

2011

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Review

www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables

Volume XII, No. 18 (2011)

3 May 2011

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse
Roundtable Web/Production Editor: George Fujii

Introduction by Joseph T. Jockel, St. Lawrence University

James Fergusson. *Canada and Ballistic Missile Defence, 1954-2009: Déjà Vu All Over Again.*

Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010. ISBN: 9780774817509 (hardcover, \$85.00); 9780774817516 (paperback, \$34.95).

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XII-18.pdf>

Contents

Introduction by Joseph T. Jockel, St. Lawrence University	2
Review by D. Fraser Holman, Canadian Forces College.....	6
Review by Philippe Lagassé, University of Ottawa	10
Review by David Mutimer, York University	13
Author's Response by James Fergusson, University of Manitoba.....	16

Copyright © 2011 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online.

H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for non-profit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author(s), web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For other uses, contact the H-Diplo editorial staff at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.

Introduction by Joseph T. Jockel, St. Lawrence University

The celebrated Canadian writer Margaret Atwood once claimed that “Americans think anything can be changed, torn down and rebuilt, re-written. Canadians think that nothing can. Both are wrong, of course.”¹ If true, this fundamental cultural difference might alone explain why the more enthusiastic Americans have twice, once in the 1970s and again shortly into this century, deployed ballistic missile defenses to help protect their homeland, while the cautious Canadians --as James G. Fergusson chronicles in *Canada and Ballistic Missile Defence, 1954-2009: Déjà Vu All Over Again*-- have rather publicly and forcefully declared that they were going to stay out. The first time, Liberal Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson refused to renew the North American Air Defense (NORAD) agreement in 1968 unless it included a clause formally exempting Canada from participation. Thirty-seven years later his successor, Paul Martin, also a Liberal, suddenly announced on the campaign trail that Canada would not be actively participating in the ballistic missile defense system that had been authorized by President George W. Bush.

Still, the Canadian aversion to missile defense has additional causes than just a Canadian lack, for better and for worse, of the American “can do” mentality. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the Canadian approach has been shaped by the country’s place under the U.S. nuclear umbrella while helping to hold it up. A comparison with the NATO Europeans is useful. During the Cold War western European leaders often fretted that the U.S. threat to use strategic nuclear weapons on their behalf against the Soviet Union might not be credible enough to deter an attack. Canadians had no such worries about credibility. Located right next to the U.S., they knew that the Americans could not distinguish between an attack on themselves and an attack on Canada. In strategic parlance, Canada, alone among the NATO allies of the U.S., was well covered with complete credibility by “direct deterrence” while the Europeans had to make do with the inherently less credible form of “extended deterrence.” This meant that if the Europeans had to worry if the U.S. was not visibly willing and able enough to unleash nuclear war, the Canadians tended to worry that the U.S. might be *too* willing, thereby dragging Canada along with it into a nuclear disaster. This was called ‘no incineration without representation’ in Canada at the time; it is not clear who first put the phrase together.

It is no surprise then, that Canadians attached great importance to strategic balance and stability. As a 1971 defense White Paper released by the government of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau approvingly put it, “One of the most important changes in international affairs in recent years has been the increase in stability in nuclear deterrence and the emergence of what is, in effect, nuclear parity between the United States and the Soviet Union. Each side now has sufficient nuclear strength to assure devastating retaliation in the event of a surprise attack by the other and thus neither could rationally consider launching a deliberate attack.”² Of course, this state of affairs made it only more difficult for the U.S. to

¹ Margaret Atwood, “Canadian-American Relations: Surviving the Eighties,” *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose* (Toronto: Anansi, 1982), p. 383.

² Canada, Minister of Defence, *White Paper on Defence: Defence in the 70s* (Ottawa, 1971), p. 4.

brandish strategic nuclear weapons on behalf of the Europeans. But that wasn't Ottawa's concern or, better put, was not its main concern. The situation described in the Trudeau White Paper generally was called, in an originally scornfully joking term that oddly enough eventually lost its ironic bite, 'mutual assured destruction' and if you believed in it you had to condemn active strategic defenses as 'destabilizing.' To be sure, the "'defence is a dangerous thing' argument"³ (the term is Lawrence Freedman's) also had plenty of adherents in the U.S. and was the underpinning for the 1972 Soviet-U.S. treaty banning missile defense from which President George Bush had to withdraw the U.S. in December 2001 in order to authorize the limited missile defense system in place today. In Canada, if 'defence is a dangerous thing' was not quite a universally embraced dogma, --Professor Fergusson, for one, never bought it—then it was at least the consensus.

Yet while shying away from missile defense, Canada remained engaged in another form of North American strategic defense, that against Soviet long-range bombers. Canadian fighter aircraft and Bomarc anti-aircraft missiles stood ready to intercept them. Canadian air defence forces had been placed in 1957 under the operational control of NORAD (which in 1982 was renamed the North American *Aerospace* Defense Command) with a U.S. commander, a Canadian deputy commander, and personnel drawn from the militaries of both countries. Wasn't this kind of strategic defense a dangerous thing, too? The Canadian government had to explain the discrepancy. The Canadian aircraft, Ottawa sometimes said, were 'protecting the deterrent' which was sort of OK from the perspective of 'defence is bad', except when the deterrent was to be protected by missile defense. Still better, the Canadian interceptors were really just flying detection devices that served as a 'tripwire' to unleash the deterrent and also as protectors of Canadian airspace sovereignty; just try to ignore the weapons (nuclear devices from 1964 to 1984, conventional before and after) that they carried to, well, defend North America strategically.

It would have been harder for Ottawa to explain away the relationship between Canadian strategic air defense efforts and U.S. attempts to demonstrate that it could in fact rationally consider launching a deliberate nuclear attack on the Soviets inasmuch as the deterrent posture of the west ultimately rested on credible U.S. threats. Canadian 'peace' groups charged that Canadian efforts in NORAD were part and parcel of U.S. plans to develop options for limited, controlled, and protracted nuclear strikes. While the 'peace' groups were absolutely correct about this point, Ottawa managed to deny or just plain ignore it until the end of the Cold War.

