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What is This?

An Elephant's Eye View of the Mouse: American Impressions of Canadian Governance

Dana Lee Baker

Abstract

Canada and the United States share a border with one of the longest peaceful existences in the world. Yet relationships between the two countries, while seemingly routine, often lack transparency and mutual comprehension. Of particular concern in Canada is a growing impression that public discourse in the United States considers Canadian governance to be flawed. This article employs the cases of terrorism and SARS to examine discourse regarding Canadian public administration in the United States press. The results of this analysis not only demonstrate elements of the American understanding of Canada but also speak to the role of peer nations in domestic policy discourse.

Keywords

The border between Canada and the United States is one of the longest peaceful borders in the world. As a result of this seemingly unproblematic coexistence and the global status enjoyed by the United States in recent decades, an assumption of cultural, if not political, consistency often underlies the stereotypically minimalist impressions of Canada in the United States. To the extent consideration of Canada takes place, it is expected to be viewed as a respected sociocultural peer by the United States (Salter and Jones, 2002). In Canada this impression stereotypically motivates an ongoing need to strenuously assert Canadian identity as distinct from the American generic. As Len Kuffert put it, "in a world that is most familiar with American films and consumer goods, we seem to rely upon the myth of America in order to construct the myth of Canada" (Pryke and Soderlund, 2003). As a result, the common understanding of the relationship between the ongoing governance systems of the two nations is of indifference to the south in direct conflict with a hypervigilant identity crisis in the north.

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However, recent events challenge elements of these myths, including the impressions of cultural consistency expected to exist in the public discourse of the United States. In managing a public issue definition of emergent risk, many Canadians came to believe that the United States had resumed ancient habits of accusing Canadian governance of potentially endangering the United States. The current expression of this mindset is typically understood as focusing on the impression that the Canadian government's administration of border policies fails to adequately protect North America from threats to public health and safety rooted outside the continent.

Although this attitude is routinely assumed to shape public issue definition in the United States, there has been limited analysis of characterizations of Canadian governance in the public discourse of the United States. This article employs the cases of post-9/11 terrorism and SARS to examine public discourse regarding Canadian public administration in the press of the United States. The guiding research questions are: 1) To what extent does the definition of public challenges relating to SARS and terrorism in the United States involve characterizations of Canadian governance? 2) What is the nature of the characterizations of Canadian governance found in this public discourse? Examining these questions sheds light on the role of cultural supremacy in deliberative creation of public issue definition relating to emergent risk.

Literature Review

Emergent Public Risk

Complete safety continually eludes societies. Identified risks represent attempts on the part of humanity to define and measure threats to the ongoing safety of a particular segment of humanity at a given moment in time. As Moldrup and Morgall explain, "invisible by their lack of tangibility, risks are social constructions created by the explanations of scientists" (2001: 63). Dangers become risks as a result of more or less sustained – if not systematic – observations by (issue) elites or policy-makers. During the time that parameters of a novel risk remain appreciable but nebulous, the risk is emergent. Whereas no risk is a neutral phenomenon completely independent of social constructions, emergent risks possess extraordinary potential for divergent effects of the socioeconomic and political environment due to the unsettled aspect of the science associated with the risk (Houston, 2001). Significant motivation for policy innovation results from discourse interpreting newly observed risks (Arentsen et al., 2000).

The specific risks faced by particular nations at given moments in time exist in a continuum from those considered timeless and continual to those emergent risks understood as having modern origins (Baker and Stokes, 2006). Constructed public understandings of risks faced by a given nation tend toward one end of this continuum or the other. Economic downturns, for example, occupy a position close to the timeless challenge end of the continuum. Negative implications of genetic engineering, on the other hand, rest closer to the emergent public risks arch-type. Increased focus on emergent public risks exists in the United States, at least since the terrorism attacks in the United States on September 11 2001.

