

Canadian Values: Understanding Our Values in a Global Context

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"Connecting with Canadians" Canadian Policy Research Networks Leadership
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Good afternoon. First of all I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me today. Sharon has shown great courage and skill in evolving CPRN to meet the formidable challenges it is confronted. The current project vividly indicates just how relevant CPRN can be. There are so few sources of creative thinking about our medium and longer term future.

Secondly, I would like to offer my sincere apologies for the photo of me appearing in the program brochure. As one of my colleagues noted, Sharon must have got it from my high school yearbook. I will speak today about the growing generational divide in Canada. The nostalgic picture wasn't an attempt to bridge the gap. Rather another illustration of CPRN ingenuity as we were moving and could not provide a more up-to-date version.

Outline

The purpose of this presentation is to:

1. To situate the CPRN project in a broader political and societal context.
2. To talk about "values"; their uses and abuses as tools of public policy and to make some brief observations about what's unique (and what's not) about Canadian values.
3. To offer some broad observations / surprising antidotes to some of the received wisdom on the five challenges noted by CPRN.
4. To conclude with a simple set of alternative futures which are currently vying to define Canada's place in North America and the world in the 21st C.



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Introduction: The Project in the Current Context

Political climate and policy options?

- Institutional mistrust, vision lacuna
- Canadians suffering from “primary envy” as they look south?
- CPRN project an ambitious and resonant response to daunting challenges of 21st C. policy architecture

Current national outlook is a mixture of strong positives and profound challenges; mistrust has produced thin minorities and a focus on short-term exigencies.

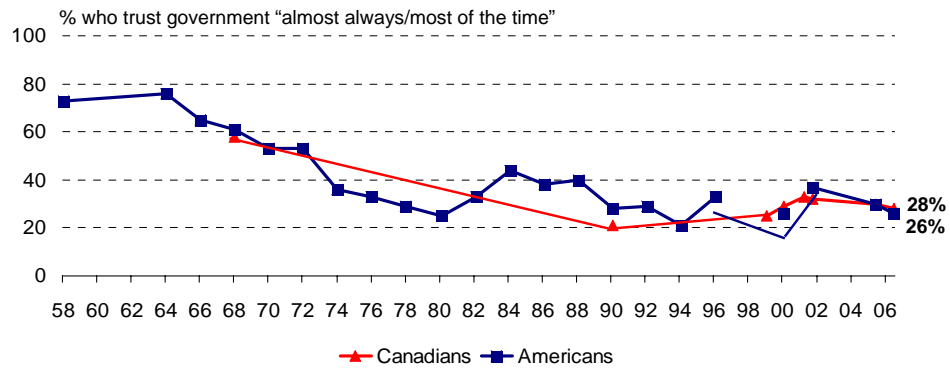
- If economy is up, why are Canadians so down? (e.g., QoL is not up, dark view of future, progress paradox, decency deficit)
- But, Canadian public “fundamentals” are healthier than Americans; even stronger vision thirst
- Cycle of hope and fear still leans to fear (security ethic); nervous 90s ended with high hopes for technology, trade and globalization
- Latent post-boomer agenda / values frustrated by confused / potential non-linear succession strategy (looming generational storm?)



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Trust in Government

Q. How much do you trust the government in [Ottawa / Washington] to do what is right?"



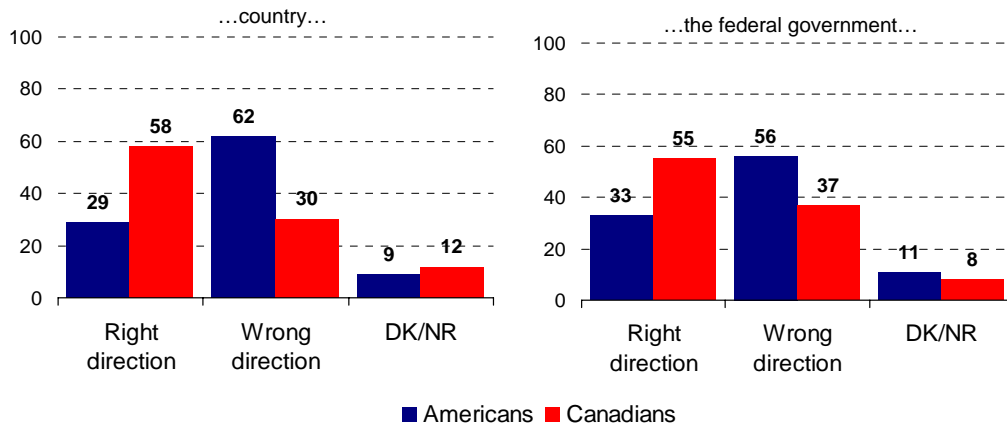
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Base - Most recent data points: Canada, May 06 n=1524; U.S., Nov. 06 n=1500

