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CULTURAL EXCHANGE: ANOTHER CANADA–US
CONTINENTAL DIVIDE OVER LIBERALISM

Introduction

Canadian Studies are often situated in the broader frame of North American Studies. This is appropriate given the New World continental landscape and its economic and political realities. North American Studies in turn often focus on America's perceived hegemonic role with Canadian participation relegated to that of a benign observer. This view is very complementary to Canada, but fails to acknowledge how influential the single-border relationship is between Canada and the United States, especially for trade relations, resource extraction and use. Nor does it consider how nuanced the cultural exchange is between the two nations. Canada and the United States have built upon and re-examined transatlantic foundational concerns about individual rights; despite an early convergence, pivotal outcomes and oscillating concerns on social issues thereafter set the stage for an extreme American neo-Conservative resistance to an "excessively liberal" Canada. Canada's mainstream, subtly nationalist response, channeled by its iconic Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), has tried to portray a more balanced but detached socially democratic edge, difficult due to its overwhelming dependence on the American market. This paper sets out conceptual

before analyzing key aspects of North American political economy that impact continental interpretations of "liberalism". It considers Canada's geopolitical and metaphorical coming-of-age—a prolonged adolescence—compared to America's bold beginning, focusing on the critical separation era of World War I and its aftermath, and the peripheral shift of

dependency from empire to a predominantly continental alliance. Mass communications in Canada continue to have a resounding influence on this path, with the critical perspectives of Marshall McLuhan and Harold Innis embedded in Canada's orientation, although globalization pressures are adding new challenges.

Cultural Exchange, Technology and Liberalism

Cultural exchange has inherent challenges associated with technological change, shifting geo-politics and morality. The study of culture and prior concentration on anthropological comparison have long required reflection upon cultural relativism (Kluckhohn 1949), especially when biology, circumstance and economic behavior are considered. It also requires the explicit recognition of both researcher subjectivity and the bi-directional impact entailed whenever something social is studied (Dewey and Bentley 1949). These principles of inquiry resonate in the enduring debate of Atlanticism versus differentiated Eurocentricism and Americanocentrism (Kroes 2009). There cannot be, within this conceptual frame, any unilateral sovereign effect nor any detached colonial (or post-colonial) influence.

Technology long ago accelerated travel and personal contact, with established trade of materials and goods ensuring reciprocal learning. Momentous developments such as the Gutenberg Press (1436), with its movable type, first introduced speed and flexibility into widespread information exchange; subsequent technological leaps (such as computer processing, the Internet and visual imaging) have long exceeded the basic human thirst for knowledge and advancing philosophical thought. Unchecked, the drive for suppleness in contact and entertainment may ironically impose both a yoke and a yearning. It could foster an over-stimulated, over-burdened obligation to ferret out piecemeal data and instantaneously process fragments¹; this in turn could lead to knowledge transiency rather than accumulation, desensitization, blanket censorship or other institutional retrenchment of information exchange. Technological advancement, as such, has the potential to work against meaningful cultural exchange and reflection. At a meta-level, the worrisome trend

¹ The increased use of split-screen imaging in TV and film formats reflects the pressure to multi-task visual processing. It inevitably reduces the appreciation and interpretation of each image.

towards “technopoly” (Postman 1992) with the deification of technology (as a “tool of tools”) and the “surrender of culture to technology” could be viewed as a somewhat villainous socio-behavioral inclination intent on securing the domination of worldviews. America, as an imagined hegemony, cannot be held singularly responsible for this almost universal human tendency.

Discussion of villainous intentions and censorship as a barrier to idealized free exchange of ideas reaffirms the need to consider technological change along with geo-political developments and morality. As suggested above, value orientation is implicit in even the most rigorous inquiry. A personal reflection is thus, at some point, justified. One could subjectively argue that without the *liberal* principles of free thought and speech, seeded in Roman times and developed progressively since the 17th century, the movement towards universal rights would falter, autocratic rule would prevail, stilted adversarial dialogue would overwhelm balanced dialectics, and inequities would remain unchallenged. For those advocating science and reason over religion and faith, the paramount quest for rationality can drive a concern for the lost opportunity to ask questions, address assumptions, test authority and apply a structured theoretical approach to consider the pressing issues of the day. But not all modern religions require blind faith: a “religion” can be broadly interpreted as “something which has a powerful hold on a person’s way of thinking, interests, etc.” or simply a “worldview” with a “system of beliefs and practices relating to the sacred and uniting its adherents in a community” (Webster’s Dictionary, 1987)

