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## Another Mars–Venus divide? Why Australia said ‘yes’ and Canada said ‘non’ to involvement in the 2003 Iraq War

BRENDON O’CONNOR AND SRDJAN VUCETIC\*<sup>1</sup>

*Why did Australia fight in Iraq, while Canada did not? In this paired comparison, we go beyond explanations centered on the role of leaders to consider three alternative factors—ruling party opinion, public opinion and strategic culture. We argue that in both countries the Iraq decision followed the dominant views within the ruling party as well as the dominant strategic culture among the elites. As for the public opinion, its impact was significant in Canada, especially concerning the province of Quebec, while in Australia its impact was mostly neutral. This type of explanation, we suggest, is not only more historically grounded, but it can also illuminate broader patterns of Australian and Canadian foreign policy behaviour.*

According to conventional wisdom, the prime ministers of both Australia and Canada played a crucial role in deciding whether their respective countries would join the US-led war against Iraq in 2003. Australian Prime Minister John Howard’s role has been deemed so pivotal as to produce the term ‘Howard’s war’.<sup>2</sup> Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien is similarly cast as central to Canada’s decision, with some accounts going as far as to suggest this soon-to-retire leader acted with a particular eye to his ‘legacy’<sup>3</sup>; in other words, he desired to be known as the leader who said ‘no’ to Washington.<sup>4</sup> The dramatic and personalised media commentary on the 2003 Iraq War continually perpetuated these characterisations to such an extent that their validity has extended well beyond the reality.

Of course, dramatic decisions, such as the one to invade Iraq in 2003, encourage snapshot analysis. For some historians and political scientists, such an approach is justified; they view political events as swift and unpredictable occurrences akin to a tornado or meteorite hit. Others, however, take the opposite view, regarding such events as the result of ‘big, slow-moving and invisible’ processes (Pierson 2003), similar to the shifting of tectonic plates that eventually leads to an earthquake. In this article, we side with the latter who, like

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Max Weber (1918), believe ‘politics is a strong and slow boring of hard boards’. This perspective sees political events as the result of long-term structural factors with slowly developing consequences. By definition, the value of this sort of analysis lies not in specifying the dynamics of a single, overdetermined event, judgment or decision, but in clarifying the so-called underlying causes.

Analysis thus far of the Australian and Canadian decisions regarding the Iraq War has done largely the opposite, focusing almost exclusively on the drama of the decision to go to war and the personalities involved in making this decision.<sup>5</sup> Political commentary on the issue reads rather like the ‘great man of history’ thesis with dominant individuals shaping events to fit their beliefs and will. Such analysis, we argue, is more conventional than it is wise and in fact runs counter to much of the academic literature which argues that leadership decisions reflect the views of a team of decision makers, not solely the views of a prime minister. This leadership focus has seen John Howard cast as the loyal Bush supporter who went to war to fulfil his ambition of aligning Australia more closely with the United States. Meanwhile the Chrétien–Bush relationship has been presented as one of distrust and even contempt, which broke down when Chrétien decided not to commit troops to the 2003 Iraq War.

In trying to answer why Australia went to war in Iraq while Canada did not, we consider alternative explanatory factors to leadership, namely political party, public opinion and strategic culture. The Iraq decision in both countries, we contend, reflected the views of not only the inner circle of advisers and Cabinet members, but also ruling party opinion as well as strategic culture more generally. We are following a long tradition with the argument that the political and ideological make-up of a government as well as wider public opinion are important determinants of foreign policy processes and outcomes. It is also an argument which has recently been revived by scholars studying the European ‘rift’ over Iraq (Schuster and Maier 2006). While the concept of strategic culture is relatively new, it has proved useful in explaining some long-standing foreign policy puzzles, including those related to the states under investigation in our study (Bloomfield and Nossal 2007).

As well as challenging the leadership-centred analysis of the Iraq decision, this article is also interested in why these two long-standing US allies took such divergent positions. The common response seems to be that Canadians and Australians have different attitudes towards international affairs. Regional anomalies aside, claims of divergent cultural attitudes between the two countries more generally, such as the Mars–Venus divide used in this article’s title—with a nod to Robert Kagan’s (2003) famous essay—seem hard to justify, with the survey evidence showing fairly similar attitudes to global affairs in Canada and Australia (BBC 2003). However, in geographical terms, the difference could not be starker. One country shares a common border of almost 9000 kilometres with the United States. The other lies across the Pacific Ocean. Though geography on its own is not destiny, the interpretation of that geography can be extremely influential on foreign policy decision making. In Australia’s case, we argue that its

geography has often been interpreted as creating a vulnerability which calls for strong alliances with certain great, but distant, powers.

Our analysis relies on newspaper reports, opinion polls and the early scholarly literature on the subject. Furthermore, in the period between 2005 and 2008 we interviewed a number of senior diplomats and advisers from Australia and Canada about the Iraq decision. A final point before we flesh out our argument in detail: our analysis does not seek to entirely exclude the Howard–Chrétien effect. Rather, by looking at the three factors of political party, public opinion and strategic culture, we seek to balance the snapshot analysis of much of the critique undertaken so far with a more historically grounded interpretation of events.

