made itself into the world's most successful country by "profiting from the explosive creative forces that are unleashed when people of different races, cultures, and lifestyles live together and bond" (Ibbitson 2005, 3). Ibbitson betrays more confidence about this bonding than all others cited in this section, Ignatieff included. For Ibbitson, only the cultural dynamism from 250,000 immigrants each year can save Canada from its deep regional divisions and advance the causes of national unity and identity (Ibitson 2005, 12-14).

⁹ Some second-generation immigrants, like Sri Lankan Tamils, identify with Canada more weakly than their parents do. Canadians have yet to consider how this trend might affect national unity, Wentz (2009a).

A Third Model: Canada as an Alternative to the United States

There is nothing new about defining Canada as “not the United States.” Sydney Wise reports that by the early nineteenth century “it was essential for Canadians not to believe in the United States.” They saw British North America as representing a “genuine alternative...organized upon principles and for purposes quite different from it” (Wise 1967, 21-22). For Frank Underhill, Canadians will enjoy a national identity only when they believe they have “arrived at a better American way of life than the Americans have” (Underhill 1967, 69). Some contend that Canada already is superior to the United States. The qualities which make it better help to define its identity. Michael Adams, John Ralston Saul, Herschel Hardin, Philip Resnick, and Senator Hugh Segal affirm Canada’s superiority from diverse perspectives. Others disagree: Margaret Wente, Mel Hurtig, Edward Grabb and James Curtis, John Ibbitson, Nelson Wiseman, and Andrew Cohen use equally varied arguments in dissent.

Adams supplies the greatest detail on Canadians’ “better American way of life.” His polls suggest that Canadians are becoming less like Americans – and a good thing too. Canadians show less conformity, obesity, religiosity, male chauvinism, patriarchal authority, and resistance to immigration than Americans outside New England. Michael Adams reports that, in a 2006 transnational survey, 75% of Canadians believed that immigrants have a positive influence on society, while only 52% of Americans (and 43% of Britons) concurred (Adams 2007, 13). While Quebecers least resemble Americans and residents of the Prairies are most like them, Canada’s regions differ much less than the regions below the border (Adams 2003, II, 47-76, III, 77-102 –note the table at III, 81). Canadians have become more autonomous and “heterarchical” in their comparatively stable social and economic environment. Life in Canada contrasts sharply with the risk, anxiety and insecurity which murders, destitution, inadequate health care and limited social insurance inflict on many Americans in an almost Social Darwinian survival-of-the-fittest society (Adams 2008, 4-5).

Adams dismisses Cohen's concern that unintegrated immigrants can destabilize a country which lacks a clear identity. For Adams, the absence of a consensus on identity makes Canada better than the United States and Europe in three respects: it frees Canadians from prejudice, it helps them to welcome immigrants, and it lets immigrants choose how deeply they integrate. Adams identifies "our unlikely secret weapon": Canadians "don't imagine we possess some core identity worth forcing onto others, something essential that will be lost if we let newcomers retain their own customs" (Adams 2007, 37-38).

Saul's Canada has been "heavily influenced and shaped by the First Nations" (Saul 2008, 3).¹⁰ As a "métis civilization", Canada is belatedly embracing aboriginal values of "inclusion, complexity, diversity, and living with the place." Canadians reject the "European-U.S. monolithic view", with its "old European prejudices" of racism and the domination of people and the land (Saul 2008, 18-21). Hardin detects an identity-conferring "redistribution culture" based on natural justice and social relationships of interregional solidarity and generosity. Canadians have a "sure sense of regionalism." Regions' obligations to help each other surpass the "American dogma" of an "Invisible Hand" enforcing a set of impersonal free-market rules (Hardin 1974, 314-316).

Resnick, unlike Saul, calls Canada more of a European than an American society, in part for its low religiosity. He proposes that Canada forge a relationship with the European Union, the "only institution on Earth" which can offer Canadians the counterweight to American hegemony that they need (Resnick 2005, 85-88). Segal has a somewhat different perspective. He maintains that Quebec is European, but not the rest of North America. For this reason, Quebec holds the key to a Canadian identity different from the United States. Quebecers' sense of solidarity with low income and working class people resembles European practice more than other parts of Canada. Through its influence on Canada's politics, Quebec will continue to shape a more meaningful

¹⁰ In support, see Martin (2009f).

quality of life and equality of opportunity for all Canadians along European lines than Americans enjoy (Segal 2008, 30).

Almost all of these arguments have their debunkers, some of whom interpret the same phenomena from other points of view. Wenthe concurs with Hardin that “we all share our wealth with each other.” But she gives Canadian unity a twist: “Our deepest fissures are...geographical. Each part of Canada is convinced that it’s getting screwed by all the other parts. It’s their sense of mutual grievance, finely honed over generations, that holds us together” (Wenthe 2009b). Long-time nationalist Hurtig laments that the “good old compassionate Canada” of the past has progressively and gratuitously relinquished its superiority relative to the United States. For one thing, Canada now ranks “near the bottom of the list” (twenty-fifth of the thirty OECD countries) in social spending. Canada now scarcely differs from the United States, which occupies twenty-sixth place (Hurtig 2008, 40-41). Hurtig faults the North American Free Trade Agreement’s imposed “race to the bottom” for moving Canada’s rate of child poverty and its tax and spending policies closer to the “uncaring” and low-tax American model than to Europe’s more “caring” standard (Hurtig 2008, 23, 42-43, 61).