“Liberal economics” can thus be viewed as a culturally-embedded *religion* on the Western front, adding another worldview dimension impacting cultural exchange and liberal practices generally. When this complex paradigm is synergistically bundled with an overlay of Christian endorsement—as clearly occurs in the U.S. *Declaration of Independence*—the entrenched beliefs in competitive free market capitalism impart *sacredness* to monetary exchange, with dominance over cooperation and less unitized forms of reciprocal exchange. The resulting inequitable accumulation of knowledge and wealth can thereafter be justified in terms of this framework with all persons equally granted the *right to compete*²; a wide array of conduct becomes defensible not only for basic survival, but also for happiness and the protection of property.

² But not necessarily the *means* to do so.

The collective entity's survival is driven by progress in turn, gauged by expansion and material growth. America's cathartically-legitimized, more rigid constitutional foundation and these justifications reflect the European-coined notion of Social Darwinism with the promotion of highly individualized self-interest³ and the reliance upon economic instruments to fairly distribute goods and wealth. Individual success results from either the "survival of the fittest" or dishonesty and speculation—an obvious mix of exclusionary and predatory practices—with less obvious collective impacts in terms of stability. The unbalanced pursuit of competition over cooperation adds inherent instability, as Elinor Ostrom⁴ demonstrated: "rational" individual self-interests must be tempered by reciprocity, familiarity and trust, backed by a cooperative *behavioral* theory of collective action, to ensure community resilience and support formal economic structures (Rolfe 2004).

Any reader may now be wondering why my focus rests first and foremost upon the American value framework rather than Canada's differentiated orientation. The reasoning is clear: the continental geopolitical reality for Canada is that of economic dependence, with 80% of Canadian exports routed to the United States. So, whereas Canada might ideally wish to pursue a consistent, *modern social democratic* approach—distanced from socialism *per se* in its practical, hybridized mix of social welfare policies and relatively efficient capitalist mechanisms and private ownership—it appears hopelessly engaged in a schizophrenic, structured but pragmatic dance for the sake of supporting its own more community-than individually-focused agenda. Arguments supporting more intervention and regulation in banking and social services often rest upon a conservatism⁵ driven by this peripheral, lopsided economic reality. Canada, spread out as it is, has a more vulnerable economic position especially during a downturn, along with lesser economies of scale, the need for more quasi-monopolistic structures in transportation and com-

³ It is important to note that Adam Smith, despite his more popular argument for the efficient redistribution of labour and wealth via money ("the invisible hand", from *The Wealth of Nations*), preferred his own first work, the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. He observed that, despite humanity's inclination towards self-interest, there was also the ability and compelled desire to apply moral judgments to collective actions.

⁴ Co-winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics 2009.

⁵ This cautionary social welfare approach should not be confused with the Conservative political agenda.

munications, and a general acknowledgement that, for smaller populations on the fringe, you have to take care of all community members even if this means a collective, almost paternalistic, imposition of sacrifice on individual liberties⁶ and the bridling of free speech⁷.

For the transatlantic cultures, there were 19th century developments and reassessments in the connection of liberalism with economics. The argument, under “social or modern liberalism” was that governments were now able to offer more freedom by providing broader social services; this had many skeptics, unsettled by the corollary notion that unrestrained capitalism automatically hindered freedom. This led to a reassessment and to “*neo-liberalism*” with a negative stigma thereafter associated with *social* liberalism. Neo-liberalism prevailed with economic policies driven by monetarist principles accepting only an affordable level of social services. As Bertrand Russell highlighted, the growing “liberal idealism” as an over-arching mindset was becoming problematic: the continuing underlying assumption that monetary mechanisms alone could efficiently reallocate goods and optimize labour distribution—through an “invisible hand”—was not being reflected in global equity. The global circumstance is such that many groups are more advanced and others lag behind in terms of their technological progress, economic activity, pursuit of individual rights and accumulation of wealth and influence. Using neo-liberal economics, especially when coupled with development⁸ economics, did not appear to sufficient generate “catch-up”. The need to counter over-confidence in neo-liberal economics is evidenced by the *growing* disparity between rich and poor, and North and South, despite subsequent thrusts of Keynesian and modern welfare economics.