### **Leadership and party**

The study of leadership in international relations, like many other areas, can easily be read as a polarised division—in this case, between those who focus on the primacy or importance of decision makers (Beasley *et al.* 2001; Hermann and Hermann 1989; Snyder 1958; Snyder *et al.* 1954) and those who emphasise the systemic context over the ‘largely irrelevant “noise”’ made by decision makers (Hagan 2001: 6). Structural realists (Gilpin 1981; Waltz 1979) and neo-liberals (Keohane 1984) are readily associated with the latter position, whereas a disparate collection of historians, biographers and leadership scholars are generally associated with the former position. We have no intention of taking one or the other side of this unresolvable debate, but rather look to explore the nexus between structural conditions and the role of decision makers; in other words, to emphasise both structure and agency.<sup>6</sup>

Chrétien and Howard loom large in most analysis of the roles their respective countries played in the ‘coalition of the willing’. The attraction to this ‘leadership’ narrative is understandable, given the heavy media speculation and commentary about the relationship these two leaders had with President Bush. Howard, it is frequently claimed, enjoyed the closest relations with a US president of any Australian prime minister (Pan 2006; Stolberg 2007; Wright 2004). Conversely, many Canadian observers have placed Chrétien’s relationship with Bush as amongst the worst, at least since either the Vietnam War or the notably frosty Kennedy–Diefenbaker relationship (Frum 2002; Wilson-Smith 2003). Even if we accept this reading (which seems more accurate pertaining to Howard than to Chrétien), we should not assume that either leader made their announcements on Iraq in isolation from a wider context and based principally on their personal relationship with Bush. In both cases, their decisions were in keeping with the general sentiment in their parliamentary parties and, in Australia’s case, the decision was entirely consistent with its historic alliance-orientated attitude to similar major decisions such as involvement in the Vietnam War. One could even

argue that it is consistent with what could be called Australia's 'strategic culture', as we discuss below.

If we employ counterfactual analysis, it seems reasonable to assume that if Peter Costello and Paul Martin in Australia and Canada respectively had been at the reins, the same decisions would have been made. Costello's (2005) comments on the centrality of the US alliance and his concerns about anti-Americanism seem entirely consistent with Howard's thinking towards the United States. Other leading Liberal Party parliamentarians, such as Alexander Downer, Tony Abbott and Brendan Nelson, would also have been highly likely to make the same decision. In Canada, the former prime minister, Paul Martin, or any other conceivable Liberal Party leader—with a possible exception of Michael Ignatieff—would most probably have opposed joining the United States in Iraq had they been prime minister in early 2003.

In Australia in particular, the media's infatuation with the Bush–Howard embrace has been so all-encompassing as to largely ignore such counterfactual analysis. The story perpetuated by the media begins with Howard courting the American leader while George W. Bush was still governor of Texas and culminates with a champagne toast by Howard and his then foreign minister, Alexander Downer, on hearing the news of Bush's win in Florida in 2000 (Wright 2004). As chance would have it, John Howard was in Washington, DC, on September 11, 2001; many say that it was this direct experience of 9/11 which saw him become the first prime minister to activate the Australia, New Zealand, United States (ANZUS) Security Treaty (done while flying home on Dick Cheney's Air Force Two plane). Further strengthening the bond between the two leaders was their presence in England around the time of the 7/7 terrorist attacks of 2005. Apparently, they spoke at length on the phone about their reactions to these terrorist attacks and Bush praised Howard in the Australian Parliament as a 'man of steel' (Bush 2003). Howard returned the favour by publicly endorsing Bush's re-election in 2004, making him the first Australian prime minister to publicly endorse a US presidential candidate (no such endorsement has ever been made by a Canadian or British prime minister). Given this history, it is tempting to position Iraq as 'Howard's war', an outlook seemingly strengthened by the lack of constitutional restraints on Australian prime ministers taking their country to war. Undoubtedly, the way that Australia went to war was stamped with Howard's personal style, from the dogged case he made for the war in Parliament and in public (O'Connor 2004, 2006) to the canny way Australia was able to avoid a larger troop commitment. However, Howard's actions fit within a tradition to alliance politics that is long-standing in the Liberal Party of Australia. Howard used Iraq as an opportunity to strengthen US–Australia relations, just as Menzies did with his eagerness for Australia to be involved in the Vietnam War (McLean 2006).

Lastly, one of the great weaknesses of the leader-focused analysis in Australia is the lack of focus on the individuals who influenced Howard's decision. Surely his advisers in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Australian

ambassador in Washington, DC, and the director generals of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, the Office of National Assessments and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should be mentioned as having some influence on his decision? Regular readers of popular US newspapers or weekly magazines like the *New Yorker* would have heard of Karl Rove, George Tenet, Andrew Card, Scooter Libby, Richard Perle, Michael Gerson, Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, Douglas Feith and Paul Wolfowitz. They have all worked for the current US president and vice-president, and their impact on Bush's decision to go to war has been thoroughly scrutinised. Bob Woodward's (2002, 2004, 2006) three insider accounts of the Bush administration give us a sense of the internal debates between high-ranking officials in the Bush administration. Accounts of previous administrations show that decisions were generally made by groups of people, not just individual presidents. In Australia, political science textbooks tell us that we have a system of cabinet government (Emy and Hughes 1991), but media commentary nearly always emphasises the prime minister as the decision maker, particularly in foreign affairs. The role, for instance, of senior Howard government advisers and figures like Arthur Sinodinos, Peter Varghese, Ashton Calvert and Michael Thawley is rarely discussed in Australian media commentary.

Despite this reticence to move beyond the individual leader, it is likely that all of these men shaped Australia's decision to go to war against Iraq in 2003, with then Australian ambassador to the United States, Michael Thawley, possibly playing a pivotal role. Despite this, we were unable to find a single article printed in an Australian newspaper in 2003 (or 2004) that discussed Thawley's influence on the Iraq decision. Greg Sheridan (2005) wrote a piece on Thawley in early 2005 (shortly before Thawley stepped down as ambassador) which touched on his connections and background but did not discuss his role in the Iraq decision. In 2006, Thawley's name was mentioned in a handful of articles that claimed he attempted to quash US Congressional investigations into the activities of the Australian Wheat Board in Iraq.<sup>7</sup> The lack of coverage of the role played by Thawley and other key players in the 2003 Iraq decision displays the power that the image of an all-commanding prime minister holds among Australian journalists, although it is hard not to see this telling of events as displaying a lamentable laziness (or at the very least cosiness) in Australian journalism. The interviews we conducted have led us to surmise that Thawley may have been as influential in his own way in the Australian context as Paul Wolfowitz was on President Bush's decision on Iraq. One can only imagine how much criticism there would have been of US journalists if they had overlooked Wolfowitz's influence.