There was another way for Canadians to escape the fact that their strategic air defense efforts and their participation in NORAD's attack warning and assessment role meant that they were holding up a U.S. strategic deterrent for which limited and protracted options were planned. That was to transcend it psychologically. The legendary Canadian diplomat and scholar John W. Holmes wrote in 1976 that "In the SALT age...it may seem increasingly as if we were protected not by the U.S. deterrent but by the system of deterrence itself,

³ Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 3rd Edition (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 238.

which enables not only Canada, but all the lesser powers to pursue their contribution to world politics relatively free of the threat of oblivion.”⁴ Seen from this perspective, Canada’s air defense role and other involvement in NORAD are transformed. They become a part of the “system of deterrence itself,” serving not the U.S. Strategic Air Command but helping to protect global stability itself—just like Canadian support for arms control and participation in international peacekeeping efforts.

At this point, we arrive at the Canadian identity, or a version of it: Canada committed above all to international peace and security and having a special vocation to pursue that commitment. “Like the Boy Scouts,”⁵ Prime Minister Jean Chrétien once (over) enthused. This is the sort of thing that David Mutimer is referring to, if I am reading him correctly, in his review of Fergusson’s book, when he writes that many Canadians see “a close connection of Canadian security with global peace and security” as being “quintessentially ‘Canadian.’” He goes on to regret Fergusson’s failure to pursue in his book the relationship between the Canadian identity (so conceived) and the eternal coolness Canadian governments have shown towards missile defense. Fergusson, it certainly seems fair to conclude, also does not buy this notion of the Canadian identity; he is “Mr. BMD” after all. Moreover, he has tried to stay out of such arguments in his book and to avoid advocacy—to the approval of D. Fraser Holman in his review, while Mutimer only sees “the appearance of neutrality.” Philippe Lagassé doesn’t even see quite that, espying pro-missile defense biases here and there.

Still, as you will see when you turn to the three reviews, all three commentators agree that *Canada and Ballistic Missile Defence, 1954-2009* makes a significant contribution to the literature on Canadian defense policy. And I, in turn, agree with them. I cannot resist simply repeating what I say on the back cover of the book itself: “This is important scholarship. It is the first history of Canada and ballistic missile defence, placing the most recent debates in the context of more than fifty years of developments and revealing recurring (and lamentable) patterns of Canadian decision making.”

Participants:

James Fergusson holds a Ph.D. from the University of British Columbia and is the Director of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies, a Professor in the Department of Political Studies at the University of Manitoba, and a Research Fellow with the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute. His recent publications include *Canada and Ballistic Missile Defence 1954-2009: Déjà vu all over again*, in the Canadian War Museum Studies in Canadian Military History Series with the University of British Columbia Press; and Wilson Wong, *Military Space Power: Current Issues*, Praeger Security International; and *Beneath the Radar: Change and Transformation in the Canada-US North American Defence Relationship*, Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute.

⁴ John Holmes, *Canada: A Middle-Aged Power* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 213.

⁵ “The Prime Ministers of Canada,” Jean Chrétien, www.prime-ministers.ca

Joseph T. Jockel is professor of Canadian studies at St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York and is co-editor of *International Journal*, the scholarly publication of the Canadian International Council, Toronto. Among his many publications about Canada-U.S. relations and Canadian defense policy are *No Boundaries Upstairs, Canada, the United States and the Origins of North American Air Defence* (1987) and *Canada in NORAD, 1957-2007: A History* (2007).

D. Fraser Holman holds an M.A. in International Relations from York University and an M.Sc. from the Royal Military College, Kingston. Holman is a retired air force Major-General of the Canadian Forces, who has taught at the Canadian Forces College, Toronto for the past thirteen years, mentoring graduate level students, largely senior military officers (Colonels and naval Captains). He spent much of his 35 year career in fighter operations and the latter portions of it working in NORAD; he spent the years 1993-1996 in very senior positions at NORAD Headquarters in Colorado Springs at a time when National Missile Defence was developing fairly briskly. Subsequently he wrote a monograph, *NORAD: In the New Millennium* (Toronto: CIIA Contemporary Affairs, Irwin, 2000) which addressed among other things BMD into the future and from a Canadian perspective.

Philippe Lagassé is an assistant professor at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa. His research focuses on Canadian defence policy, the politics of Canadian defence, and Canadian defence governance. He holds a Ph.D in political science from Carleton University. His articles have appeared in *International Journal*, *Canadian Foreign Policy*, *Defence and Peace Economics*, *Canadian Military Journal*, and *Diplomacy and Statecraft*. He is also the co-author of the monograph, *Reviving Realism in the Canadian Defence Debate*, which published by the Queen's Centre for International Relations in 2008. His latest publication is *Accountability for National Defence: Ministerial Responsibility, Military Command and Parliamentary Oversight*, a study published by the Institute for Research on Public Policy. His current research focuses on executive power and national defence in Canada.

David Mutimer is Deputy Director of YCISS and Associate Professor of Political Science at York University. His research considers issues of contemporary international security through lenses provided by critical social theory, as well as inquiring into the reproduction of security in and through popular culture. Much of that work has focused on weapons proliferation as a reconfigured security concern in the post-cold war era, and has tried to open possibilities for alternative means of thinking about the security problems related to arms more generally. He has published *The Weapons State: Proliferation and the Framing of Security*, and is co-editing a special issue of *Contemporary Security Policy* on Arms Control for the 21st Century.