Undesirable circumstances successfully interpreted as anticipating a public role tend to invoke a clear and present danger creating emergent public risk. Establishing a public role tends to occur most easily when perceived dangers are global and diffused throughout a society (Moldrup and Morgall, 2001). Both SARS and terrorism demonstrate no socioeconomic preferences. Emergent public risks fundamentally differ from transcendent human challenges. First, since humanity generally considers itself to hold at least partial architectural responsibility for its era, culturally salient understandings of emergent risks tend to include some sense of control or culpability. To some

degree, as Maarten Hajer described, under such circumstances "the role of knowledge changes as the relationship between science and society has changed: scientific expertise is now negotiated rather than simply accepted" (2003: 175). As a result, governments might be expected to take action to minimize or, ideally, eliminate these risks prior to having access to conclusive scientific evidence. This is arguably particularly true in the case of nations considering themselves as global leaders.

Second, emergent risks typically involve origins less immediately understood as inherently complex by the general public and governing bodies. In other words, public issue definition surrounding emergent public risks tends to involve deceptively simple definitions of public problems and preferred policy solutions. Furthermore, modern society (often in the form of technology) often plays a role in the creation of both problems and solutions in emergent public risks. Because the risks are understood as having emerged from current sociocultural, environmental or political circumstances, the rapid advances in technology over the past century are routinely blamed for the existence of emergent public risks.

Reactions to emergent public risks have the potential to be relatively extreme. Human beings are remarkably resilient and become surprisingly conditioned to ever present threats. The impulse to address transcendent challenges thrives in modern democracies. Nevertheless, an acceptance of the slow pace of overarching change tempers this impulse. Because emergent public risks seem to involve novel threats and are often accompanied by events perceived as life altering, this impulse remains relatively uncontrolled. Furthermore, whether or not the perception is scientifically accurate or realistic, emergent public risks tend to be considered more threatening because they have yet to be proven survivable through previous human experience.

Finally, emergent public risks are politically volatile. Because of the inherent limits of time and energy extant in any political system, acquiring a position on either the formal or systemic public agendas is a competitive process. As was described by John Kingdon (2002), a straightforward way for a particular issue to gain a position on a public agenda is as part of the problem stream in a particular society. Windows of opportunity are thrown open by remarkable events embodied by circumstances such as those foreboding emergent public risks. As a result of this and the politician's need for publicity, emergent public risks can be expected to be much more politicized. As issue stakeholders fight to establish their preferred problem definitions and associated policy solutions, most, if not all, culturally salient definitions of the issue are likely to be articulated in public discourse, including the media (Baumgartner et al., 2006; Dery, 2003). Discourse surrounding emergent public risks should, therefore, include the broadest scope of the operating definitions of Canadian governance employed in the United States.

Relationship between Canada and the United States

Canada and the United States were both born of the European colonial era and the dismantling of native societies present before the European invasion began in the 15th century. Whereas the United States severed its colonial ties through revolution, purchase of property, and regional warfare, Canada gradually attained mature nationhood through an ongoing negotiated relationship with the British Empire and a complicated partial rejection of a colonial relationship with France. The Canadian constitution was patriated in 1982 as a result of an act of the Canadian parliament subsequently signed by Queen Elizabeth II.

Heated debate over the placement of the border dominated early relations between the two nations. However, since the War of 1812 a series of formal agreements and treaties have defined political interactions between Canada and the United States. In the long run, cleavage between the

two nations has not necessarily implied conflict (Posner, 2004). The currently most influential agreements include the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). NORAD was established in 1958 with the intent of creating joint aerospace control simultaneously protecting both Canada and the United States. NORAD was created in response to concern surrounding nuclear attack by the Soviet Union. During the later part of the 20th century NORAD embraced the goal of curtailing drug trafficking. Since the terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001, NORAD began tracking all aircraft flying in the United States. NORAD is headquartered in Colorado and is under the command of an individual jointly appointed by the prime minister of Canada and the president of the United States.

