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Introduction

Does domestic politics affect Canadian foreign policy? In liberal democracies like Canada, where elections determine which political party achieves the power to govern, it is perhaps not surprising that political leaders are inclined to assert that there is an intimate connection between domestic politics and foreign policy. As early as 1922, William Lyon Mackenzie King, prime minister from 1921 to 1930, and then again from 1935 to 1948, described Canadian foreign policy as an ‘extension’ of domestic policy (Eayrs 1961, 40), and during his many years in office, he invariably acted on that belief (Stacey 1981). A half-century later, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, prime minister from 1968 to 1979 and from 1980 to 1984, used precisely the same phrasing: foreign policy, he claimed, was ‘the extension abroad of national policies’ (Nossal et al. [42] 2015, 21). For his part, Lester B. Pearson, who was the secretary of state for external affairs (as Canada’s foreign minister was known before 1993) between 1948 and 1957, asserted in a speech in 1948 that foreign policy ‘is largely the consequence of domestic factors’ (Pearson 1970, 68).

Although Canadian politicians have asserted the connection between domestic politics and foreign policy, we actually see a paradox at work. On the one hand, we really cannot understand the international policy behaviour of the federal government in Ottawa unless we link it to the broader patterns of the social, economic, cultural, and political lives of Canadians (Nossal 1983–84). In a variety of ways, as the chapters in this volume reveal clearly, foreign and defence policy is invariably shaped by a range of domestic political forces within Canada.

On the other hand, however, foreign policy has not generally been a *political* issue in Canada, in the sense of being an issue that plays a determining role in the electoral process and its partisan struggles

between political parties. Those who make foreign policy decisions for Canada may shape those decisions with an eye to domestic political consequences, but the paradox is that in most cases the policy options they embrace will not have an important impact on the key political process that brings political parties and political leaders to power in a liberal democracy — elections. Foreign policy issues are rarely central to elections in Canada, and even in those few elections that are widely remembered as ‘foreign policy elections,’ it is not at all clear that the choices of voters were driven by foreign policy concerns. Indeed, in many elections, foreign and defence concerns are rarely mentioned. Political parties do not appear to be rewarded for their foreign policy stances; and, by the same token, they do not seem to be punished by voters for foreign policy reasons. Despite this, political parties and party leaders often act as though international policy issues animate voters in Canada: they make promises about foreign and defence policy issues that are clearly designed to woo voters.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the paradoxical nature of the connection between domestic politics and foreign policy in Canada. We look at the electoral connection and demonstrate that Canadians tend not to base their votes on foreign policy issues. Indeed, in most elections, there is a sustained silence as the political parties contesting the election choose not to hinge their campaigns on foreign policy issues. At the same time, however, there are occasions when politicians appear to believe that foreign policy issues will attract voters, and pitch foreign policy promises to the voters. However, while most of the time the electoral connection [43] is thin, I conclude with the case of the Canadian sale of light armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia as a reminder that the electoral connection can be quite real.

Canada’s ‘Foreign Policy Elections’

In October 2019, Canadians voted in the 43rd general election since Confederation. Of these forty-three elections, there have been six elections that are generally remembered as having turned on foreign and defence policy issues. In 1891, 1911, and 1988, the elections focused on trade with the United States; in 1917, 1940, and 1963, the dominant issue was the question of war and peace.

In 1891, the Liberals under Wilfrid Laurier, then in opposition, embraced a policy of free trade, or ‘unrestricted reciprocity,’ as it was known then, with the United States, arguing that Canadian prosperity would be enhanced if the protectionist National Policy of the Conservative government of Sir John A. Macdonald were abandoned. The embrace of free trade by the Liberals allowed Macdonald to play the nationalist card. He whipped up anti-American sentiment in English Canada by warning that free trade posed an ‘impending danger’ to Canada because free trade would lead to the annexation of the country by the United States. Castigating the Liberal plan as ‘veiled treason,’ Macdonald argued that since John Willison, the editor of the *Globe*, a Liberal newspaper, was an annexationist, the proposal for reciprocity was tantamount to advocating union with the United States (Wood 2001). Although Macdonald himself

died just three months after the March vote, his appeal to the budding economic nationalism of Canadians proved a success: on 5 March 1891, the Conservatives won a majority.