Jim Fergusson has delivered a very valuable and nicely structured study of the policy considerations related to Canadian participation in any ballistic missile defence (BMD) system over a period of almost six decades. The subtitle says it all: *Déjà Vu All Over Again*. Despite hugely shifting underlying circumstances through the ages, the concerns, the rhetoric and the eventual results of the debates have been depressingly consistent. Dithering leadership, group think and exaggerated anxieties have characterized the discourse, on both sides, throughout the five periods of evolution which Fergusson identifies. He has created a very complete register of the main events and actions of the concerned players throughout that time – a record which has not been attempted by anyone else.

To be clear at the outset about the approach taken by this reviewer, I am more a practitioner than an academic scholar. I have followed the missile defence debates as a student and teacher of national security issues at the Canadian Forces College over twenty years; further I served at NORAD headquarters in Colorado Springs in the middle-1990s first as Vice-Director of Plans, later as Deputy-Commander of Cheyenne Mountain, and finally as Director of Combat Operations. In many of these capacities I had privileged access to the bureaucratic process and to policy development at least in the Department of National Defence. This leads to a review based more on personal experience than on published scholarship. Moreover, in the spirit of full disclosure, I believe I share many of Jim Fergusson's views as a recognized proponent of Canadian participation in missile defence.

Early on in the book Fergusson acknowledges his standing as “the most prominent academic proponent of Canadian participation”(xiv), but assures us that despite this appearance of bias he will offer a balanced account to the best of his ability. And my judgement is that he is very successful in this objective. His accounts are even-handed and largely without the excesses of emotion and innuendo to which the underlying debates have been prone. He explores with reasonable detachment the varying contributions to the BMD debate, in academic discourse, in politics, in the bureaucracy, and in the peace movement.

The book's organization is mostly chronological, moving through five U.S. BMD system designations which focussed the debate in each period. Fergusson names them as Acts in a play, giving each a subtitle in a rather cute attempt to characterize each, but since they are actually all so similar the subtitles served little purpose for this reader. The five periods he employs are:

- 1) 1954-1971 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM)
- 2) 1972-1985 Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI)
- 3) 1986-1992 Global Protection against Limited Strikes (GPALS)
- 4) 1993-2000 National Missile Defence (NMD)
- 5) 2001-2005 Ground-based Midcourse Defence (GMD)

As he notes his access to archival documents is quite complete for the first three Acts (up until Jean Chrétien's election), and this portion of the book constitutes a detailed historical analysis. On the other hand, for the contemporary period, that is from 1993 forward, he has had to rely on his personal experience, public and media materials and confidential interviews he was able to undertake; he was largely unsuccessful in accessing major primary documents. Accordingly, this portion is more of a speculative analysis, but is completely coherent and credible. His material here is perhaps the most enlightening, and I might add it also aligns well with the reviewer's personal involvement with the issue. Unfortunately, however, Fergusson's inability to cite materials which arose in the confidential interviews leaves one wondering from which sources certain of the conclusions and insights came.

There a number of specific issues on which I would like offer comment, from my particular experience and insight.

The main thesis of a consistent Canadian approach to the issue of strategic defence is extremely well made through the entire book. With slight adjustments to accommodate the specific issues of the debate in each of the 'Acts', Fergusson demonstrates the enduring paradox of defence being at once legitimate and illegitimate in this Canadian debate. The explanations are related to arms control preoccupations (especially where outer space is involved), to deterrence doctrine, to scepticism of technical capacity, and to economic implications. But these arguments, established during the cold war in the era of the doctrine of mutual assured destruction, have persisted well after the underlying reasons have evaporated.

Essentially defence is legitimate when it comes to conventional defence against airborne or surface threats, but becomes illegitimate, so the argument implies, when it is applied to ballistic missile threats but only when they apply to North America. Other people can be defended, for instance deployed troops or the territories of NATO Europe, but not Canadians at home. Defence against cruise missiles is fine, but not against ballistic missiles. The only legitimate counter to ballistic missiles is the threat of overwhelming retaliation with nuclear weapons – a morally difficult argument in this age. This contradiction is very difficult to sustain when the non-nuclear technical capability to intercept ballistic missiles exists.

The major break with these arguments of the past came for me in seeing the demonstration of the value of BMD during the first Gulf War in early 1991. Scud missiles aimed at Saudi Arabia and Israel were intercepted by the up-tuned Patriot surface-to-air missile system, averting damage, injury and indeed the entry of Israel into the conflict. Now that a non-nuclear defence to these tactical ballistic missiles had been demonstrated, it seemed natural that the evolution of that capability to the strategic realm was inevitable, understandable and supportable. Theatre level defensive systems were thereafter deployed (at least by the U.S. forces) in support of deployed troops. Why not envisage the same type of protection to the citizens of North America?

An argument which I did not see in the book relates to the desirability, or not, of combining organizations which contribute capability to a single mission. The post cold war period with the many technical improvements (especially in communications and computing) of the 1990s prompted many waves of organizational integrations such as the subsuming of U.S. naval and air force retaliatory forces under a single (joint) Strategic Command (Stratcom) where they had previously been commanded by their parent services. The question of how best to address the possible combination of strategic defences with strategic offences also arose in the 1990s. NORAD embodied the former and Strategic Command the latter. But NORAD as a bi-national command was inappropriate to align directly with the U.S.-only nuclear forces of Stratcom. Indeed the argument was made that there was a comforting separation of warning by NORAD from the reaction forces of Stratcom; the consequences of an inappropriate response by nuclear forces were so severe that this organizational separation was maintained despite the possibility of theoretical organizational efficiencies. This calculus may have shifted in light of the non-nuclear, defensive responses of BMD to a potential attack.

Another possible combination was to align the air defence forces of NORAD with the offensive fighters (and other related capabilities) of the U.S. Air Force Air Combat Command, but again the bi-national nature of NORAD precluded that idea, briefly floated in the early 1990s. This initiative ignored the significance of NORAD's warning mission, and of course any eventual move by NORAD into BMD.