The bilateral trade partnership between Canada and the United States became the largest in the world over the course of the 20th century. The nations remain each other's largest trading partners. NAFTA, and its predecessor the Canada–United States Free Trade Agreement (CUFTA) put in place in 1989, targeted trade barriers between the two nations (as well as Mexico). NAFTA went into effect on January 1 1994. The implementation plan for NAFTA included the immediate elimination of most tariffs and a gradual elimination of the remaining tariffs over the course of the subsequent fourteen years. These treaties, conducted in an era of market liberalization extant before September 11 2001, assume that limitations on the free market hurt individual consumers in their attempt to protect specific national industries. Substantial opposition to NAFTA existed on both sides of the Canadian–United States border, though less specifically targeted at that relationship (rather than the one with Mexico) given the implementation of CUFTA. Significant areas of disagreement, including the trade of Canadian soft lumber, continue to exist. Nevertheless, the basic premise of free trade remains intact nearly 20 years after its introduction.

Both NORAD and NAFTA might be seen as contributing factors to a sense of practical homogeneity between Canada and the United States. As is described above, however, both cultural distinction and a sense of otherness survive and are perhaps expanding at the beginning of the 21st century (Houston, 2001). Nevertheless, emerging public problems transgress international boundaries, potentially challenging both the independence of legal systems and national identities (Hajer, 2003). However, these transgressions appear ultimately to reinforce rather than eliminate boundaries. A common image employed to describe the relationship between Canada and the United States is that of an elephant sleeping next to a mouse. The United States (the elephant) is portrayed as only vaguely aware of the mouse at any given moment in time but is continually conscious of its separateness from the mouse. Canada (the mouse), on the other hand, is both acutely aware of the elephant and constantly afraid the elephant might roll over. Perceptions of emergent risk constitute a potentially effective mechanism for emphasizing and defining difference between the self and other (Houston, 2001). Analysis of these perceptions serves to clarify implications of external viewpoints on national governance.

Method

The analysis employs data collected from the press of the United States. The media imperfectly mirrors public sentiment (Soroka, 1999). However, in the absence of continuously collected opinion polls on an issue, the media is the most complete barometric source available, creating time-series data or data representative of an extended period of time (Baumgartner et al., 2006; Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). The period analyzed spanned from September 11 2001 until September 10 2006.

In order to gain a barometer of the presence of the issue in the media at large, a search of world news appearing in Lexis-Nexis was conducted for both cases of North and South American news

sources. The search located articles with the case keywords (SARS and terrorism) in the headline, lead paragraph or article keywords and with "Canada" appearing in the full text of the article. These restrictions generated the population of articles about SARS and terrorism charted to diagnose the intensity of press coverage.

In the terrorism case, as might be expected, a few of the days' levels of press coverage overwhelmed the measurement capacity of the system (which is limited to 1,000 articles in the selected press per day). These days included September 12–22 2001; September 24–29 2001; October 9–13 2001, and October 18 2001. Rather than exclude all articles from these dates, the search was restricted to articles that included "Canada" in their lead paragraph or key terms.

A record of the number of articles appearing each month between September 11 2001 and September 10 2006 was created in order to examine coverage patterns. Overarching coverage patterns were compared. A statistical analysis of the monthly coverage rates was used to determine peak coverage months. Peak months are those including a statistically significantly higher number of articles than the mean monthly rate using a one tailed T-test with a cut off p-value of .05. The analysis of the terrorism case excluded the months of September and October 2001 as obvious outliers.

A sample of articles from the major papers of the press of the United States was then assembled for each case. The sample consisted of 200 randomly selected articles for each case. The tone of the title of each article was coded as positive, negative or neutral. In order to control for bias, upon completion of the coding a random sample of the codes was examined by a researcher with graduate training in political science not involved in the current study. Although tones of headlines can differ from the overall tone in an article, titles aim to concisely communicate events, problems and culturally salient public challenges. Tone is typically coded in issue definition studies (see, for example, Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). Next the headlines were coded for the presence or absence of the words "Canada" or "Canadian."