The account offered here reveals a subjective, typically apologetic Canadian perspective, reflecting a national autonomy submerged and world influence rendered largely impotent. It reveals a perennial adolescent bellyache driven by relative affluence, emancipation and leisure, with a particular brand of naivety and idealism disassociated from recurrent centuries-old conflicts and international economic realities.

⁶ A commonly cited example is that of forced use of motorcycle and bicycle helmets.

⁷ That is, especially where free speech leads to statements reflecting prejudice and causing undue harm.

⁸ Development economics, in the early stage, typically led to unsustainable borrowing and obligations to purchase goods from the funder.

North America's coming of age and Canada's metaphorical past

As argued prior, cultural exchange in North America can be neither dissociated from age-old philosophical traditions nor from continuing networked transatlantic influences. Given our colonial pasts and Western European affinities, it is commonplace to see selective European continental philosophies cited. The Age of Enlightenment is highlighted for the origins of liberalism, with John Locke's (1690) underscoring of the live and let live principle ("no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions"), providing a foundation for Rousseau's (1762) specified "Rights of Man". This combination could be partly responsible for Canada and the United States' earlier shared, isolationist stance, along with the sense that a separate, juxtaposed set of utopian dreams could be pursued. There are, however, far too many notable figures and movements associated with the rich 19th and 20th century European philosophical development to definitively argue this case here. Rather, a more obvious argument is that the linguistic, partnered assumptions of English (as the "objective" language of business) and French (as a counterbalancing emotive expression) have left a lingering flat dialectic that excludes full consideration of alternative languages and views⁹.

Obvious connections between the American *Declaration of Independence* (1776) and the writings of European philosophers, especially Locke, must be acknowledged with further credit to the French revolutionary precedent. Atlanticism, as an exchange with imagined *northern* two-directional flow, must acknowledge a further layering of southern and international networking that impacted the United States and Canada's coming of age. Compared to Canada's gradual, hand-holding exploration of identity, the United States had an abrupt, revolutionary right of passage with a pivotal impetus linked to the triangular transatlantic subjugation of Africans and other citizens of regional colonies. Both nations dealt poorly as well with the internal issues of dominance and displacement of aboriginal North Americans, as well as later immigrants. The Dominion of Canada took a lesser rebellious path¹⁰, satisfying its

⁹ Many of which have percolated through both England and France's earlier thinking, for example, with aspects of Marxism, German idealism, phenomenology and existentialism incorporated.

¹⁰ Only lesser insofar as the Louis Riel rebellion was also a pivotal event albeit not as widespread as the American Revolution.

English rulers with maintenance of peace, order and good government on the Western front, while constructing east-west communications and transportation networks to protect the Empire's interests and buffer Canadian territory from its neighbour. Canada has respectfully and incrementally pursued a gradual independence, emulating British constitutional structures and practicing common law, constructing legislation and setting precedents which embody many principles of Western European liberalism. One example is Canada's alignment with the United Nation's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), which led to a suite of meshed Canadian national and provincial legal mechanisms intended to protect the human rights of Canadians. These include the 1982 *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982), the 1977 *Canadian Human Rights Act* (which explicitly advocates equal opportunity without discrimination on the basis of gender, disability or religion), and the 1977 *Canadian Human Rights Commission*.

Despite these international influences, immediate geo-political realities prevail. Canada has had considerable experience living on the periphery of an abyss, off its Eastern, Northern and Western shores, with the Atlantic, Arctic and Pacific Oceans offering ample separation outside its continental landscape. Canada also lies in the shadow of a giant, with the Canadian population concentrated very close to its southern border and the United States superpower offering its only significant land-based neighbour¹¹. Canadian territory and identity, respectively protected and fostered through east-west conduits, has relied heavily on innovations in electric media and a strong federalist vision to coordinate activities across disparate regions. Mass communications is more than a powerful tool in Canada: it is the socio-political glue that helps the country overcome environmental determinism, a looking glass through which it can observe its awesome neighbour as well as its own response. Here the renowned words of communications theorist, Marshall McLuhan, resound: that the "medium is the message"—that *any* media image or idea is inescapably distilled and contrived as it passes through a lens.