Grabb and Curtis use their own polls to identify four North American “sub-societies.” They isolate Northern and Southern Americans, and English Canadians and Quebecers, to detect differences on five measures: moral issues such as religion, family values and crime; individualism, collectivism and the state; social inclusion and tolerance toward minorities; political attitudes and political action; and voluntary association membership and activity. They designate Quebec and the American South as outliers, at opposite poles on all five measures. For this reason Americans and Canadians diverge overall. But their large English Canadian and Northern American majorities “are often found to be very similar to one another.” They “share more in common with each other

than they do with their fellow citizens from Quebec and the American South (Grabb and Curtis 2005, 244-245, 257)."

Ibbitson agrees that Canadians differ more from each other than from Americans. Canada makes up "four solitudes" in the Atlantic Provinces, Quebec, Ontario, and the West (Ibbitson 2005, 57). Albertans, with their "more economically libertarian and socially conservative bent" than other Canadians, identify with the Midwest states. They are "left seething" when their values dominate American politics while they cannot get Ottawa to respect their interests (Ibbitson 2005, 83-83). Overall, Alberta is "a good deal to the right of mainstream Canada (Martin 2009e). Wiseman concurs: Alberta is "the Prairies' US" which maintains an anti-Ottawa grievance-based political culture. For Wiseman, most provinces enjoy unique cultures thanks to their settlement patterns: Quebec is "New (Old) France", Ontario is "the US's Counterrevolution" with a stronger national than provincial identity, British Columbia is "Canada's Australia", and so on (Wiseman 2006, 21-57). Because Canada is so complex and accommodates such varied regions and people, the country is an amalgam of distinct and persisting regional cultures which preclude a single national value system and identity (Wiseman 2007, 264-266).

Ibbitson and Cohen criticize Adams by name for exaggerating any differences with Americans. For Ibbitson, "Americans and Canadians are so inextricably intertwined as to be inseparable" (Ibbitson 2005, 196-197). Cohen contends that Adams' books win awards because he tells Canadians what they want to hear, namely that they are better than Americans (Cohen 2007, 103). Cohen cites surveys which contradict Adams on several points, including the myth that Canada's social mosaic is more diverse than the assimilating American melting-pot (Cohen 2007, 112-115). If anything, Americans are more tolerant of diversity than Canadians (Cohen 2007, 115). Meanwhile, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is Americanizing Canada into a similar rights-based society (Cohen 2007, 124). Also, these countries' ideologies are converging in the

Harper-Barack Obama era (Cohen 2009). So Canadians should shed their immaturity and “get over” their resemblance to Americans (Cohen 2007, 248). For good measure, Cohen adds that Canadians fortunately have little in common with Europeans, who are “riven with ancient feuds and simmering hatreds” (Cohen 2007, 215).

Discussion

Ronald Watts, Canada’s foremost authority on federalism, finds that successful federations offer their citizens emotionally appealing reasons for national survival (Watts 1994, 198). For British psychologist Alan Branthwaite, effective statehood needs “a meaningful, collective, and satisfying sense of identity.” It further “requires authentication by things which are shared, enduring, and which positively differentiate the group from others” (Branthwaite 1993, 56). Canadians’ divergent views on history, federalism, identity, and on an individual versus group perspective will dismay any government which seeks to honor Watts-Branthwaite criteria and help Canadians “gel”, as Bishop Tutu puts it. But nearly all Canadians desire at least *some* validation of Canada’s distinctiveness. Adherence to the United States hurts a majority-seeking Harper when Canadians still seeking Wise’s “genuine alternative” regard Americans as Branthwaite’s “others” and define their patriotism accordingly.

Harper has not made clear whether, much less how, he and his government should help Canada’s culture, values, society, or policies advance Underhill’s “better American way of life” positively differentiated from the United States. Raymond Blake notes that the Conservative Mulroney called himself a nationalist because his free trade pact with the United States strengthened Canada’s economy and safeguarded its federally initiated and identity-validating social programs (Blake 2009, 60, 75). But Harper’s open federalism and his antipathy for federal activism rule out his making a similar claim. In this setting, Harper’s perception of Ottawa’s role as a facilitator of

personal and provincial autonomy by staying out of the way poorly positions him to market himself and his party as exemplars of patriotism.