- Antidote to the view that trust is a local problem
- Note lock-step pattern (extends broader)
- Most indicators suggest things are same, possibly better than 1990
- Cultural shifts (western phenomenon); individualism, post-materialism, decline of traditional authority
- Old elite accommodation disguised for deferential, poorly educated, anachronistic
- Search for renewal trust wrong-headed
- Inclusion, transparency, results

Direction of the country / government

Q. All things considered, would you say ... is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?



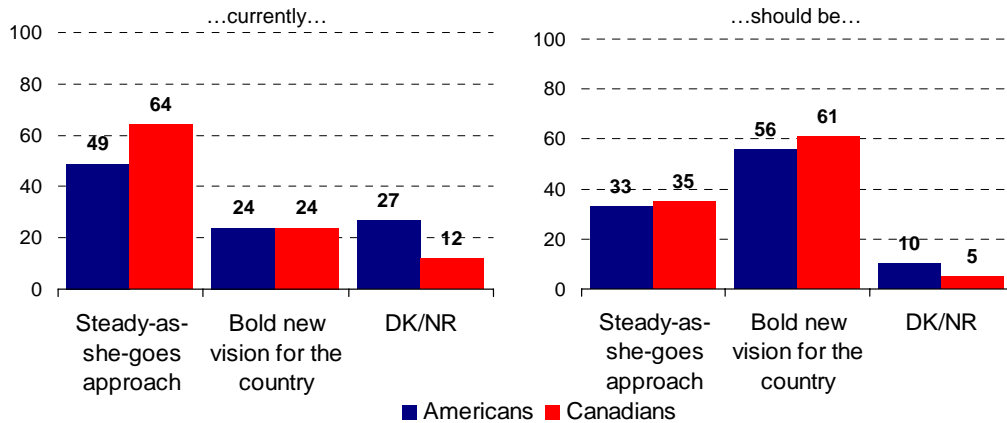
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Base - Americans, May 07 n=half sample; Canadians, May 07 n=half sample

- Bordering on a legitimacy crisis in the U.S.
- Legacy of failed security (foreign policy) strategy; but consensus that security should still be the focus.

Vision or Steady-As-She-Goes?

Q. Which of the following best describes the way the United States / Canadian federal government is [currently / should be] operating? Is it...



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Base - Americans, May 07 n=1000; Canadians, May 07 n=half sample

- Agenda of accountability, crime, war on terror, taxes for boomer and senior cohorts
- Agenda of environment, knowledge, internationalism for post-boomers

A Note on Values

Normative statements about generalized beliefs as to what is good and bad; kind of society we would want to hand off to our children.

- Strengths:
 - Stable and reliable
 - Deal with collective preferences / “good society”
 - Broad convergence

- Caveats:
 - Definitional complexity
 - Problem of pluralism (unitary framework not possible)
 - State needs more neutral framing (e.g., tolerance)
 - Growing view that both state (rationalism) and marketplace (profit) have had a corrosive influence on values (role for other sectors and institutions?)

Also – 1) elite / public normative rupture and 2) growing generational storm



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Canadian Values in an International Context

Globalization and Clash of Civilizations?

- Shift from material / capital conflict to ideological / normative conflict
- Demographic and political economic basis too

Post-Material Rhythms

- Advanced western world converging in values
- Canadian-American differences small, and narrowing (not fire and ice; ice and steam?)

But - unique Canadian values exist:

- Statism / collectivism (trajectory with U.S. stable)
- Moralism / ideology (trajectory with U.S. stable)
- Cosmopolitanism (trajectory with U.S. widening; stronger with youth)
- Environment (trajectory with U.S. widening?; stronger with youth)

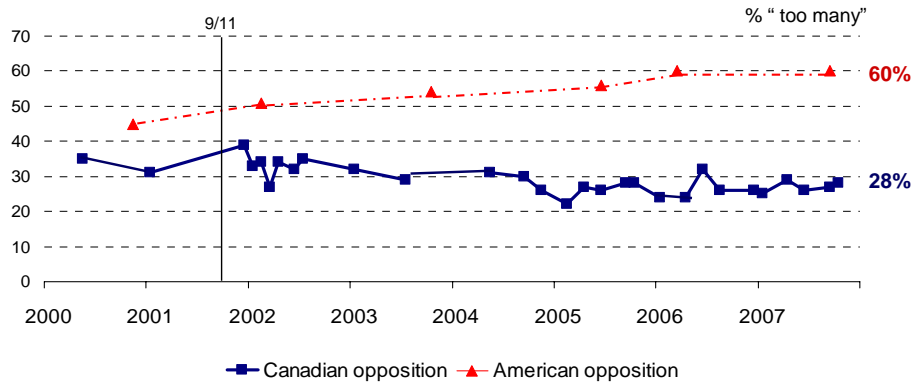
More than sufficient differences to underpin vibrant and distinctive identities (and alternate national choices such as Iraq, same-sex, and social policy)