¹¹ Canada also has close island neighbours: France's St. Pierre-et-Miquelon islands just off southern Newfoundland and Denmark's Greenland which lies largely within the Arctic Circle.

This embedded Canadian awareness of the lens and its refashioned reality—historically but not necessarily universally¹² retained—has long given rise to a detachment rather than a cynicism, reinforced through well-publicized efforts to consider both sides in debates, on a single national public broadcasting service. This sense of detachment also provides a partial permission to enjoy “harmless” entertainment, even if the explicit and subliminal messages are anything but harmless. Canada’s less defensive and cynical attitude towards American media, compared to other nations, may simply reveal more practice dealing with America up close and personal, waking up each morning to find there’s been no invasion to secure Canada’s resource reservoirs¹³. Canada’s general tolerance is clearly tied to the view that mass media is essential for collective action, news, weather and entertainment—all critical for *survival* in a more northerly, sparsely populated nation. In many respects, North American experience has been moderate: Canada did not confront, on its own land¹⁴, the point-blank tyranny of the Third Reich or its blatant propaganda. The United States, in contrast, experienced direct hits on Pearl Harbour as well as its marine routes. Both countries, through their WWI and WWII efforts had to deal critically with information transmissions, with coded messages and manufactured realities, but this does not set them aside from the experiences of many other allies.

The United States with its milder climate, greater population density, rich resources and productivity, and more openly networked communities more quickly established its own independent economic engine. In contrast, Canada’s path has long remained that of a colonial-styled “staple

¹² One cannot assume that all Canadians share this heritage of media “detachment”. Immigration has had considerable socio-cultural impact in Canada and there are now many alternative language channels, conveying other worldviews, i.e. Bollywood. The Canadian 1st Nation’s receptivity to English and French media, and counteraction with their own customized media formulation, is also a case deserving more attention.

¹³ Sadly, no invasion is necessary: Canada does not have adequately strict rules on foreign ownership.

¹⁴ Canada was nevertheless impacted by the war on native soil: the Halifax Explosion (1917), set off when two allied cargo ships collided, was one of the country’s most devastating incidents—and remains the “world’s largest man-made accidental explosion” (Wikipedia)—killing 2,000 people and injuring over 9,000 others.

economy”¹⁵ (Innis 1930) reliant on the export of unprocessed primary resources. The resulting entrenched imagery of dependency meshes awkwardly with Canada’s early metaphors of vulnerability and humbleness in the face of nature. The wish for independence coupled with a lack of confidence created national adolescent angst. Much has been made of Canada’s thematic pursuit of “survival” (Atwood 1972), perhaps best portrayed in Earle Birney’s fatalistic epic poem, *David*¹⁶. Trepidation of the natural elements waned earlier in American historical discourse and soon either a mastery of the landscape was celebrated or a truce declared: *The Virginian* regards the struggling Wyoming territory with both awe and promise, the natural flow of *A River Runs Through It* and *Legends of the Fall* is echoed in behavioral choices but does not fully constrain them¹⁷. American Frontier icons continue to be celebrated, as unconstrained Marlborough cowboys securing individual freedom by using the most basic of tools and sheer bravado. In Canada, mastery of things natural has never been assumed: the natural environment and human biological frailties prevail, with resistance falling away to acquiescence in Atom Egoyan’s tragic Canadian films, *The Sweet Hereafter* and *Away From Her*.

World War I and its Aftermath: A Rocky Road for Liberalism

The outcomes of World War I spun an oscillating trajectory of operational prerogatives linked to interpretations of “liberalism”. WWI (1914–1918) was a colossal tragedy, not only in the millions of lives lost but also in the shattering of Western European optimism. The momentum was broken for contemplating conditions *liberalis* (Greek), as those “suitable for a free man”: the idealism of Locke, Smith, Kant, Jefferson, Paine, Mill and others—firmly transatlantic in their appeal—was confronted by bitter realities. This first worldwide conflict fundamentally

¹⁵ The staples theory argues that Canada’s socio-political and economic history was largely tied to resource extraction and export, including various staples such as fur, fish, wheat, wood, minerals and fossil fuels.