Fergusson describes well the issue of establishing a so-called demarcation between theatre and strategic BMD in 1997. Interceptors with maximum velocities below the demarcation speed of 3 kilometres per second would be understood to be limited to theatre defence, while faster interceptors would be designated strategic and be subject to the ABM treaty of 1972. This arbitrary speed limit was a feature of the now-superseded arms control regime of the cold war, and demonstrates the extent to which the U.S. and Russia went to attempt to retain the ABM Treaty while developing theatre level defences.

Perhaps the ultimate contradiction in Canada's policy on BMD is its ability to support NATO's plans for missile defence in Europe as a member of the alliance, yet its avoidance of taking similar steps in its own defence from ballistic missiles.

A very important issue for Canadians has been the links between BMD and outer space (no matter how hypothetical); and Fergusson deals effectively with it in several spots throughout the book. First, the attacking missile does travel through space, so interception at any mid-course point will take place in space. Thus the capability to intercept a ballistic missile in space implies a capability to intercept a satellite in low earth orbit; the altitudes, speeds and conditions are roughly similar. However anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons, tentative as they have been, have been withdrawn from the arsenals of both the U.S. and Russia over the past couple of decades, making this a class of weapon which could be prohibited – an arms control dream. Regretfully the Chinese broke whatever taboo might have been associated with ASATs and demonstrated their rudimentary capability in 2007.

Second, one model of BMD envisions certain weapons stationed on orbit – the weaponization of space. From as far back as the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 Canada has taken a very strong stance to prohibit the intrusion of weapons into space, at least in orbit. So this possibility is one which truly confronts Canadian arms control policy and cannot be countenanced in any system which Canada might support. Fergusson makes this point very well, and details just where that pillar of Canadian policy has been the barrier to U.S. initiatives on BMD, even where that particular capability has not even been proposed. Merely the possibility of a system evolving into one with a component with weapons in space has been enough for some to withhold support of BMD.

The last area in which I would like to comment is that of organization. While NORAD has been identified by the U.S. military as the right place to assign control of a bi-national BMD system, it continues to be a bit of an organizational anomaly. It is responsive equally to both Canada and the U.S. and it is based on an exchange of diplomatic notes which amount to a treaty; so in many people's minds it cannot be subordinated to any other command. And it focuses purely on aerospace warning and aerospace control for North America. There are two other commands which compete in this arena – U.S Northern Command (Northcom), and Canada Command – and the overlap of their roles is still in discussion. Studies have been undertaken on resolving the areas of mission overlap, but as yet no changes have been implemented. BMD, as Fergusson notes, is assigned to Stratcom, with Northcom apparently holding control of weapons release for the continent.

Fergusson implies a concern over a U.S.-only structure (called USELMNORAD) within NORAD as a way of side-stepping Canadian lack of support for BMD (236). Actually this is a long-standing, and I would say benign, mechanism whereby the U.S. can employ assets assigned to NORAD in support of a national requirement. An example from 1996 was when they needed fighter assets in southern Florida to deal with a Cuban shoot-down in Cuban airspace of two U.S. civilian aircraft operated by a group of Cuban expatriates known as the Brothers to the Rescue. Canada, and indeed NORAD, was not directly involved as the incident did not represent a threat to North America; USELMNORAD was the vehicle to employ U.S. resources.

The Canadian need for access to U.S. information and plans is accurately described as a constant factor through the five Acts. NORAD has been one of the best opportunities for that access, as well as offering prospects to insert sensitivity to Canadian issues into U.S. planning. I was privileged to work in NORAD during a period of relatively comfortable access, and was even occasionally involved in hypothetical exercises on the potential employment of an NMD system. But we recognized that such access was a privilege that could be easily withdrawn as it was in other eras.

Overall I must say I enjoyed the accuracy and thoroughness of this book. Detail, while occasionally repetitive due to the nature of the story, was full and complete. I noted only a very small number of factual or typographic errors, which I will convey directly to the author.

This is a very valuable addition to our understanding of an important Canada/ U.S. issue.

James Fergusson has made an important contribution to the study of Canadian defence affairs. His book, *Canada and Ballistic Missile Defence, 1954-2009: Délà Vu All Over Again* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), stands among the best contemporary scholarship on Canadian defence policy. It is a penetrating analysis of defence policymaking and Canada-United States defence relations. Moreover, while the work focuses on Canada's approach to ballistic missile defence, its contributions extend well beyond this topic. The book will be included among the notable studies of how defence decisions are made in Canada, how Canada's defence and foreign affairs bureaucracies relate and interact, and how Canadian and American governments approach questions of continental defence and defence cooperation. That said, the work is not flawless. Professor Fergusson holds strong views about his topic and he does not shy away from airing them. Though his forthrightness is refreshing, it also leads him to be too quick in dismissing opposing ideas and alternate readings of situations. When he discounts the perspectives of key figures in the history of Canada and missile defence, his analysis treads too close to advocacy.

Fergusson makes three interrelated arguments in the book. The first is that successive Canadian politicians and bureaucrats have sought to avoid making a definitive decision about participating in an American missile defence system. From the 1960s to 2004, Canadian leaders and officials looked for ways to secure the benefits of participating in American missile defence systems without having to formally declare some form of Canadian involvement. Although this point has been made in the existing literature,¹ Fergusson meticulously details how decision-makers went about attaining this objective. Whereas some, such as myself, are wont to applaud their deftness,² Fergusson suggests that their balancing act was fundamentally wrongheaded and confused. A clear commitment to Canadian interests, he notes, would have led them to articulate a more consistent policy. One of the reasons they were not forced to do so, Fergusson argues, is that American leaders and officials routinely found ways to accommodate Canada's concerns. This finding is one of the book's most interesting contributions. Observers of Canada-United States relations have often assumed that American officials expected or demanded full Canadian participation in missile defence. Fergusson demolishes this notion. Time and again, he shows, American political leaders were respectful of Canada's hesitation towards a formal participation. More surprising still, Fergusson found that certain American officials were hostile to the idea that Canada should be deeply integrated in missile defence. The conventional wisdom about Canada and missile defence must be rethought in light of this discovery.