The text of each of the sample articles was read for public discourse about Canada or Canadians. A catalogue of each separate reference to Canadians was created using the paragraph in which the word appeared as the basic unit of analysis (when a single thought spanned more than one paragraph, this was considered a single unit). Upon completion of the reading for references to Canada, longer catalogue entries were reviewed to determine if they constituted two separate arguments about Canada or Canadians. In a few cases, this examination resulted in the separation of the original entry into two separate units. The catalogue entries were then coded for positive, negative, neutral, or absent impressions of Canadian governance. Finally, the basic arguments and impressions about Canadian governance were then categorized and used as qualitative evidence of impressions of Canadian governance extant in the public discourse of the United States.

Findings

As expected, the search located significant coverage of both cases. Some 41,444 articles including "SARS" in their headline, lead paragraph, or article keywords and "Canada" in their full text appeared during the period analyzed. Monthly coverage ranged between 13 (month beginning November 11 2001) and 8,696 (month beginning April 11 2003) articles. The mean number of articles per month was 691 with a standard deviation of 1,537. The peak coverage months were the months beginning in March through July 2003.

Some 233,675 articles including "terrorism" in their headline, lead paragraph, or article keywords and "Canada" in their full text were located in the period analyzed. With the exception of September and October 2001, between 1,481 (month beginning April 11 2005) and 11,270 (month

beginning November 11 2001) articles were located each month. The mean number of articles located during the months analyzed was 3,508 with a standard deviation of 1,631. Apart from the first two months, the months during which peak coverage occurred were the months beginning on November 11 and December 11 2001.

Evident distinction exists between the patterns of coverage. Coverage patterns of two different types speak to incomplete historical determinism and suggest at least partially independent public discourse surrounding each of the two emergent risks. The historical events in question shape rather than are completely shaped by the historical sociocultural contexts of the era analyzed.

SARS

In coding for tone, negative scores typically indicated an emergent risk understood as difficult, if not impossible, to address in the current sociopolitical infrastructure. Neutral codes tended toward banal or unrelated facts. Positive codes tended to be associated with headlines emphasizing success or progress in controlling the spread of SARS. Some 40 percent of the sample articles' headlines were negative in tone, whereas only 22 percent were positive.

Canada, Canadians (either specific individuals or as a group), or the name of a specific location in Canada (typically Toronto) appeared in just under a third of the sample articles' headlines (63); 55 percent of the headlines including direct reference to Canada were negative in tone.

Some 280 distinct elements of discourse on Canada, Canadians, or specific locations in Canada appeared in the text of the sample articles. Slightly more than half of these references (52.7 percent) presented no or neutral impressions of Canadian governance; 28.5 percent discussed Canadian governance in a negative light. Discourse expressing judgments about Canadian governance were approximately one and a half times as likely to be negative as positive in the case of discourse relating to SARS. The most common categories into which these negative judgments fell were in presenting Canadian governance as incompetent as a result of being overwhelmed and insufficiently responsive to emergent risk. Nevertheless, in this discourse there was a strong presence of positive descriptions of Canadian governance. The most often employed positive descriptions were as a partner in international efforts and, more occasionally, as a policy innovator.

Terrorism

The headlines of the sampled terrorism articles were coded using the same schema applied in the SARS case. The terrorism headlines struck a more even tonal balance than those of the SARS sample: 29.5 percent of the headlines were negatively toned and 32 percent were positively toned. As was the case for SARS, approximately half were neutral in tone.

Canada, Canadians, or specific locations in Canada appeared even less frequently in the terrorism case than in the SARS case. Only nine of the sampled headlines (4.5 percent) included specific references to Canada. Three of these were negative in tone and two were positive in tone, a distribution that is more or less in keeping with the distribution observed in the sample at large, though reminiscent of the SARS case where negatively toned headlines were found to be somewhat more common in headlines making direct references to Canada.

Some 233 distinct elements of discourse about Canada, Canadians, or specific locations in Canada were located in the full text of the sample of terrorism articles. Slightly more than half (53.9 percent) of the references presented no or neutral impressions of Canadian governance. Approximately one-quarter (25.4 percent) referenced Canadian governance negatively. The ratio of positive to negative

descriptions was slightly higher in the terrorism case than was found in the SARS case. The most common types of negative impression located in the discourse were that Canada was a haven for terrorists or drug dealers and that Canada was insufficiently vigilant about security risks. The most commonly appearing positive description was that Canada was a valued partner in international governance partnerships.