¹⁶ In this poem, the narrator Bob stumbles through an early adult rite of passage, being forced (through observation) to acknowledge Nature’s awe and impartiality: his companion, David, echoing the biblical David and Goliath struggle, is drawn to climb a challenging peak but tragically falls to his death.

¹⁷ Authors were respectively: Owen Wister (*The Virginian*, 1928), Norman Maclean (*A River Runs Through It*, 1976), and Jim Harrison (*Legends of the Fall*, 1978).

shifted the European outlook, sobered North American mindsets, prompted a problematic response, and set the stage for another widespread war. Both Canada and the United States were significantly involved in the wars, but their motivations differed sharply as did the paths taken.

Canada automatically entered the war when Britain declared war on Germany, with Canada's Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden, passing the 1914 *War Measures Act*. Despite its colonial obligation, WWI also offered Canada a right of passage. The new military policy it specified ensured that Canadian troops were kept together and national recognition was given for their valiant efforts in the battles of Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele and other critical locations. Borden had initially committed 500,000 troops to support the cause, but news of enormous casualties and deplorable trench conditions diminished the enthusiasm of volunteers. The government's introduction of the *Military Service Act* (1917) led to a political and military crisis (the Conscription Crisis): it challenged the right to choose to fight or not, to live and let live (Locke), or choose to avoid conditions which were unfair or prejudicial¹⁸. Canada's internal political circumstance was also moving the country further away from alignment with the United States—away from the 1911 Liberal-led negotiations of free trade (“reciprocity”)¹⁹.

Canada's rights as a dominion within the British Empire were re-cast. Its seat at the Paris Peace Conference was earned by proficiency and bravery, and Canada (along with the other dominions) now also had the right to be an independent signatory on the Treaty of Versailles as well as hold separate membership in the League of Nations. Canada's commitment in WWI and its pursuit of conditions *liberalis* both challenged and transcended individual and economic rights: it recognized through symbolic sacrifice and political commitment—abroad as well as at

¹⁸ The greater reluctance on the part of French Canadians to join the military effort stemmed from the reported preference for English Protestant commanders and associated linguistic challenges and prejudices.

¹⁹ Borden's continuation as Conservative leader and Prime Minister was at risk, but he salvaged his position by skillfully soliciting support from opposition Liberal ranks¹⁹ and establishing a coalition Unionist government. This alliance countered the depleted English Liberal party, removing Unionist interests further from Liberal initiatives such as the 1911 debate over free trade with the United States. Interestingly enough, Borden had himself been a prior Liberal party member.

home—that the ideal of liberalism would require ongoing retrospection and negotiation.

When WWI broke out, the United States was determined to remain neutral, continuing its international trade under a unilateral approach. Two critical circumstances nevertheless led to America's 1917 decision to participate as an "associated power"²⁰: its international shipping was being threatened and it was revealed that Germany had appealed²¹ to Mexico for a military alliance. President Woodrow Wilson, however, not only argued for the protection of American trade and territory, but also idealistically for the support of liberal ideas, consistent with the United States' declaration of self-evident rights. In his message to Congress on February 26, 1917, Wilson argued for the protection of the "ultimate base of our existence and our liberty", suggesting that this was a crucial moment when civilization itself was at stake through an attack on human rights. As compelling as his words were, and as pivotal as America's role was in the Allies' success, the US Senate later refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, which in turn, would have supported the League of Nations, which Wilson personally favoured. The United States returned, during the interwar period, to its prior more neutral position, letting economics rule through its unilateral trade policies.

In the inter-war period, there were parallel developments on liberties within Canada and the United States. Women's suffrage gained gradual momentum, despite the far earlier (pre-18th century) French leadership on this cause. Recognition of American women's rights began in Wyoming in 1869, likely intended to establish more stable structures on the rugged frontier. Nation-wide, American women's voting rights were not established until 1920 when President Woodrow Wilson passed the Nineteenth Amendment. In Canada, early initiatives started first in Ontario in 1884, when unmarried women and widows were allowed to vote in municipal elections, and then in Manitoba when in 1916 women were permitted to vote in provincial elections. It was not until 1919 that all Canadian women were granted the right to vote federally, with the

²⁰ As such it did not join as a direct "ally" with the members of the Triple Entente (the United Kingdom, France and Russian Empire) which had formally declared war on the Ottoman Empire.