¹ Joseph T. Jockel, *Canada and NORAD, 19957-2007: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).

² Philippe Lagassé, "Canada, strategic defence, and strategic stability: A retrospective and look ahead," *International Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (2008).

The book's second argument is that successive governments shied away from a consistent missile defence policy because they were wedded to the promotion of international peace and stability. As Fergusson shows, this commitment to international peace and stability took many forms. In the 1960s, it involved protecting the reality of mutually assured destruction (MAD). When MAD became entrenched in the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, defending this accord became paramount. Later, when the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) raised the possibility of weapons in space, space weaponization emerged as another Canadian concern. According to Fergusson, these much vaunted worries about international peace and stability were marginal when officials discussed a Canadian role in missile defence. Yet they were at the forefront of the public debate about missile defence in Canada, which in turn compelled Canadian political leaders to give them greater weight. The end result, he laments, was a tendency to undermine Canada's national interests for the sake of accords that Canada had no part in negotiating, or more problematically, the championing of vague ideals that the Canadian government was poorly placed to trumpet.

The case Fergusson makes here is convincing. Given that the United States was determined to move ahead with missile defence and that Canada could do little to guard international stability, it seems evident that Canadian leaders should have pursued a more self-interested set of policies. Hence, the obvious question appears: why did they not? Fergusson's answer leaves the reader somewhat wanting. He surmises that decision-makers have been afflicted by a national groupthink that routinely dismisses Canada's strategic interests. Although this might be true, there were surely other, more sympathetic interpretations that could have been considered, too. Pierre Trudeau, for instance, may have sincerely believed that Canada's security depended on reducing international suspicions and tensions. Lloyd Axworthy, meanwhile, may have been truly committed to the idea that the end of the Cold War was the time to cease crafting policies to reflect narrow national interests. Alternatively, the choices of successive Canadian governments could be seen as a form of 'soft-balancing' against American power.³ Such interpretations are equally plausible. Mentioning them would have added a degree of nuance to Fergusson's critique.

Fergusson's third argument is that Canada stood to benefit in various ways from negotiating a formal role in missile defence. In the public debate and Canadian literature on missile defence, the survival of the binational North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) has typically been presented as the primary rationale for taking part in the system. While Fergusson acknowledges that this was an incentive in the last round of negotiations, he shows that it was a minor issue in previous decades owing to how participation was understood. Indeed, his research highlights that privileged access to American strategic and continental defence planning, industrial benefits, and cost sharing were the principal gains Canadian decision-makers saw in securing a role for NORAD in missile defence. Ensuring that Canadian cities were protected by the system was equally critical for Canadian negotiators. As part of his research, Fergusson further discovered that the United States did not entirely rule out possible requests for Canadian territory or

³ Robert Pape, "Soft Balancing against the United States," *International Security* Vol. 30, No. 1 (2005).

money as preconditions for a significant role in missile defence. This suggests that Canada might be presented with price tag or other requests should a future government attempt to reopen missile defence negotiations with the United States.

Aside from these three arguments, *Canada and Ballistic Missile Defence* makes several interesting contributions to the scholarship on Canadian foreign and defence policy. Foremost among these is Fergusson's description of how the defence policy process unfolds at the bureaucratic and political levels of government. By carefully detailing how politicians and the defence and foreign affairs departments tackled the missile defence issue over the course of several decades, he has provided Canadian foreign and defence scholars with a unique case study, one that will better their understanding of policy formulation and execution. What is more, his research sheds valuable new light on how the defence and foreign affairs departments relate on matters of national and international security, and how the Canada-United States defence relationship unfolds when controversial matters are discussed. In addition, the book could easily serve as an introduction to the evolution of American strategic defence policy, considering how carefully it treats the technological and strategic advances the United States military has made in the areas of air and missile defence. In each of these respects, this book far surpasses the existing literature on Canada and ballistic missile defence, and indeed Canadian defence policymaking.

To conclude, Fergusson must also be complimented for the missile defence documentation he has unearthed, the contribution he has made to his field, and the dedication he has shown towards this topic. And while the primary documents he used are not well cited, his biases are apparent, and his treatment of opposing views is unforgiving, these faults detract little from the overall quality of the work. *Canada and Ballistic Missile Defence* ranks as the best book available on the subject. I am confident it will remain so for some time.

James Fergusson's book sets out to provide a full account of the minutiae of Canadian decision-making concerning the various U.S. programmes for ballistic missile defence over the past fifty years. Taken in those terms, the book is a tremendous success. It provides a detailed historical account of the ebb and flow of Canadian policy, although as Fergusson points out in the book's central argument – which also provides its subtitle – there is little of either ebbing or flowing as the policy process seems caught in an endlessly repetitive loop.

The success of what is, essentially, detailed reportage, however, begs the question of politics. Fergusson is professor of Political Science, after all, and so I was very surprised to find so little by way of political analysis, and indeed so very little politics. This latter is particular surprising, and actually quite frustrating, because, as Dan Middlemiss notes in his dust jacket endorsement: “[Fergusson] is ‘Mr. BMD’ in Canada.” Jim Fergusson is not some disinterested scholar who has located an interesting puzzle that has not been answered in the literature; rather, he is and has been the most vocal and passionate advocate of missile defence in the country. I picked up the book expecting to disagree with just about everything in it, and probably to get properly outraged along the way. Passionate disagreement has marked just about every engagement I have had with Fergusson over missile defence, and there have been a number of them over more than a decade now. Instead, I found very little with which I could disagree, because virtually all of the advocacy has been (intentionally?) drained from the book. In its place we get an apparently careful neutrality, and a dispassionate recounting of discussions, memos, and decisions taken and (more usually) avoided.