When it comes to judging the centrality of Chrétien within his foreign policy-making team, we have less information to make a judgement. Our interviews with officials and advisers revealed a degree of uncertainty about whether Canada would participate in the 'coalition of the willing'. American officials have suggested that they received mixed messages from the Canadians, with the greatest confusion seemingly caused by Canadian troops being embedded in

United States Central Command (US CENTCOM) along with Australian troops. These military personnel had to withdraw awkwardly from US CENTCOM just before the war, when Chrétien announced that Canada would not join the United States in the Iraq invasion. Furthermore, Canada's Minister of Defence, John McCallum, said at least twice (8 October 2002 and 10 January 2003) on *CBC News* that the Canadian forces could provide a military contingent similar to the one that helped fight the war on terrorism in Afghanistan. These factors have created a discourse, at least among American officials, that the Canadian decision was handled undiplomatically and was made at the last minute to soothe negative opinions in Quebec towards the war.

Running contrary to this narrative of mixed messages and politically expedient decision making is the view presented by Chrétien's former chief of staff, Eddie Goldenberg (2006), in his recent memoir and in an interview we conducted with him. Goldenberg insists that Chrétien made it clear to the Bush administration in a number of speeches and communications that without a second United Nations resolution, Canada would not send troops to Iraq—a position also expressed by other traditional US allies such as New Zealand. In contrast, Howard told Bush that 'we need a [second] resolution', but Woodward claims that ultimately Australia's commitment to send troops did not rest on the passing of this resolution (see Woodward 2004: 183, 363, 368).

Eddie Goldenberg also questions the dominant Canadian media narrative of Chrétien having poor relations with Bush from the beginnings of their official relationship, claiming that early meetings were quite productive. Goldenberg's view has to be placed in the context of his loyalty to Chrétien and his legacy. This being the case, Goldenberg probably overstates the degree to which principle—a commitment to international law and the United Nations—guided Chrétien's decision, while at the same time understating the impact of forthcoming elections in Quebec and strong opposition to the war within that province. Goldenberg could not be relied on for a fair answer regarding whether Paul Martin would have made the same decision, as his invective against Martin was unrelenting. As one would expect from a chief of staff, Goldenberg's views highlight the positive aspects of Chrétien's leadership. Looking at this decision in a historical context, Chrétien could be seen as continuing the Liberal Party tradition of prime ministers Pearson and Trudeau.<sup>8</sup>

In order to clear up any confusion, the term 'Liberal' in Australia and Canada applies to parties at the opposite ends of the political spectrum. The Liberal Party of Australia is the more conservative (right-of-centre) party with the other major party, the Australian Labor Party (ALP), to its left. In Canada, the opposite orientation applies for the Liberal Party—the Liberals are the major left-of-centre party, with the Conservative Party of Canada<sup>9</sup> to their right.

There is a definite case to be made that, historically, Canadian Liberals have been reluctant to send troops to join US wars, whereas Australian Liberals have been America's most reliable allies. The Canadian Liberal Party legacy of not deploying troops to support the United States stems from Liberal Prime Minister

Lester Pearson's decision not to send Canadian troops to Vietnam. Meanwhile, his Conservative counterpart, John Diefenbaker, offered support for US policy in Vietnam. The Canadian reluctance to become involved in foreign wars has a longer lineage stretching back to the imperial era; however, it is the Vietnam position that was arguably the historical precedent for the contemporary generation of Canadian Liberal politicians. The Liberals under Pearson—and, later, Pierre Trudeau—not only opposed Canadian involvement in the Vietnam War, but at times vocally criticised American actions in Vietnam. From this perspective, it is fair to say that on the question of involvement in US-led wars, the Canadian Liberals stand out as the party most likely to say 'no' to the Americans, while the Conservatives are more likely to offer support. Notably, the leader of the Conservative Party, Stephen Harper, supported Canada joining the 'coalition of the willing' in 2003. Thus, on the question of joining US wars, which party is in power seems to matter significantly in Canada. However, we are less certain whether this holds true for Australia.

It is difficult to be entirely certain of the ALP's position on both the Vietnam and Iraq Wars because, unlike the Canadian Liberals, the ALP were not in power when troop commitments were made in either conflict. The nature of Westminster politics often leads to opposition from the cross benches. This is not to say that we should overlook the parliamentary and public opposition voiced by ALP leaders to Australian troop involvement in Vietnam in 1965 and in Iraq in 2003 (Edwards with Pemberton 1992: 345–9; O'Connor 2004). Nonetheless, if in power at the time, it is not inconceivable that a Calwell and/or a Whitlam government in 1965 would have supported sending a small number of troops to Vietnam. Interestingly, Peter Edwards, Australia's 'official historian' of the Vietnam War and probably the most authoritative expert on the subject, has portrayed the involvement as inevitable (Edwards 1997; McLean 2001, 2006; cf. Woodard 2004). Similarly, in 2003, a Labor government led by Kim Beazley or Kevin Rudd may well have supported the United States in Iraq with a small troop commitment, given both have been long-standing and strong supporters of the Australia–US alliance. Further, the strong support voiced by the Labour Party leader in Britain might have had some impact on the thinking of a Beazley or Rudd government. In 2002 and 2003, Kevin Rudd expressed that Iraq was most likely to have weapons of mass destruction (ABC 2003). The fact that Rudd chose to express this opinion rather than play the more pragmatic game of simply supporting the United Nations processes and calling for the weapons inspectors to continue doing their job would seem to add substance to this speculation of support for the United States had the ALP been in power in 2003. It is also useful to consider Labor's strong support for the United States during the 1991 Gulf War when considering whether Labor would have sent troops in 2003 had it been in power. Our speculation about the likely course of action of the opposition parties in Canada and Australia, had they been in government, and our examination of the dominant foreign policy traditions of the major parties in both countries



highlights both the importance of parties in this debate and the fact that this importance has been largely ignored by scholars and the media to date. Of course, parties and their leaders rely on the public to both bring them to power and keep them there. Whether public opinion affected the 2003 Iraq decision thus seems the next logical question to ask.