²¹ This appeal was evident in the intercepted Zimmerman Telegram.

provinces for the most part following suit²². Although this progress seems fragmented, it must be acknowledged that, in England, women did not have equal rights to vote until 1928, and the United Nations only introduced a declaration for universal women's voting rights in 1948. One could argue, as such, that this North American rights outcome was quite influential. The same could be said for the 1960s–1970s feminist movement led by iconic American figures, Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan, with the prominence of female political activists assisted thereafter (with Rachel Carson, for example, writing the bestseller, *The Silent Spring*).

Post-war economic and social conditions were generally bleak in Canada but less congruent in the United States. For soldiers returning from war, there were fewer job opportunities; women had joined the workforce to assist in the war cause and some remained, and the economic and physical costs of the war overall took a major toll. The cost of the war was reported as \$1 billion for Canada and substantially more, at \$32 billion, for the United States; however, the economic spin-offs of America's involvement in European reconstruction created wealth for trading industrialists and financiers, so the resulting American recession was short-lived. The 1918 flu²³, transmitted home from Europe after the war, substantially disrupted the economic and social fabric of both countries, killing mostly youthful healthy persons. In Canada, this H1N1-variant flu epidemic claimed over 50,000 persons, close to the nation's 67,000 WWI casualties. In the United States, it was even more devastating, affecting roughly 28% of the population and causing over 500,000 deaths, close to one-half of their 116,708 souls lost in WWI. In Canada, the disruption was compounded by the 173,000 Canadians who returned home from World War I with injuries. This rate of injuries was far higher (relative to troop strength) than that in the United States: in fact, it came close to 85% of the 204,002 Americans injured²⁴.

²² The notable exception was Quebec which withheld women's right to vote provincially until 1940.

²³ The 1918 worldwide flu pandemic killed in excess of 50 million and disrupted commerce worldwide.

²⁴ Sourced from:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history_of_Canada_during_WWI,
Stewart Wallace (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Canada* (1848), and
<http://www.americanwarlibrary.com/allwars.htm>.

The aftermath of war led to the reassessment of rights across various segments of society. In Canada, the overall labour disruption and economic suffering led to intensified, broad-based unionization²⁵, culminating in the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, and giving rise to a reactive armed force focused on strikebreaking. Prime Minister Mackenzie King argued for greater regional concern, countering the industrial-heartland and centralized Canadian influence while pushing for greater independence from the United Kingdom through a redefined role for the Governor General²⁶. This push for decentralization saw Canada's sovereign identity within continental North America bolstered through the establishment of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, encouraging Canadian cultural content and counter-acting growing American radio media influence. Despite this drive towards greater autonomy, there is evidence that Canada was coincidentally shifting to a more continental approach, avoiding external conflicts²⁷ and seeking closer diplomatic ties²⁸ with the United States. Overall, the two nations were moving more so in concert, grasping their new military stature, reassessing their international involvement, and pursuing unilateral arrangements from an isolationist²⁹ position with the benefits of trade considered foremost. The result was a shift away from the internationalist momentum established overseas by the League of Nations, where many citizens were seeking

²⁵ In particular, there was an effort to improve working conditions universally, with Canadian trade unionists establishing One Big Union (the OBU), an entity criticized by some as excessively socialist.

²⁶ The Governor General is Canada's ceremonial head of state, continuing a degree of formality respectful of Canada's prior dominion role.

²⁷ The *Foreign Enlistment Act* of 1937 restricted Canadians from participating in foreign wars. Nevertheless, 1,546 volunteers served in the Spanish Civil War, when the legitimate Spanish government was challenged by Francisco Franco's uprising, backed by Nazi Germany and Fascist allies in Italy.

²⁸ Canada entered into a fisheries treaty with the United States and opened its own embassy in Washington".