The moralistic Harper, unlike the more pragmatic Harris and Manning or Granatstein, supports market economics and United States foreign policy on principle. He upholds “freedom, faith, and family.” Faith teaches that “there is a right and wrong beyond mere opinion or desire” (Harper 2009). Harper has increased military spending since 2007 by \$2.4 billion while reducing the Foreign Affairs budget by \$639 million (Martin 2009c). He believes Canadians should feel national pride and solidarity because they are serving a cause in Afghanistan transcending themselves. When Harper concedes that the Taliban can never be defeated, Canadians ask why they keep troops in Afghanistan (Walkom 2009a). But they miss the point, as Harper sees it. The Afghan mission currently lets Canada discharge its moral responsibilities. Afghanistan is a success as long as Canada shows itself and others that it stands up for its values in concert with its allies, regardless of the mission’s long-term prospects. Harper’s description of Iran’s ideology as “obviously evil” and the Western Hemisphere as full of “real serious enemies and opponents” further exhibits his us-versus-them mindset even as President Obama attempts to alleviate tensions with Iran (Editor 2009b).

Kymlicka has asserted that “Canadians are distinctive in the way that they have incorporated Canada’s policy of accommodating diversity into their sense of national identity” (quoted in Adams 2007, 21). Harper and Ignatieff, as unwitting avatars of Canada’s diversities, may agree. But they talk past each other. Harper affirms respect for the autonomy of Canada’s diverse individuals, regions and provinces; Ignatieff affirms respect for the rights of Canada’s diverse linguistic and ethnic groups. As both appeal to some Canadians more than others, both too narrowly to provide Branthwaite’s authentication and meaningful and collective sense of identity, they both risk Taylor’s “real heat.” The Northern Ireland Good Friday peace accord’s “parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos, and aspirations” of Ulster’s two

communities may serve as a potential guide for honoring the varied and competing visions of Canada discussed in this paper (Governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom 1998, 4).

Harper's political fate may affect the future of identity politics. Let us consider three issues: Harper's appeals to Quebecers and immigrant voters, his response to the global recession, and his budding relationship with President Obama. Harper pandered shamelessly to Flanagan's "third sister" from 2006 through the 2008 election by passing a parliamentary resolution symbolically recognizing Quebecers as a nation within a united Canada, and by sending Quebec billions more wholly unconditional federal dollars than any other province. His largesse to remedy a "fiscal imbalance" peaked in 2008 (Simpson 2009a). After Quebecers rewarded him with a disappointing ten MPs, the same as in 2006, Harper finally accepted that Quebecers are not like the folks in Red Deer after all. He thereupon transferred his attention and munificence to Ontario (MacFarland 2008). Conservatives, including Harper himself, cannot hide their resentment of an ungrateful Quebec (Editor 2008b).¹¹ According to the *National Post*, "it's time for Ottawa to adopt a tough-love attitude toward Quebec. And who better to do that than Mr. Harper and his Tories? They've got nothing to lose" (Editor 2009a). But one may question Quebecers' future attachment to Canada if the Conservatives hold onto power without continuing to offer them enough of Watts' emotionally appealing attention, respect and financial support to avert the sovereignty movement's success.¹²

¹¹ Right-wingers David Frum and Peter Brimelow have long advised against a conservative appeal to leftish Quebecers as futile. Kheiriddin and Daifallah (2005), 143-147. But for the argument that Harper still can build support in Quebec with a new strategy, see Gagnon (2009).

¹² Andre Pratte, editorial page editor of Quebec's largest daily newspaper *La Presse*, echoes Ignatieff with the assertion that Quebecers are losing interest in the Government of Canada in any case. Quebecers pay attention to federal politics only when Ottawa addresses issues affecting their self-centered interests, Pratte (2008).

Flanagan is now advising Harper to intensify his partly successful 2008 strategy to “court the fourth sister”, Canada’s burgeoning immigrant community concentrated in suburban Toronto and Vancouver. Flanagan notes that immigrants are more conservative than Quebecers on social issues, while they also endorse lower taxes, family values, and a favorable business climate. They also have become an important Ontario voting bloc (Flanagan 2008). But Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, who is close to Harper, not to Adams, says immigrants “have a duty to integrate...We don’t need the state to promote diversity” (Martin 2009d). Moreover, few Ontarians, immigrants included, perceive the Government of Canada as a threat to their way of life—especially when they expect help from Ottawa in a recession.

The recession has tested Harper’s Hayek-inspired economic principles. In his precarious minority, Harper “exists almost entirely in the realm of tactics” (Martin 2009b; also see Editor 2009c). He has had to disregard his free-market ideology and accept a stimulus package with deficit financing.¹³ But his stimulus is more targeted, temporary, and restrained than most others, especially Obama’s (Fox and Norquay 2009, 32-35; Walkom 2009b). Harper’s *laissez-faire* instincts may be ill-suited to the current crisis (Laghi 2009). Even so, “small-c” conservatives fear the “death” of their agenda now that “their” government has become “conservative in name only” (Moore 2009; Laghi and Chase 2009). We cannot foresee the future of Canada’s identity politics in uncharted territory where “we have, perhaps for the first time ever, a government in Washington which is considerably more liberal than the government in Ottawa” (Ibbitson 2009).¹⁴ How Harper responds to Obama’s economic, climate change and other policy initiatives may help to determine his government’s fate (Manley 2009; Simpson 2009b).

¹³ Harper blames Americans for the recession. He also implicitly criticizes Obama’s stimulus package for excessive spending, Harper (2009).

¹⁴ Ibbitson is overlooking the 1930s’ F. D. Roosevelt-R. B. Bennett dyad.

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