The quarrels over free trade with the United States persisted, however. In 1896, the Liberals under Laurier defeated the Conservatives, and were re-elected in 1900, 1904, and 1908. By 1911, Sir Wilfrid, as he had become in 1897, had embraced a policy of free trade with the United States, negotiating a Reciprocity Treaty with Washington, and this free trade agreement became a central issue in the 1911 federal election. Once again, the Conservatives argued that free trade with the United States would weaken Canada's ties with the United Kingdom and draw Canadians closer into the orbit of the United States. In this, the Conservatives were mightily assisted by American politicians, who openly trumpeted the idea that the Reciprocity Treaty would more easily enable the United [44] States to annex Canada and fulfill America's 'Manifest Destiny' — the idea dominant in the United States in the nineteenth century that Americans were destined to settle and control all of North America (Granatstein 1996, 61–62). Champ Clark, a Democrat from Missouri, was an ardent supporter of the idea of annexing Canada to the United States. For example, speaking on the floor of the House of Representatives during a debate on reciprocity on 14 February 1911, Clark stated that he favoured the treaty 'because I hope to see the day when the American flag will float over every square foot of British North American possessions clear to the North Pole' (*Congressional Record* 1911, 2520). Needless to say, Clark's comments — and other pro-annexation comments by American politicians — were widely publicized in Canada by the Conservatives, and were one of the reasons why the Laurier Liberals went down to defeat in the election on 21 September.

The defeat of the Liberals under Laurier in 1911 cast a long shadow in Canadian politics. Not only did it sustain and reinforce the economic nationalism of Canadians (Nossal 1985), but it also deterred successive generations of political leaders from embracing unrestricted free trade with the United States throughout the twentieth century. Thus, for example, when Prime Minister Mackenzie King was presented with an agreement for a customs union between Canada and the United States that had been negotiated by Canadian and American officials in 1947–48, he worried about the possibilities that such an agreement would allow the Conservatives to paint him and the Liberals as selling Canada out to the Americans. The political consequences were sufficient to prompt King to kill the deal: to his diary he wrote that he would no more think of approving such an agreement with the United States 'than I would of flying to the South Pole' (quoted in Granatstein 1985, 42).

Likewise, when Brian Mulroney was running for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative (PC) party in 1983, he was asked about free trade with the United States. 'That's why free trade was decided on in an election in 1911,' he responded. '[Free trade] affects Canadian sovereignty, and we'll have none of it' (Michaud and Nossal 2001, 9). As it turned out, Mulroney changed his mind about a

comprehensive free trade agreement with the United States after the PCs beat the Liberals in the September 1984 election (Tomlin, 2001). The next general election, held on 21 November 1988, turned on the free trade agreement that the Mulroney government negotiated with the administration of Ronald Reagan, with [45] over 88% of voters mentioning it as the most important issue (Clarke et al. 2019, 76).

On three occasions elections have turned on the broad issue of war and peace. In 1917, the English–French cleavage in Canadian politics was clearly evident on the issue of conscription. When the Great War had broken out in 1914, the deep divisions between how English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians viewed the world were exposed. English Canadians, most of whom at this stage of Canada’s history had deep family links to the United Kingdom, conceived of Canada’s national interests as being intimately connected to the British Empire; volunteering to fight in the trenches of the Western Front, and devoting Canadian resources to the war in Europe on the side of Britain, was a natural response. French-speaking Canadians, by contrast, had a very different worldview. Cut off from France after the Conquest of 1760, French Canadians were, as Henri Bourassa, a leading Québec nationalist and founding editor of *Le Devoir*, put it succinctly, ‘unhyphenated Canadians’ (Levitt 1970, 174): in other words, they tended to see the world as purely *Canadian*, not as English-Canadian members of the British Empire. Indeed, many French Canadians had a view of the war between the European powers similar to the view of many Americans that kept the United States out of the First World War for three years: the quarrel ‘over there’ had little impact on North America. However, the cleavage between English and French Canadians was exacerbated after 1916, when the number of volunteers needed to replenish armies that were constantly being depleted by the mass slaughters that came with trench warfare began to diminish. In his new year’s message in 1916, the Conservative prime minister, Sir Robert Borden, announced that Canada would raise its contribution to the war to 500,000 soldiers. While Borden had promised in 1914 that his government would not introduce conscription, his government discovered in 1917 that Borden’s pledge of January 1916 could only be kept by introducing conscription (Granatstein and Hitsman 1985). The Military Service Act, 1917, allowing the government to conscript Canadian men between the ages of 20 and 45, became a key issue in the general election of 17 December 1917. While Borden formed a coalition government composed of Conservatives and some Liberals, Laurier refused to join the Unionist government, splitting the Liberal party. While Borden’s Unionist government was elected with a large majority of 153 seats and Laurier’s Liberals only returned 82 MPs, 62 of those seats were in Québec. Just three Unionists were elected in that province.