### **Public opinion**

The role of public opinion in the specific domain of foreign policy is a matter of great and long-standing debate.<sup>10</sup> In the case of the 2003 Iraq War, public opinion provided neither strong enough encouragement to the Australian government to enter the war nor significant enough opposition to prevent participation<sup>11</sup>, whereas, in Canada, public opinion featured more crucially in that nation's decision not to go to war. This is not to argue that public opinion was ignored or not courted in Australia; rather it is to suggest an argument about its relative importance. Survey evidence illustrates that support for the war was weak in both countries in 2002. Furthermore, within Canada, regional variation is evident, with support for the war being particularly limited in Quebec. We suggest that this limited national support for the war, and the particularly low level of support for the war in Quebec, was crucial to Chrétien's decision not to send Canadian troops to Iraq. The looming Quebec general election, widely interpreted as a vote of confidence on Chrétien's policies towards the province, certainly made the federal government extra cautious. By removing the war as a possible election issue, Chrétien probably helped the provincial Liberals overtake the incumbent Parti Québécois in the elections on 14 April 2003. In this sense, it can be said that the provincial election amplified the role of public opinion in the decision-making process.

In Australia, although John Howard's decision to commit troops ran counter to early public opinion, Australians became more supportive of the US position on Iraq following the Bali bombing of 12 October 2002. Furthermore, once it became obvious that Australia would commit troops to a US-led invasion, a slim majority swung Howard's way to support the war (arguably reflecting a 'rally around the flag' response to the war). These are the general trends; the specific data offers a more complex picture.

Cross-national analyses of public opinion data suggest some divergence in opinion between the two countries, with Australians ahead of Canadians in terms of the support for the war, both in the pre- and post-invasion phases (Goot 2004: 246–52). For example, according to a Gallup International poll of January 2003, American and Australian interviewees constituted the only pro-war majorities among 34 countries; Canadians came third with 44 percent voicing support for war. After the war (in May 2003), three international polls (Pew, Gallup and ICM) found that the majority of Australians (between 54 and 62 percent) still supported the war, compared to between 31 and 44 percent of

Canadians (roughly reflecting the pre-war attitude). In general, the majority of Australians were found to be pleased with the government decision on Iraq, as were the majority of Canadians (Goot 2004: 246–7).

National public opinion data offers a slightly different picture. According to these numbers, support for the war in Australia actually was as low as in Canada throughout 2002, usually hovering around 33 percent (Goot 2003). As summarised in Table 1, which shows an overview of Australian public opinion polls, in terms of the longitudinal comparison, Australian pre-war polls show a rough split between supporters and opponents (Goot 2003: 5), while post-war polls show strong evidence of the ‘rally around the flag’ effect (Mueller 1973). An interesting dynamic occurred in October and November 2002. First, public support for joining the United States in Iraq increased after the Bali terrorist attacks of 12 October caused the deaths of 88 Australians. This spike in pro-war opinion may well reflect a response to the arguments of Howard and his foreign minister linking Saddam to wider terrorist threats.<sup>12</sup> However, once Iraq became framed as primarily a United Nations issue—as in surveys which queried United Nations involvement as a condition for war—responses moved towards disapproval of any ‘unilateral’ action by the United States. Public concern about the prospect of Australia joining an invasion of Iraq that was not directly sanctioned by the United Nations culminated in record-breaking protests on the weekend of 14–16 February 2003. The protests saw over 500,000 people take part in anti-Iraq War rallies across Australia, including Australia’s largest ever demonstration of around 250,000 people in Sydney (Lawson 2003; Priest 2003). Thus, there is evidence to suggest that sizeable elements of the Australian population were opposed to involvement; however, this opposition failed to represent an ongoing majority of those surveyed in public opinion polls. Given this ambivalence, it seems fair to claim that elite opinion rather than public opinion was crucial to Australia sending troops to Iraq. The Australian government clearly saw opposition to entering a US-led war as sizeable, but not politically insurmountable. In Canada, on the other hand, public sentiment was more clearly opposed to the war and is likely to have had a direct impact on the decision not to send troops.

Table 2 provides an overview of Canadian public opinion polls on both Iraq and the United States. On balance, the data—interpreted from surveys by Ipsos-Reid, Gallup, Léger, SES, Pollara, Compas, Pew and ICM—shows a fluctuating, but persistent, anti-war mood. So, while the opposition to war ranged between 40 and 60 percent across time and across sources, in no survey did more than 11 percent of Canadians support ‘unilateral’ or ‘near-unilateral’ US action against Iraq. Also, Canadian troop deployment received significantly less support than mere ‘verbal support’ for the US-led intervention.

As mentioned earlier, the opposition in the province of Quebec was particularly strong. In the Léger–Gallup–TLS survey of 15–16 January 2003, nearly half of Quebec’s respondents opposed military intervention under any circumstances, which significantly skewed the national average (Jedwab 2003).