The *appearance* of neutrality, however, here as always, masks the underlying politics rather than producing a true, and impossible, *actual* neutrality. If the critical scholarship in International Relations over the past twenty years has taught us anything, it is that our work is always necessarily political, and that it is at its most dangerous when it attempts to appear not to be. Fergusson's unexpected decision to try to mask the strident support for missile defence that has been the hallmark of his contribution to the discussion of Canadian security should raise red flags for the readers: what is he trying to get us to accept without acknowledgement? The answer is a narrow notion of 'strategic interest', which is raised in the conclusion as self-evident, having underpinned much of the previous discussion but without much comment.

It is in the conclusion that the lack of both politics and political analysis in the rest of the text comes shining through. On page 264 Fergusson asks a question that could well have animated the book's analysis of Canadian policy: “if defence, including missile defence, doesn't matter domestically, why do politicians act as if it does?” He does not, however, go on to answer this question, but rather looks instead to the effects of the politicians acting as if missile defence matters politically. It is here that the politics that has animated the rest of the book, but stayed so resolutely hidden, peeks out. Fergusson argues that Canada has consistently acted against its national strategic interest for forty years, culminating in the

unnecessary 'no' to missile defence in 2005. Here the politics is doubly evident: first of all, the idea of a self-evident 'national strategic interest' is posited; but in addition, Fergusson seems to be arguing that in 2005 the government should simply have not made a decision at all. This is, of course, precisely the course that governments repeatedly chose over the period he surveys, a course you see throughout the book that frustrates Fergusson. While he never says so, the implication is clear: saying 'no' when Canada did not have to choose is a mistake, but Canada should have said 'yes' when the opportunity presented itself, even though no decision was ever necessary.

So while Fergusson finally comes clear on his political preferences, his book leaves us with a very big analytical question. How and why did successive Canadian governments of different Party affiliations make the same seemingly obvious mistake? Every single one of them seems to have misunderstood Canada's clear, evident 'strategic national interest' in joining U.S. missile defence, and either avoided making a decision or, to Fergusson's evident disgust, actually said 'no'! The closest he comes to explaining this puzzle is a quotation from former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to the effect that Canada has seen its interests as identical to those of international peace and security. (268) But in the 267 pages that preceded it, Fergusson has not given the evidence for this assertion of how successive governments have understood Canadian security, and certainly has not engaged it in a way that would allow him to say it was mistaken. Here is where the paucity of the political analysis in the rich detail fails him, as that is what he would need to support the conclusion he wants to reach here.

We are still left with accounting for the persistence of (non)decision that Fergusson ultimately laments. Here I fear that Fergusson's remarkable access to detailed internal discussion let him down, as he got so caught up in providing the blow by blow of repeated decision points neatly avoided that he paid scant attention to the contexts in which these decisions were considered: political economy, international policy and politics, the actual involvement of domestic opposition and support, and any consideration of Canadian identity. For example, if the government's prospective decision on Ground Based Midcourse Defence (the George W. Bush era, and the fifth of Fergusson's five acts) provided a site around which mobilisation was possible, then an exploration of that mobilisation could give insight into the politics of missile defence in Canada. And yet, in his discussion of the lead up to 'no', Fergusson spends only two pages on the domestic opposition, and does not even cite the insider account published two years earlier by one of the leaders of that opposition, Steve Staples.¹ (245-46)

I want to suggest another problem with the conclusion that every government since John Diefenbaker's has fundamentally misunderstood Canada's 'national strategic interests'. Perhaps the problem is that Fergusson is wrong in thinking that the view Trudeau expressed and other governments appear tacitly to have followed is a mistake, and perhaps a more sophisticated view of 'interests' would help in our understanding the persistence of Canada's policy ambiguity. If instead of assuming that we, the all-knowing observers, can

¹ Steve Staples, *Missile Defence: Round One* (Toronto: Lorimer, 2008).

simply 'see' these self-evident 'strategic national interests' that so remarkably the governments fail to see, we can recognise 'interests' as contextually and historically formed and reformed. If we start from such a conception of interests, then perhaps the persistence of a policy position Fergusson wishes were different is indicative of a set of interests that have been produced and reproduced in Canada's domestic and international political practices. These interests would not simply tie Canada to an amorphous international community, but the connection of Canadian security interests to the peace and security of the wider world would figure prominently. Certainly, a close connection of Canadian security with global peace and security well accords with what many Canadians see as quintessentially 'Canadian'.² Indeed, I would suggest that a view of Canadian interests as forged contingently could not be disconnected from the nature of Canadian 'identity'. Interests are an expression of identity, which is also not fixed, but rather historically and contingently constituted. Fergusson's unanswered question, then, could lead us to probe the connection between missile defence and the production of Canadian interests and identity, interestingly enough in the way that some recent works on missile defence in the United States have done, notably Columba Peoples' *Justifying Missile Defence* and Nathalie Bormann's *National Missile Defence and Politics of US Identity*.³

In sum, James Fergusson has done students of missile defence and of foreign policy decision-making in Canada a significant service with this book, while at the same time missing an important opportunity. The detailed account of the repeated decisions or non-decisions around missile defence participation is extremely valuable, both as a picture of Canadian bureaucratic and diplomatic processes and as a spur to further questions for research. Fergusson poses one of those questions himself, but misses the chance to answer it in a way that would push our understanding of the politics of Canadian security policy, and perhaps even our understanding of Canada itself.

² The widespread acceptance of such a view of security is well reflected in the famous Molson Canadian advertisement featuring 'Joe', who includes in his litany of what it means to be Canadian the line: "I believe in peacekeeping, not policing." [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRI-A3vakVg>]

³ Columba Peoples, *Justifying Ballistic Missile Defence: Technology, Security and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), and Natalie Bormann, *National Missile Defence and the Politics of US Identity: A poststructural critique* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2008).