Discussion

The analysis suggests mixed impressions of Canadian governance exist in the public discourse of the United States. Although a slight majority of the references to Canada found in the sample articles presented no or neutral impressions of Canadian governance, for the most part those references found in this category were references to simple fact, such as the number of Canadians who had died of SARS or reports of Canadian service people who had died in the Middle East. When it comes to Canadian governance, there is little evidence of the true opposite of love – indifference. It is clear that the understanding of Canadian governance in the United States is relatively conflicted. While tipping slightly toward the negative, the tones of the titles and the references were remarkably balanced between the positive and the negative. Qualitative examination of the positive and negative characterization reveals, however, that while a secure impression of Canadian government as a reliable partner in international efforts exists and rare references to Canada as a policy leader are made, the negative impressions of Canadian governance are much more strongly articulated, particularly because they are more likely to include direct quotes from public figures from the United States.

In discussing Canadian governance, a current of seeking to avoid panic by deemphasizing risk while encouraging safe behavior characterized many of the positive impressions of Canadian governance. Though the United States tends to approach the precautionary principle with suspicion (LaFranchi, 2005), some of the discourse tended to encourage taking action to avoid risk where at all possible. As a result, risk was rarely put into context. Obviously, both death by terrorism and SARS represent astonishingly rare occurrences. This reality was only rarely included in discourse about the issues, however. For example, on May 31 2003 an article in the *Boston Herald* about an upcoming game in Toronto addressed baseball players' reluctance to travel to Canada. In this article it was pointed out that "visitors to Toronto have a better chance of hitting Canada's national lottery than contracting the new condition, but many major leaguers continue to express fear about visiting Canada's largest city."

Nevertheless, discussion of Canadian governance rarely acknowledged the potential of overemphasis of risk. For example, descriptions of the response of the public sector in Canada tended to emphasize Canada's inability to manage risk associated with an emergent public health issue. An article entitled "The SARS Enigma" in the *New York Times* on June 7 2003 pointed out that, "in many areas, SARS has disrupted the health care system. Doctors and nurses have died from the disease. Beyond the personal tragedies the illness has caused, SARS has disrupted care in emergency rooms, hospitals and offices, postponing surgery and other treatments for many people with other conditions." Similarly, an article appearing on June 3 2003 in the *New York Times* described the official Canadian response to SARS as "hysteria." The fact that impressions of risk might travel back and forth across the border was rarely discussed. Hysteria about risk is not presented as something that policy-makers in the United States and Canada might share.

A common description of Canadian governance was that it was insufficiently responsible. Frequent mentions of the so-called millennium terrorist were made, noting the fact that the terrorist

who intended to bomb the Los Angeles airport resided in Canada. Never was the fact mentioned that the terrorists involved in the September 11 2001 attacks were concurrently living in the United States. Discourse surrounding terrorism often assumed that Canadian governance freely allowed terrorists to reside in Canada. For example, an article appearing in the *Buffalo News* on October 13 2001 stated: "U.S. officials have criticized Canadian immigration and refugee laws as too lax, citing the case of Ahmed Ressam, a failed refugee applicant from Algeria, who was arrested in December 1999 while trying to cross the border into Washington state with explosives in the trunk of his car." Such discourse was used in arguments discussing a need to increase border personnel, while failing to mention that monitoring entrance *into* the United States has always been a responsibility of United States personnel. Furthermore, when a terrorist who hijacked a Canadian plane in the 1970s was discovered living in the United States in 2002, emphasis was placed on the upstanding life the individual had led as a teacher in the community as opposed to making direct comparisons between the difficulties faced in both the United States and Canada in balancing its citizens' and residents' rights with the more global responsibility of preventing and punishing terrorist activity. No direct comparison is made between the potential of Canada and that of the United States to harbor terrorists.