Table 1. Overview of Australian public opinion polls concerning the Iraq War and/or the United States (2002–3)

Month	Source	Main findings
August–October 2002	Newspoll, Roy Morgan	43–50 percent disapprove of US military force in Iraq 74–5 percent against Australian involvement in Iraq if evidence supporting the invasion is not provided and/or if United Nations approval is not received 53–4 percent against Australian involvement in US-led military action in Iraq
December 2002	Newspoll, Roy Morgan	43 percent disapprove of US military force in Iraq 50–2 percent against Australian involvement in US-led military action in Iraq
January 2003	Newspoll	61 percent against Australian involvement in US-led military action in Iraq, even if United Nations approval is received
February 2003	Newspoll, Roy Morgan	56–7 percent in favour of Australian involvement in Iraq if United Nations approval is received 76 percent against Australian involvement in Iraq if United Nations approval is not received 60 percent against sending some troops to Iraq 53 percent support military action against Iraq 12 percent in favour of unilateral action by the United States and its allies
March 2003	Newspoll	56–61 percent in favour of Australian involvement in Iraq if United Nations approval is received 68–71 percent against Australian involvement in Iraq if United Nations approval is not received
21–3 March 2003*	Newspoll, Roy Morgan	41 percent disapprove of US military force in Iraq 42–48.5 percent disapprove of Australian involvement in Iraq
(Late) March 2003	Newspoll, Roy Morgan	38 percent against Australian involvement in Iraq 61 percent think the war in Iraq is going as expected 61 percent think the United Nations should have supported the US-led military action in Iraq
April–May 2003	Newspoll, Roy Morgan	36 percent against Australian involvement in Iraq 62 percent think that military action was justified 49 percent think the world is a more dangerous place since the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions 31 percent state military action in Iraq has had a negative effect on their attitude towards the United States 48 percent say that military action in Iraq has had no effect on their attitude towards the United States

Table 1 (*Continued*)

Month	Source	Main findings
June–July 2003	Newspoll, Roy Morgan	63 percent feel favourable towards the United States 49 percent feel unfavourable towards George Bush 57 percent agree that the United States is a force for good in the world 65 percent agree that the United States feels it can do what it likes as the only superpower 38 percent think the United States was wrong to invade Iraq 53 percent think the United States was right to invade Iraq 67 percent think John Howard misled the Australian public on Iraq

\* After—or concurrent to—the invasion

Source: Goot 2004.

But according to a number of observers, the Quebec opinion was more salient in the period under study because the federal Liberal government was worried about the fate of the provincial Liberal government in the upcoming Quebec elections.<sup>13</sup> This province—or the way it is understood—influences Canadian alliance behaviour in two ways. Arguably, no province in Canada is as politically strong as Quebec, as evidenced in the geographic and linguistic identities of Canadian Liberal Party prime ministers. Second, in terms of opinion and values, Quebec has long sustained Canada's Venustian identity (Haglund 2005; Igartua 2006: 10–2). Historically, because the (francophone) Quebecers disliked the use of force (and, above all, the draft), every time Ottawa decided to militarily intervene abroad, the question of national unity became more salient. At the time of the Iraq decision, the question of national unity was in the background, but the anti-war sentiment in Quebec was overwhelming and, as far as Ottawa was concerned, influential.

Regarding Canadian opinion towards the United States, the extant data may not be sufficient to draw meaningful inferences, but one annual poll found a 'profound cooling of feelings towards the Americans since last year's poll, taken just after the shattering events of September 11' (Gregg 2002: 32).<sup>14</sup> Other sources indicated persistent hostility towards American foreign policy and/or US President George Bush.

The mass-protest indicator is also inconclusive in Canada. On 16 February 2003, thousands of people around the world took to the streets to express their anti-war stance. Montreal saw between 150,000 and 250,000 protesters, while Vancouver and Toronto had around 20,000 to 30,000 each (AP 2003; cf. Jedwab 2003). The size of the protest in Quebec relative to elsewhere in Canada adds weight to our claim that Quebec opinion was crucial to the Canadian government's decision on Iraq. In comparison to Australia, Canadian mass

Table 2. Overview of Canadian public opinion polls concerning the Iraq War and/or the United States (2002–3)

Month	Source	Main findings
August 2002	Ipsos-Reid, Léger	54 percent against the war 54 percent do not believe President Bush on Iraq (63 percent in Quebec)
September 2002	<i>The Economist</i>	‘Majority’ against the war
October 2002	Léger	51 percent believe the United States is not justified in Iraq 52 percent against Canadian participation 44 percent believe Israel/Palestine is a greater problem than Iraq
November 2002	SES	24 percent support unilateral US action 66 percent support unilateral US action ‘with United Nations approval’
December 2002	<i>Maclean’s</i>	22 percent describe Americans as ‘family’ or ‘best friends’ (down from 33 percent in 2001) 67 percent believe the United States behaves ‘like a bully’
January 2003	Ipsos-Reid, Gallup, Léger–Gallup–TLS	10–26 percent support the war without United Nations approval (as low as 7 percent in Quebec) 44 percent ‘politically’ support the invasion (30 percent in Quebec)
February 2003	Ipsos-Reid, Léger, Gallup, SES	65–7 percent against an attack on Iraq without proper United Nations approval 60 percent support a United Nations-sanctioned attack 50 percent describe the United States as Canada’s ‘best friend’ 25 percent say that Britain is Canada’s ‘best friend’
March 2003*	Pollara, Léger	56 percent support the war 33 percent see the war as ‘justified’
April 2003	Compas, Pew, ICM, Gallup	31 percent support troop deployment 41 percent offer ‘verbal support’ 31–44 percent support the war in Iraq
May 2003	Léger	46 percent believe the war was ‘justified’ 41 percent disagree that the war was ‘justified’ (51 percent in Quebec) 50 percent believe US foreign policy has a negative effect on Canada

\*After—or concurrent to—the invasion

Source: Asmus *et al.* (2003), Bricker and Wright (2003), Ekos and Public Policy Forum (2003), Goot (2004), Haglund (2005) and Jedwab (2003).

protests were smaller and only the Montreal crowd could begin to compare with the protest in Sydney or, especially, those in New York City (half a million) or Europe (between one and two million in London and one million in Rome). Combined, however, the two indicators—public opinion polls and mass protests—suggest that Canadian public opinion strongly contributed to Canadian non-participation in Iraq, as per our hypothesis.