Author's Response by James Fergusson, University of Manitoba

Although the three reviewers come from markedly different perspectives – a practitioner (D. Fraser Holman), a defence policy scholar (Philippe Lagassé) and a contemporary critical security theorist (David Mutimer) – they do all recognize the fundamental essence of the book; a study of Canadian policy-making from the beginning of the missile defence question until today (as not much, if anything has changed since 2009). Even more importantly, none questions or criticizes the substance of the historical and contemporary narrative, notwithstanding Holman's passing reference to “a very small number of factual ... errors.”

Now, one may lament, as the reviewers do (and as I suspect readers also will, relative to their own perspectives), what the narrative doesn't cover. For Holman, this entails organizational questions, and particularly the missing argument of “the desirability, or not, of combining organizations which contribute capability to a single mission.” For Lagassé, this is being “too quick in dismissing opposing ideas and alternate readings of situations” in discounting “the perspectives of key figures in the history of Canada and missile defence...” Finally, Mutimer feels that the narrative “lacks politics and political analysis”, which in itself is a strange statement given his previous suggestion that the text is infused with political analysis masked by the “appearance of neutrality”, and the subsequent critique, which is all about the politics in the text.

While no study can meet or satisfy everyone's interests, the reviewers implicitly answer their own laments. They recognize that the true uniqueness and significance of this study stems from the paucity of in-depth, issue-based, empirically grounded defence (and for that matter foreign and security policy) historical/contemporary narratives in Canada. Even the worst critic believes that the “detailed account ... is extremely valuable ... as a spur for further research”

In effect, this is one of the key points of the work. Much, too much, analysis of defence policy and politics in Canada, in academia and the press, is simply polemics, based upon pre-existing ideological preferences and prejudices. Indeed, Mutimer's critique reflects this polemical state of affairs in privileging the anti-missile defence perspective. He notes my failure to do justice to domestic opposition in the Paul Martin Jr.-George W. Bush era (Act V).

Notwithstanding the clear exposition of my bias in the preface, which I assume Mutimer fears will not be read, and thus my bias must be unmasked, Mutimer would probably suggest that the entire narrative is infested with a pro-defence bias.¹ This may well be true, especially given that the topic is about defence, and the narrative is significantly based upon defence documents and interviews with defence officials. While my past 'political' writings appear to haunt this policy-making study, none of the reviewers question the

¹ James Fergusson. *Canada and Ballistic Missile Defence, 1954-2009: Déjà vu all over again*. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press. 2010). pp. xiv-xv.

manner in which the documentary and interview evidence is employed. Indeed, the practitioner or insider applauds the text as an even-handed account, reasonably detached, accurate and thorough.

Of course, any scholar seeking to construct a temporal policy process confronts two major barriers. First, one may not be able to obtain access to all the relevant primary documents, even those within the archives, nor obtain interview access to all the key decision-makers. Second, a scholar must select from the mass of primary documents and primary interviews and this selection process is naturally subjective. However, these cannot be reasons to eschew empirical studies. Like science itself, such research provides the basis for scholarly replication.

As such, this history of *Canada and Ballistic Missile Defence* (and in reality of Canadian defence and foreign policy) is hopefully not the last word or last empirical study. Other scholars, whose research interests are sparked by this work may well uncover material overlooked or not available for this study. Indeed as an archivist informed me, large amounts of military archives from roughly 1964 to the early 1970s have been misplaced or lost as a function of the administrative re-structuring of that era. If found, they may shed more light on the process, or indeed alter my narrative. Above all else, the post 1993 narrative, drawn from available public documents and confidential interviews, as informed by the pre-1993 archival-based research, awaits future archival verification.

More importantly, it is empirical studies that provide the primary foundation to falsify pre-existing preferences and prejudices. As Lagassé notes, the study demolishes the notion that “Americans expected or demanded full Canadian participation in missile defence.” However, exactly what U.S. officials truly thought about Canadian governments, bureaucracies and the military on the missile defence file over time is only partially answered, and what this means for a broader understanding of the Canada-U.S. defence relationship only hinted at. The answer is to be found in future research that places the focus on the U.S, and mines the American archives for the answers.

This is the other key point. The narrative concentrates upon the key major Canadian actors within the government, the bureaucracy and the military. It is how they saw, thought, and framed the issue of missile defence, placed within the broader strategic context. If the study truly “lacks politics and political analysis” as Mutimer suggests, (notwithstanding what exactly he understands politics and political analysis to mean), it is because they were absent from the internal process.

Thus, Mutimer’s domestic opposition lament simply misses the point. Domestic opposition is given only limited attention, because that is exactly how much it received. This reflected how truly insignificant it was in the decision-making process. The missile defence issue was elite driven, as the evidence clearly indicates. When public opinion, attentive or otherwise, agreed with elite preferences within government, it provided a useful justification. When not, it was to be ignored. As one senior official put it when asked about public opinion polls supporting Canadian participation in SDI research, the issue is ‘much too complicated for the public to understand.’ Even Paul Martin in his memoirs echoes this point. It was not

anti-missile defence public opinion that drove his decision.² It was anti-Americanism and its threat to other more important issues on the Canada-U.S. agenda. In effect, the missile defence no had little, if anything, to do with missile defence.

Similarly, Holman is correct about the missing organizational piece or analysis. But, this was never evident in the internal debate. The organizational structure was simply taken as a given as determined by the existing organizational structures and thus in effect by the U.S. This reality is at the heart of the observation that the existing organization – NORAD – was treated as an end in itself, rather than a means to an end.³ Moreover, the existence of USELMNORAD (U.S. personal assigned to NORAD) may have been benign during his tenure, but it became a significant concern following the stand up of the U.S. Northern Command and the subsequent 2005 Martin decision to say no. As Holman notes, “access was a privilege that could be easily withdrawn as it was in other eras.”