Canada was also described as being particularly lax in the construction of emergent risk. In the case of SARS, such discourse focused on the difference between Canadian diagnostic standards for SARS and those put forth by the World Health Organization. As was described by the *Boston Herald* on May 29 2003, "some physicians have accused the federal government of defining the disease too narrowly, arguing the number of probable cases – the figure the World Health Organization focuses on – could be even higher under a broader definition." Descriptions of the Canadian standards tended to suggest an overly cavalier approach to the construction of the emergent risk. Explanations for the reasons for the difference, especially in connection with Canada's relative success in controlling the spread of SARS, were virtually absent in the public discourse of the United States. Similarly, in the terrorism discourse Canadian governance was described as insufficiently vigilant. For example, on July 2 2006 an article in the *Washington Post* characterized the public discourse of the United States as follows: "on the American side, there are worries that Canada is not being vigilant enough ... a recent State Department report called Canada's recently tightened immigration policy 'liberal' and claimed Canada is a safe haven for militants."

Cavalier Canadian governance was also portrayed as allowing Canada itself to become a Petri dish nourishing the growth of dangerous situations likely to harm the United States (though, oddly, not Canada itself). A town's mere proximity to the Canadian border is presented as a self-evident source of risk. Discussion surrounding the illegal importation of prescription drugs from Canada was reproduced in an article in the *New York Times* of December 23 2003, which pointed out that "federal authorities will not allow the state of Illinois to buy prescription drugs from Canada, even as a small test program, because they cannot ensure the safety of those drugs, officials from the Health and Human Services Department said." Canadian responses to such characterizations tended to be described as more or less irrational. For example, an article appearing in the *Washington Post* on July 6 2006 stated: "'We face exactly the same kind of security threats and are defending exactly the same kinds of values,' the Canadian said, emotionally requesting a change in the passport law." Furthermore, the pervasive myth that terrorists involved in the 9/11/2001 terrorist attacks came to the United States from Canada persisted in the public discourse of the United States, generally within quotes from public officials cited in the press. The only discussion of this misconception located in the sample articles was in a statement made by the Canadian consul, who wrote an article for the *San Diego Union Tribune* of June 16 2002: "the biggest myth: None of the 19 Sept.

11 killers came from Canada ... you can confirm this with Attorney General John Ashcroft, INS Commissioner James Ziglar and Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge."

Canada and Canadian governance were also described as reflexively hostile toward decisions made by the United States government. After discussing how President Bush incompletely (and potentially deceivingly) described the legislative process in the United States during a meeting with the new prime minister of Canada, an article appearing in the *Washington Post* on July 7 2006 stated: "in his defense, Bush was in a tough spot. He was hoping to reward Harper – 'Steve,' as he repeatedly called him – for toning down the anti-Americanism north of the border since his Conservative government came to power in February." Similarly, an article appearing in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* stated: "the Canadian political and media classes have been vocal opponents of U.S. policy in Iraq and the broader war on terror, an amplification of traditional criticism against the powerful and often-despised giant on Canada's southern border" (6/28/2006). Disagreements with the United States were routinely presented as hostile without specific explanations for the hostility, such as firearms coming into Canada as a result of more permissive policy in the United States.

Nevertheless, Canada and the Canadian government were frequently characterized as active partners in international governance efforts. Typically, the partnerships vaguely described, or more or less reflexively described, Canada as dependent on the United States for resources and information. The vast majority of positive descriptions of Canadian governance were bland and unspecific. In some cases, however, specific benefits of the interaction were positively described. For example, a description of the developing response to the risk of SARS in the United States in an article in *USA Today* on May 27 2003 stated: "a staffer from Health Canada, the Canadian public health agency, serves as a liaison between his country's SARS team and the CDC." Similarly, in an article appearing in the *Buffalo News* on July 7 2006, intergovernmental partnership was described as follows: "the two leaders agree the law's implementation 'must not unduly hinder cross-border travel or tourism or trade,' Harper said during a press conference with Bush ... the two governments have assigned officials to 'agree on common standards for secure and alternate documents, and preferably as soon as possible,' Harper said." Such specific descriptions of the modes of governance employed in partnership were relatively rare, however. Another event depicted in the public discourse described a joint effort on both sides of the border to stop marijuana trafficking from British Columbia to Washington state. Interestingly, however, of the many articles referencing this event only one in the sample mentioned that the same aircraft involved in transporting the marijuana carried cocaine into Canada on return trips.