As for opinions on US foreign policy more generally, most polls indicated that Australians held broadly similar attitudes to the Canadians and Britons on US foreign policy—largely critical, but far less dismissive than in countries such as France, Indonesia or Jordan (Goot 2004: 248, 251). In terms of the approval of President Bush and/or American foreign policy, the majority in both Australia and Canada held unfavourable views, arguably similar to those expressed in European countries (Goot 2004: Table 1).<sup>15</sup> The negative views disappeared when respondents were asked to evaluate the United States politically and culturally, though longitudinal international public opinion surveys indicate that Australians are more critical than Canadians of the influence of Americanisation and the influence of ‘American television culture’ and ‘American food’ on their society (Goot 2004: 252; O’Connor 2007a, 2007b).<sup>16</sup>

Does the survey evidence presented here suggest that Canada and Australia have different strategic cultures or at least attitudes towards the United States? Although Canadians were more clearly opposed to involvement in the 2003 Iraq War (with particularly strong opposition from Quebec), the limited polling data available suggests Canadians and Australians generally have fairly similar attitudes towards global affairs and towards the United States. While public opinion on foreign affairs can give a basic sense of a nation’s orientation, it can also leave much room for interpretation. For example, a majority of Australians believe that the ANZUS security arrangements are important to Australia’s security, while in the same surveys a majority say they would like a more independent foreign policy from the United States (Day 2001). What exactly this desired ‘independence’ means is relatively vague, thus giving Australian elites considerable freedom with their decision making. In the case of the 2003 Iraq War, it seems plausible that politicians in Australia interpreted negative public opinion as concerning but not concerning enough to determine Australian policy (Woodward 2004: 183, 319, 363).

In Canada, opposition to the war—particularly in Quebec, with the looming provincial elections—saw public opinion more clearly determine government policy. Arguably, Canada’s Venesian identity was largely a product of its French-speaking province. Skilful managers of Canadian domestic politics like Jean Chrétien would never highlight Quebec’s influence in this blunt manner. Thus, it was useful for the Canadian government to be able to frame opposition to involvement in the 2003 Iraq War as reflecting Canada’s belief in multilateral organisations and the authority of the United Nations (of course, this belief was not unimportant; however, it was only part of the story). A Conservative prime minister may have reacted

differently to the US request to be involved in the 2003 Iraq War, suggesting that Quebec opinion weighs more heavily on Canadian Liberals than Conservatives.

### **Strategic culture**

As far as states and nations go, few are as similar as Australia and Canada, as measured by the indicators of size, history, culture, economy or ‘quality of life’. Similarities are also said to exist in the domain of strategic behaviour to such an extent that one recent study identified these two countries as ‘strategic cousins’ (Blaxland 2006). Strategic culture, the last explanatory factor we will consider, can be defined as a nationally specific system of communication made up of historical analogies, similes and metaphors, which tend to solidify public preferences in the domain of foreign and defence policy. There may be several strategic cultures at play in each national context, but at any given time one of them is likely to dominate. We are agnostic over the dominant site of the construction of strategic cultures—the elite, the mass or both.<sup>17</sup> What matters is that strategic cultures are associated with the historical experiences of a nation state, which includes its philosophies, politics, institutions, values, understandings of geography, technology, economic development, demography, and so on. In the post-World War II period, for example, both Australia and Canada embraced the international institutions spree, particularly the idea and practice of the United Nations, labelling themselves as ‘middle powers’ and ‘good international citizens’.<sup>18</sup>

We submit that Australian and Canadian strategic cultures differ in significant ways and argue that this difference contributes to their policy divergence over the Iraq War. The most obvious source of difference concerns what might be called ‘the geography–history trade-off’. Many observers have pointed out that every Australian government has had to answer one basic question regarding Australia’s foreign affairs: whether policy should be primarily set by geography (Australia’s place in the Asia-Pacific) or history (Australia’s ‘traditional’ ties with Britain and the United States). The answer has typically been one-sided: with one or two notable exceptions, most Australian governments have tended to privilege a great-power alliance first with Britain and then the United States rather than looking to secure Australia’s future with regional security or non-aggression pacts. Here, Australia’s security is seen as a function of tight alliances with its ‘great and powerful’ English-speaking friends against perceived threats from Asian expansionism, international communism or terrorism (McLean 2006; see also Burke 2001; Cheeseman 1998; Higgot and Nossall 1997; Wesley 1997; Walker 1999). The Howard government, although more comfortable in the Asia region than at times acknowledged (Wesley 2007), clearly followed this tradition. As David McLean’s (2001, 2006) insightful scholarship on Australia’s alliance politics points out, this goal was more astutely achieved than critics like to suggest; nonetheless, this traditional reading of what Australia’s geographic

location means for its strategic culture has hampered the development of a more inventive and independent foreign policy.

For Canadian governments, the geography–history trade-off has long been moot. Until the second half of the twentieth century, Canadians located their foreign and defence policies within the so-called North Atlantic triangle, which later used the ideological struggle of the cold war to emphasise the close ties between Canada, Britain and the United States, as well as the common defence of Western Europe by means of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Haglund 1999). In sharp contrast to Australia, geography has therefore been Canada's friend, in the sense that most Canadians find succour in an 'automatic' defence guarantee from the United States. This covers both nuclear and conventional warfare, with the two states sharing a joint defence command and a common defence industry for at least 60 years. Yet, Canadian strategic culture has also long faced the issue of 'independence'—a seemingly long-standing search for distance and difference against the superpower neighbour. The successive Chrétien governments from 1993–2003 excelled at such rhetoric, keeping Canada out of some North American institutions such as National Missile Defense, but integrating it into many others such as the North American Free Trade Agreement or the Smart Border Declaration (Staples 2006; Thompson 2003). In comparing the geography–history trade-offs for both nations, it can therefore be said that if Australia is a regional power with too large a region to maintain its own security, then Canada is a regional power without a region.