Lagassé is possibly correct in noting that “more sympathetic interpretations”, particularly related to the beliefs of key political actors (Pierre Trudeau and Lloyd Axworthy as examples), or as a “form of soft-balancing” could have provided alternative answers to the failure of decision-makers to “pursue a more self-interested set of policies.” Certainly, a detailed analysis of the belief systems of these actors may have added to the narrative, and hopefully a future scholar may undertake one. However, most, but not all of the relevant memoirs pay little attention to strategic and defence issues, reflecting the relative insignificance of these issues in Canadian politics. Regardless, the point, perhaps not well made, is how these beliefs were understood by the bureaucratic and military actors whose attentions were devoted to these issues, who crafted the key documents, and who briefed the key decision-makers. These reflect the great bureaucratic dilemma of balancing long-term interests as understood from long experience and functional expertise with the *a priori* preferences of political decision-makers - what I have termed the politics of the second guess - especially when these decision-makers have little, if any, background, knowledge, or interest in strategic defence questions.

It is thus not a question of a more sympathetic interpretation. Rather, it is the impact of *a priori* beliefs on the inputs into the decision-making process. Thus, for example, an understanding of Jean Chretien’s past position on missile defence (anti-SDI) and Axworthy’s worldview drove the non-political actors to push for a non-decision. Even more, it wasn’t Brian Mulroney’s beliefs about strategic defence, if he truly had any per se, but an understanding of his foreign policy strategy that drove the position within the Department of Foreign Affairs, as much as a true consensus existed. As noted in a key memo related to an internal critique of Canadian participation in SDI, “such a decision [no] would fly in the face of efforts the government has been attempting vis-à-vis the U.S.”⁴

² *Ibid* p. 251. See also Paul Martin Jr. *Come Hell or High Water: My life in and out of politics*. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. 2009) p. 387.

³ James Fergusson. p. 268.

⁴ *Ibid*. p. 97.

Indeed, faithful to their beliefs about Mulroney's foreign policy strategy, External Affairs officials argued against the subsequent decision right until the last moment.

As for 'soft-balancing', there is simply no direct evidence for this type of explanation, and one needs always to be careful in taking a theoretical model and seeking to interpret the evidence in its light. Indeed, this type of *a priori analysis* is front and centre in Mutimer's list of my book's supposed sins. They range from not answering the puzzle of why politicians act as if defence matters politically when it doesn't, and the treatment of national strategic interest, to the contradiction in arguing in favour of a decision prior to 2005 and against a decision in 2005. Most importantly, all the sins are to be found in the Epilogue, and serve to expose ~~the great conspiracy~~ what is hidden in the preceding narrative. His argument, in effect, is 'don't read the empirical narrative, as all you need to know is in the epilogue,' or perhaps, 'don't read the epilogue, as what you need to know is in the narrative.'

The epilogue (or conclusion) serves to update the status of missile defence since the 2005 Martin decision, and provide a series of key observations or conclusions about approximately fifty years of policy deliberation. What does the preceding narrative tell us, or more accurately me, about defence policy making in Canada? In this, the key puzzle is raised – "if defence, including missile defence, doesn't matter domestically, why do politicians act as if it does?"⁵ Mutimer is correct in this regard. A direct answer is not provided. It is left for readers to contemplate and draw their own conclusions from the evidence. Indeed, it is an invitation for a scholar to analyze this longstanding, yet ignored, reality of defence politics in Canada. I note that Mutimer doesn't question the validity of the question or core puzzle. Moreover, the narrative provides an answer for each of the group of actors, and in many respects for the political decision-makers; it matters simply because it appears on the agenda, and doesn't matter when it disappears. It is existential as required.

More importantly, however, is Mutimer's misunderstanding of the core arguments, confusing the analytical points raised with his *a priori* views. The real point of the defence matter question is to emphasize that the issue would have gone away once a decision was made, with no political price to pay. This is not a trick answer to convince the reader that the government should have said yes. Rather, it is the failure of successive governments – the political and bureaucratic arms – to manage the issue. The narrative in effect explains why. As for the Martin decision, the point is not my disagreement with it. Rather, what is most interesting is that all the factors, which led to non-decisions in the past, were present again in 2005. The past predicted a non-decision, yet Martin decided. The narrative seeks in Act V to explain why, and this is independent of personal preference, and my views of the fallout from the decision outlined in the Epilogue.

Finally, the idea of the national interest as value-based and contested amongst actors is certainly not new. Mutimer may even be correct that the existing construction of national

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 264

strategic interest (his preference) since John Diefenbaker, which defines Canada's interest with something called international peace and security, has not been a mistake. Somewhat similar, Lagassé suggests that the manner in which elites dealt with the missile defence file reflects a successful strategy over time. Lagassé, unfortunately, disregards the fallout from the SDI decision, which drove National Defence officials to seek a new policy.⁶ In all fairness, though, it still remains unclear whether the 2005 decision has fundamentally harmed Canada's defence interests.

Mutimer, in contrast, simply misses the point. It is the absence of an alternative narrow conceptualization of Canada's national strategic interests from the historical record that is most interesting, as also recognized by Lagassé. It is Canada's national groupthink, which emerged in the 1960s and has shown remarkable resilience even though the world has changed significantly. The narrow sense of national interest were not only absent, or extremely marginal in policy debates, but the values underpinning the existing conceptualization were rarely or ever contested. Critical security theorists generally concentrate upon identifying and analyzing dominant, uncontested belief systems, rather than simply applauding their correctness.

In conclusion, this study should be taken for what it is, rather than what one may have wished for. Ideally, it will generate greater scholarly interest in empirically examining the Canadian defence, as well as foreign and security, policy process, and remove, as Holman puts it, "the excesses of emotion and innuendo to which the underlying debates have been prone."

Copyright © 2011 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the H-Diplo Editors at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.

⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 123-127.