²⁹ One indication of the withdrawal from the global community was the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924 which sought to keep demographics status quo, restricting new immigrants to 2% of that ethnic population already resident in the States.

broader collective protection, now more so apprehensive of nationalist zeal and cynical about life outcomes and the exercise of authority³⁰.

The American “Roaring Twenties” optimism was soon extinguished by the worldwide Great Depression, triggered by excessive speculation and the resulting 1929 Wall Street stock market crash. Regional employment and confidence fell further as North America entered the widespread, prolonged prairie Dustbowl conditions of 1930-1936. Canada was now more fully integrated as a peripheral continental economy; this dependency upon the inflated American market was reflected in Canada’s dampened industrial output, not quite as severe as America’s, but far worse than the post-1929 performance in Britain. Canada’s continued reliance upon primary goods export proved especially problematic. Unemployment in Canada and the U.S. rose to 27% and 25% respectively, resulting in mass migrations across provinces and states, with soup lines and fledgling social safety nets³¹ set up. With North American relocation, new improved prospects were not assured but regional diversity offered more hope than it did in Britain where many men were sent to work camps and unemployment soared to 90% in some locations, sparking massive hunger marches³².

America’s New Deal reconstruction effort rekindled hope for a revived economy. Incoming President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt pursued an aggressive counter-cyclical infrastructure investment strategy and instigated a number of labour service programs. The Canadian Conservative Prime Minister, R.B. Bennett, also assumed the helm under these difficult conditions and partly mimicked Roosevelt’s approach by supporting the expensive Canadian National Railway³³; the Conservatives otherwise promoted business, banking and revitalized trade within the British Empire, shifting away from continental alignment with the United States.

³⁰ The Nihilist movement in particular reflected a reluctance to accept government or social objectives, asserting that morality was not inherent but contrived and formal power structures were often simply manipulative.

³¹ This development was more so evident in Canada where veterans pushed for social welfare programs, arguing their rights on the basis of prior sacrifices made.

³² Sourced from: <http://www.thegreatdepression.co.uk/unemployment-during-the-great-depression/>.

³³ The counter-cyclical economic advantages of infrastructure construction in Canada is very different than that in the United States: the predominantly east-west corridor of Canada offers far fewer network opportunities and economies of scale compared to the hub-driven transportation grid of the United States.

The Canadian Conservative government thus established a strong *laissez-faire* reputation by adhering to traditional neo-classical economic principles and remaining largely indifferent³⁴ to the suffering of citizens and provincial authorities. With Roosevelt openly admired by many Canadians for his bold, compassionate efforts, the indifference on the part of the Canadian Conservatives led to greater dissatisfaction and a more broad-based, socially-driven political Liberal agenda, backed by protest movements. Winning the 1935 election as the Depression wound down, incoming Prime Minister MacKenzie King offered Canadians housing and employment relief programs while also supporting the establishment of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, National Film Board, Bank of Canada, and Air Canada.

Conclusion

Cultural exchange between Canada and the United States has developed a complex melodic character. There are many variations on Western European traditions and prior classical structures that underscore North America's social and economic life, political thought, institutions, and the practice of law. Despite their divergent histories, these two nations maintain a remarkable post-Colonial alliance: the resounding timbre of America's behemoth economic base softens to a compatible hum of largely coordinated continental resource and trade flows. Canada's sovereignty and independent path, along with its distinctly community-oriented and human rights vision, has at times struck a disparate chord with its single land-based neighbour. Canada's self-sufficiency has never been assumed—it remains largely a staple economy—but its national autonomy is nonetheless safeguarded, buttressed by transatlantic relations and recurrent, albeit more subtle nationalist refrains. Canadians remain acutely aware of the consolidating role of communications—its critical role in maintaining a buffer, as an east-west Continental Divide—with the power of the lens and the importance of maintaining responsive communications conduits acknowledging a geo-political subjectivity, with disparate environmental challenges and Canada's preoccupation with survival. The outcomes of World War I and its aftermath were particu-

³⁴ This approach offered incentives rather than relief to guide economic behaviour, assumed the market would optimally allocate resources, and relied on work camps for regulated control of unemployed men.

larly influential to the evolving relationships between the two countries and how they chose to explore, together and apart, transatlantic initiatives related to liberalism and human rights.

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