Judging by earlier periods, the principles of multilateralism, internationalism and collective security were equally familiar among Australian and Canadian foreign policy elites (Nossal 1995). In the period under study, however, cross-national differences outweighed similarities. Any time these principles appeared to clash with Australia's alliance commitments to the United States, the Howard government played them down. In contrast, the Chrétien government never missed an opportunity to shore up the memories of the so-called golden age of Canadian diplomacy, a mythical time embodied by Lester Pearson, Canada's foreign minister, who was said to have invented peacekeeping, a unique feat acknowledged by a Nobel Peace Prize (Fraser 2005; Hillmer 1994). Not all of it was nostalgia: Lloyd Axworthy, Chrétien's second foreign minister, became globally known for radicalising Canada's internationalism with 'human security'—an argument that *all* human beings should be the referent object of Canadian security policy (Axworthy 2004; cf. Crosby 2007). New international institutions such as a landmines ban, the International Criminal Court and a global environmental regime were celebrated in Canada not only because they were promoted by Axworthy and his team, but also precisely because they were opposed by the United States.

As if to stress the turn towards a post-national security future, Ottawa let defence spending plummet such that Canada ended up being ranked as one of the least capable NATO members on many measures at the time. In 2003, even Canadian defence officials publicly argued that Canada would 'soon' have to give up one branch of its armed forces, possibly all of them (English 1998; Granatstein



2004). As Bloomfield and Nossal (2007: 301) argue, even in the post-9/11 period, Canadian strategic culture tended to conceive of Canada as essentially safe. Put differently, long after the cold war, Canada still saw itself as a ‘peacekeeper’ rather than a ‘war-fighter’ (Bratt 2007). Chrétien himself often expressed his belief in peacekeeping over war-fighting. According to Tom Keating (2006: 137), Canada’s non-participation in Iraq can be explained through a ‘combination of [factors, but] it is worth considering the greater significance of Chrétien’s own deep-seated reservations over the use of force as an instrument of foreign policy’ (Fraser 2005).

Australian and Canadian strategic cultures are complex and evolving; yet, in the period under study, they clearly differed on the willingness to use force. Canadian strategic culture saw the application of military power as the absolute last resort and something to be carried out in a multilateral framework. Australian strategic culture, constituted as it was in a close relationship with the US ally, implied much greater flexibility on this question. Arguably, this particular strategic culture effect is discernible over a longer period of time. Few US allies since 1945 have charted a security policy course as independently as Canada and no US ally apart from Australia has partaken in every (major) American intervention abroad. When it comes to fighting American wars, Australians are indeed Martians to Canadian Venusians. The former species inhabit a Hobbesian world in which international law, institutions and norms are flimsy, and national security is almost entirely contingent on the alliances with great and powerful friends. The latter are Kantians who believe that conflict should be resolved peacefully and as multilaterally as possible, through fastidious deliberation and negotiation (cf. Sokolsky 2003; Zyla 2006).

## **Conclusion**

In this article, we have attempted to open up the debate about why Australia joined the US-led ‘coalition of the willing’ in Iraq and why Canada did not. We have suggested that a leadership-based explanation—seeing these decisions as principally driven by Prime Ministers Howard and Chrétien—has limitations and may lead to a lop-sided reading of history. Undoubtedly, the idiosyncratic character and style of both the Canadian and Australian prime ministers shaped how the decision on involvement in Iraq was announced and how it was defended. In our opinion, their highly visible presence has led many commentators to overpersonalise the nature of the decision-making process, thereby creating the myth that Howard and Chrétien were the lone masters of Australian and Canadian foreign policy on Iraq.

The divergent positions of two allies, we have argued, has rather more to do with public preferences, as expressed in political parties, public opinion and strategic culture. It follows that despite the influence of personality and personal relationships, deeper structural factors tend to determine the alliance behaviour of Australia and Canada. The most significant cause of divergence lies in what

we have identified as the geography–history trade-off. For Australia, the strengthening of its alliance with America has been its key foreign policy goal since at least the drafting of the ANZUS Treaty. Australia's 'American alliance' was never seen by Australians as a temporary solution to such passing threats as international communism or Japanese revanchism. Rather, it has been viewed as a central pillar of Australian security policy. In order to achieve a close and intimate security alliance with the United States, Australia has continually sought to obtain, and maintain, its attention and loyalty. This desire to secure US loyalty largely explains Australia's involvement in the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the 2003 Iraq War.

As for Canada, its American guarantee came seemingly free, thanks to the way the political map of North America has developed historically. American power grew over time, but Americans gave up the idea of annexing Canada by force, leaving Canadians to feel more and more 'essentially safe'. Like many times before, Ottawa's interaction with Quebec in 2003 reinforced Canada's Venustian identity. Nowhere did Chrétien's 'no' resonate so positively as in this province. In our analysis, divergent public preferences between two US allies are present at all levels examined—in the Parliaments, public opinion polls and among foreign policy elites. We wish to suggest in closing that this particular Mars–Venus divide is probably not limited to just the Iraq War. The chances are that Australia will continue to act as the most dependable of US allies while Canada will continue to seek symbolic ways to minimise its dependence on its neighbour.

## Notes

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2. The expression was used by prominent Australian commentator Robert Manne (2003) in his comment: 'It is generally agreed that Iraq is John Howard's war'. *Howard's war* is also the title of Alison Broinowski's 2003 book. Also, in *True Believer*, Robert Garran's book on Howard and the US–Australia relationship, Garran (2004: 9) writes that 'essentially' Iraq 'was Howard's war'. See also *Canberra Times* (2003), Franklin (2007), and Grattan (2003).
3. An opposition foreign policy critic of Chrétien's foreign policy, Canadian Alliance Member of Parliament Jason Kenney, stated in Parliament that: 'the Prime Minister finally has a legacy. He is the first prime minister in Canadian history to abandon our British and American allies at a time of need, and has brought Canada–US relations to their lowest level in modern times' (Taber 2003; see also Wilson-Smith 2003).
4. To be sure, Chrétien's was hardly a resolute 'no'. A week into the invasion, when pressed on the question of whether Ottawa was 'with the US' on Iraq, Chrétien answered 'maybe' (*Globe and Mail* 2003). On Chrétien's dithering in the run-up to the war, see Harvey (2004) and Roussel and Massie (2005).
5. We are, of course, simplifying. For a sophisticated comparative account from the leadership perspective, see Doig *et al.* (2007).
6. In this article, we have no space to revisit the venerable agent–structure problem in international relations theory. For a comprehensive discussion, see Wight (2006).