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Opposition to immigration – trend since 9/11

Q. In your opinion do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?



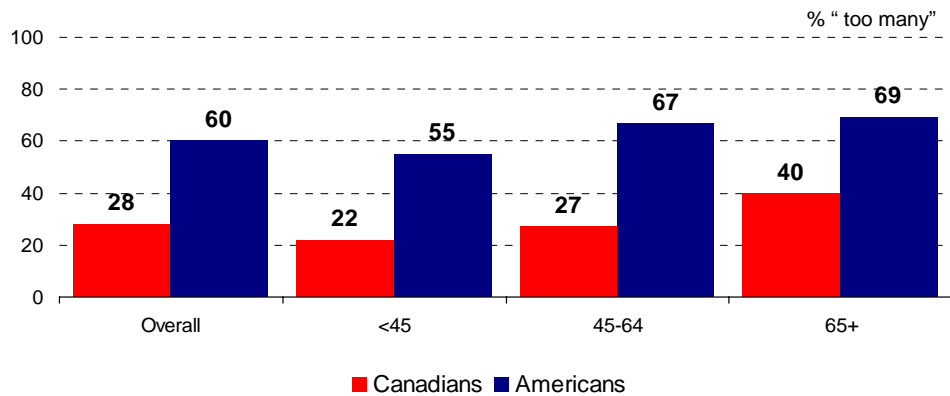
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Base – Most recent data points from Sep. / Oct. 07

- Hot button issue in U.S.
- Why is Canada going in a different path?
- Gap is much stronger in youth and urban Canada
- Reinforced by values and demographics
- Attitudes to immigration not the same as attitudes to multiculturalism or tolerance
- Potential for unique Canada
- Post nationalism (peripatetic/ trade) footprint

Demographic differences in opposition to immigration

Q. In your opinion do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?



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Base - Canadians Oct. 07 n=1000; Americans Sep. 07 n=1003

- Drivers?
 - In U.S. – Mexico, security, isolationism, parochialism
 - In Canada – labour market, economic vulnerability, cultural insecurity
- Also evident in other areas
 - Security / civil liberties
 - U.S. relations
 - Environment

Broad Observations on the Five Challenges

1. *Citizenship*

- Old style trust model anachronistic – identity models in flux
- New focus is on transparency, inclusion, and results
- “Recovering trust” is a chimera
- Legitimacy, transparency, and relevance are the new yardsticks
- Emergence of newer models accommodating pluralism (hyper nationalism) – obvious tensions with security

2. *Diversity & Canadian Values*

- Multiculturalism as a folk concept (as opposed to official policy) remains resonant
- Immigration hotly debated, but not a ballot box issue in Canada (unlike U.S. or Europe)
- Current favourable attitudes blend humanitarianism & instrumentalism
- Value also stronger and growing
- Demographics – ethnic diversity of young Canada



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Broad Observations on the Five Challenges (continued)

3. *Productivity & Skills*

- Today, compared to a decade ago, citizens are more confident and cosmopolitan
- Dramatic age and education affect, with optimism for personal future highest among the young and better educated
- Optimism linked to higher receptivity for competitiveness / productivity / Quality of life; boomer/ post-boomers problematic
- Citizens are not afraid of p-word; skills / knowledge key to personalizing
- Shift skills transfer to workplace

4. *Health & Human Capital*

- Health care remains top priority for the federal government (although environment is highly interdependent); precipitous decline in confidence arrested
- Debate on privatization approaching parity
- Unacceptable lag with progress in certain areas of policy consensus (e.g., electronic health records, homecare)
- In general, human capital investment is a top and growing priority for Canadians



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Broad Observations on the Five Challenges (continued)

5. *The environment*

- Not the explosive new issue of the day (elevated from penultimate to pinnacle concern)
- Transformation from idealism to threat
- High level of ambiguity; large words / deeds gap (heroic inflation)
- Lack of clarity about the blueprint; but clear resolve to do more
- Strongly interdependent with health and national identity (unique value)



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Conclusions

Hope and fear cycle tilted to the latter (return to cold war / McCarthyism?) due to coalescing of:

- recent history (i.e. September 11)
- demographic skews
- North American political direction

But...internal tensions could result in one of three models:

1. Fortress North America / Fortress Canada (Night Watchman State / Security State)
2. New Phoenician / Cosmopolitanism (globalization, post-carbon economy, peripatetic, open-posture)
3. Status quo (muddling along) – inertia but fails to grapple with relative decline of Canada

Key factors in shaping outcome:

- Geopolitics, the United States, another shock?
- Political marketplace
- Demographic exigencies / changing of the guard
- Citizen direction?



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