

**Cultural ties  
with the US**

Woven through some of the formative elements in our policy culture are the complexities of our relationship with the United States. Herschel Hardin, in his brilliant book *A Nation Unaware*, identifies the position of Canada as against the United States, as one of what he terms the three basic contradictions in the Canadian experience – contradictions across which Canada has defined itself.

I would not underestimate the importance to Canada of proximity to the USA, across a border which is undefended in only the military sense. But it is ironic, against our current preoccupation with Canada-USA relations, to recall that we survived in the colonial period a time when trade and other ties with the newly-born USA was forbidden. One of the results was a set of special links and interests in the Caribbean where, to this day, we continue to behave very differently indeed from the USA.

Our geostrategic location beside the United States also highlights a further fundamental point about Canada: that we are a relatively secure country in a relatively insecure world. In a century in which violence among nation states continues to persist as a means of resolving disputes, and in which national borders are daily trespassed with force or the threat of force, Canada has been remarkably immune.

Indeed our experience of relative security is, in comparative terms so different from that of, for example, Afghanistan, Uganda, Israel, Poland or Argentina that we are virtually at the far and fortunate end of the spectrum of national peace and security. This does not deny our participation in two world wars and in the common defence of the West today. But I contend that the Canadian experience has, by and large, been one of remarkable insulation from the day-to-day violence and instability so common in today's world.

And there are other formative elements in our policy culture, expressed in the way we perceive the world and in our international behaviour: our empathy for resource-based developing countries, our sense of hinterland, the maritime concerns imposed by our borders with three seas, a strain of nordicity, innovation in government enterprise, and so on. They represent some of the continuities which will, I suggest, in one form or another, always be with us.

**Changes in  
cultural policy**

The demon of change, however, is certainly at work. And I want now to turn to my second theme: some indicative areas of change and vulnerability in our foreign policy culture, caused in large part by our recent experience and by our apprehensions about the future.

The international environment has, over the past 15 years, forced Canada as a nation to be very clear about its aims and interests in the international arena. We have, curiously for a country entering its second century of life, been forced to pay an inordinate amount of attention to our national sovereignty – in legal affairs such as maritime boundaries and pollution control in the Arctic; in the control of electronic

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