7. According to Michelle Grattan (2006), Thawley ‘lobbied a US Senate subcommittee not to investigate AWB [Australian Wheat Board] as part of a probe into kickbacks to Saddam Hussein’s regime has increased the heat on the Howard Government’. See also Baker (2006), *Courier-Mail* (2006), Overington (2006), *Sydney Morning Herald* (2006), and Wilkinson *et al.* (2006).
8. For an antidote to Goldenberg’s (2006) narrative, see Frank Harvey’s (2004) *Smoke and Mirrors*.
9. The Conservatives in Canada have been organised in multiple parties in the past: the Progressive Conservatives (1867–2003), Canadian Alliance (2000–3), and, currently, the Conservative Party (2003–).
10. After half a century of analysis, there is little scholarly consensus about the impact of public opinion on foreign policy making. For overviews of this nuanced literature, including concepts such as ‘rally around the flag’ or ‘casualty aversion’, see Nincic (1992) as well as Shapiro and Jacobs (2000). What we take from this perspective, as per our general theoretical framework, is that public opinion is *one* of a variety of distinct factors that leaders weigh up when making foreign policy decisions.
11. Using second-hand surveys of public opinion, we hypothesise—following the extant literature—that committing troops to a major war would require support from at least 40 percent of the public. Conversely, the opposition of at least 60 percent makes a decision to go to war less likely (Schuster and Maier 2006). In other words, it is hard to imagine any democracy sending hundreds, let alone thousands, of troops into a ‘war of choice’ with anything less than 40-percent support from the public.
12. Examples include the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer (2003), asserting in Parliament that the ‘issue about Iraq’ was ‘about whether the world has any choice but other than to live in the constant fear of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons left in the hands of vicious dictators’. Connecting Iraq with the ‘War on Terror’, the Howard government declared on a number of occasions that Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction had the potential to be passed on to terrorists. In Parliament on 4 February 2003, Howard (2003a) stated that ‘Iraq’s history of relationships with and support of terrorist organisations magnify our concerns. The rise of international terrorism adds a new and frightening dimension to the threat posed by the proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons’. Connecting the dots at the National Press Club in March, Howard (2003b) suggested that the failure to deal with Iraq meant other ‘rogue States will believe they can do the same’, and this would ‘multiply’ the ‘risk that they [weapons of mass destruction] may fall into the hands of terrorists’. This threat is linked to Australia with the statement that: ‘if terrorists ever get their hands on weapons of mass destruction that will, in my very passionate belief and argument, constitute a direct, undeniable and lethal threat to Australia and its people, and that would be the ultimate nightmare not only for us but other peoples in other nations. That, more than anything else, is the reason why we have taken the stance we have’.
13. Note that opinion in the province of Alberta showed a majority in favour of a US-led assault (Léger, March 2003).
14. The longitudinal research on social values, such as that conducted under the auspices of the World Values Survey, German Marshall Fund/Chicago Council on Foreign Relations or the Pew Research Center, is less conclusive on this point, but judging by the dominant media reception of these findings, contemporary Canadians were indeed comfortable with the idea of ‘North American divergence’ (Maich 2005; cf. Adams *et al.* 2003; Brooks 2006; Resnick 2005). These attitudes should not be chalked up as simple-minded anti-Americanism, however. Canadian anti-Americanism is both ‘unique’, with the United States being central in many aspects of the Canadian body politic, as well as ‘ultra-lite’, meaning that it is highly contingent on particular American policies and administrations (Nossal 2007: 60; see also Granatstein and Hillmer 2001).

15. On more general foreign policy issues, the majority of Australians and Canadians reflect a global support for the US response to 'terrorism', but the same proportion also disagreed rather than agreed with American policies on 'global warming', 'nuclear proliferation', 'world poverty', and 'Israel and Palestine'. It is indicative that significant minorities of both Australians and Canadians said they 'don't know' whether they agree or disagree with American policies (O'Connor 2007a; O'Connor and Griffiths 2006).
16. In fact, while the Canadian numbers resemble those in Britain, the Australian respondents seem to share similar concerns to those in France. When asked, 'Do you think over time this country is becoming more like America or less like America?', 81 percent of Australians, as opposed to 52 percent of Canadians, answered 'more'. When asked, 'Do you think that the influence of American consumer products and entertainment in your country is too great?', 68 percent of Australians as opposed to 44 percent of Canadians answered 'too great'. It would appear that Australians are becoming increasingly Americanised but, generally speaking, 42 percent of Australians 'dislike' American television (a perusal of the prime-time television in Australia any given night would suggest a large number of Australian viewers are masochists). Only 21 percent of Canadians said they 'dislike' American television. Furthermore, 51 percent of Australians said they 'dislike' American food, as opposed to 32 percent of Canadians. Australians and Canadians are generally agreed on questions such as whether Australia/Canada is 'more cultured' or a 'better place to live' than America (O'Connor 2007a).
17. Our treatment of the concept brackets the philosophical and methodological debates on strategic culture, but see Bloomfield and Nossal (2007) and Haglund (2004).
18. There is no accepted definition on 'middle powers'—the concept has, in fact, fallen into considerable disrepute over the last decade—but the general intuition pegs them as also-rans in the cold war game of rising superpowers and declining great powers (Welsh 2004: 585–7; see also Stairs 1998: 271–9). Australia and Canada are often treated as ideal-typical middle powers, where the so-called form and scope of their middle-power behaviour varies, but their middle-power identity does not (Andrew 1993; Chapnick 2005; Cooper 1997; Michaud and Belanger 2000; Ravenhill 1998). Good international citizenship refers to foreign policies driven by internationalism, multilateralism and even cosmopolitanism (Lightfoot 2006).

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