Finally, there were instances in which Canada was described as a policy peer, if not a policy leader whose governance the United States could emulate. However, when following Canada's lead is discussed, the follower is not the United States government per se, but nongovernmental entities whose policies or practices affect the public at large. For example, on November 8 2004, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* ran an article reporting that "the Nuclear Threat Initiative donated $500,000 toward a $1.3 million upgrade of the Global Public Health Intelligence Network, created by Canada's national health agency in 1998. The network trawls the Internet every day and picks up on thousands of reports of odd health occurrences." Similarly, in another article appearing that month the *New York Times* described how a bishop's new policy "mirrors one that government and church officials in Ontario enacted in the spring of 2003 at the height of the SARS outbreak in Canada." In the terrorism case, only those who disagreed with the choices of the administration appeared to consider Canada's governance as worth emulating. For example, a June 17 2002 article in the *Boston Globe* discussing airport security described how "the subject came up on a television interview program last Sunday, when the White House chief of staff, Andrew Card, spoke favorably of Canada's privatized system in answer to a question about President Bush's signing of an

executive order June 7 declaring air traffic control not to be an 'inherently governmental function.'"

Conclusion

Analysis of the emergence of the risk cases of SARS and terrorism reveals mixed conceptions of Canadian governance. Even though a slight majority of references to Canada presented neutral or no opinions of Canadian governance, because these references tended to be those presenting bare facts, there is, in fact, little evidence that the United States is indifferent to Canadian governance. The elephant appears quite aware of the mouse. While never delighted by Canadian governance and rarely impressed enough to suggest the emulation of policy or practice, substantial presentation of Canada as a valued member of an international team (arguably irrevocably led by the United States) exists in the discourse.

Specific descriptions of Canadian governance, particularly those directly quoting public officials, tended to be more negative, however. For the most part, these references defined problems associated with emergent risk resulting from insufficiently vigilant Canadian governance. In the case of SARS, these descriptions often intimated that Canada was incapable of responding completely to emergencies. In the case of terrorism, the descriptions tended to take the somewhat odd position that Canada was insufficiently concerned about terrorist activity and all too quick to naively accept any other explanation for dubious activity on the part of foreign nationals. Blaming Canada proves to be the basic definition of convenience needed to motivate simple policy responses to emergent public risks that might otherwise be perceived as inaccessibly complex.

Of course, the emphasis on negative aspects of Canadian risk might be an expected outcome of a modern media preference for doom and disaster over purpose and progress. However, it is also the case that the vast majority of appearances of these negative descriptions of Canadian governance were associated with efforts to promote changes in the policy of the United States. Changes in public policy made on the basis of emergent risk typically require an issue definition process that raises significant issue-specific concern in the public (or at least their governing representatives), motivating changes in public policy prior to the establishment of reliable scientific evidence and the entrenchment of interest groups around the issue. This is, of course, more easily accomplished if current trends in domestic governance are understood as being on track and beneficial. As a result, presenting a foolish or incompetent other against which to contrast the governance of the United States helps to link problem definitions surrounding emergent risk to the preferred policy solutions.

Understanding the strategic dimensions of this deliberate balancing of positive and negative characterizations of foreign governance among sociocultural peers in the name of improving domestic governance requires further research. Upcoming studies will expand the analysis of public discourse to include government discourse such as congressional testimony. Furthermore, it would be intriguing directly to compare public discourse on Canadian governance in the United States and that on the governance of the United States in Canada from the perspective of emergent risk. Data generated through such analyses will clarify aspects of the purposive use of foreign governance stereotypes in the creation of domestic policy among international peers such as Canada and the United States.

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