[46] Conscription also featured in the 1940 election. When the Second World War had broken out in September 1939, the Liberal government of Prime Minister Mackenzie King, obviously guided by the lessons of 1917, immediately promised not to introduce conscription for overseas service (Pickersgill 1960, 21–23). That pledge was part of a broader appeal that King made to the electorate when Parliament

was dissolved in January 1940 and elections called for 26 March to give his government a strong mandate to prosecute the war against the Nazis. The voters responded positively: the Liberals were returned with a huge majority of 179 seats. The results in Québec confirmed the wilderness into which the Conservatives had been consigned a generation earlier: the Liberals won 62 of Québec's 65 seats, and the Conservatives won no seats at all (Granatstein 1967, 44–51).

The only other federal election in which defence issues loomed large was the election held in 1963. The minority Progressive Conservative government of John Diefenbaker was defeated in two non-confidence motions on 5 February and an election was called for 8 April. One of the key causes of the government's defeat in the House of Commons was Diefenbaker's refusal to agree to install nuclear warheads on weapons systems that his government had acquired from the United States (Stevenson 2014). The United States government had weighed in on the matter, essentially calling Diefenbaker a liar (Bothwell 2007, 173). The minister of national defence, Douglas Harkness, resigned in protest, and much of the cabinet was prepared to follow Harkness on this issue. The election campaign that followed was dominated by the issue of nuclear weapons, with the Liberal party under Lester B. Pearson promising that, if elected, a Liberal government would arm Canadian weapons systems with nuclear weapons (Lyon, 1968: 176–222).

But these six elections — 1891, 1911, 1917, 1940, 1963, and 1988 — are the only elections that international issues played an important role. But even in these cases we need to be cautious in attributing the electoral outcomes in each case to the foreign or defence policy issues seemingly so dominant in the election. While we can conclude with some assurance that votes cast in the 1917 and 1940 elections were indeed shaped by the attitude of voters to the two world wars and Canada's contributions to those wars, causality in the other cases is not always as clear. Thus, for example, the 1911 election is generally remembered, particularly in English Canada, as hinging on the rejection of the policy of free trade. However, also at issue was Laurier's policy on Canada's contribution to [47] the Royal Navy, deeply unpopular in Québec. It is possible to interpret the outcome in 1911 as a simple combination of these issues, as Mackenzie King did when he claimed that the Liberal defeat was the result of an 'unholy alliance between the [Québec] Nationalists ... and the Tories of the other provinces' (quoted in Stacey, 1977: 147). But as the historians Patrice Dutil and David MacKenzie argue (2011, 281–305), these two issues were also intimately linked to other political and economic factors driven by the dominant linguistic cleavage. Likewise, while Tommy Douglas, leader of the New Democratic Party in 1963, described the 1963 election as a 'referendum' on nuclear weapons, Lyon concludes that public opinion polls suggest that the impact of the nuclear issue on that election outcome 'was probably not very great,' and that a number of other factors shaped voter preferences (Lyon 1968, 211). In a similar way, while the issue of free trade clearly dominated the 1988 election, it would be inappropriate, as the political scientist

Lawrence LeDuc has argued, to see this as akin to a single-issue referendum (LeDuc 1989, 167). On the contrary: there were other issues on the political agenda in 1988, such as the issue of the reintegration of Québec into the Constitution through the Meech Lake Accord that had been signed the year before. However, free trade was turned into the dominant issue in 1988 because all the parties contesting that election avoided raising other central issues for strategic reasons (Brodie 1989; Johnston et al. 1992).

In short, while we can easily call these elections ‘foreign policy elections,’ we should keep in mind the observation of Ramsay Cook, then an historian at the University of Toronto, that ‘To many electors in times past these foreign policy problems doubtless loomed less large than they have to later textbook writers’ (Cook 1963, 374). Moreover, the fact that there are so few elections we can call ‘foreign policy elections’ strongly suggests that foreign policy is not an issue that will drive electoral outcomes in Canada

The Sound of Silence: Avoiding Foreign Policy in Elections

By contrast, most Canadian elections focus on domestic politics. Foreign policy issues might make an appearance over the course of an election campaign, but in all but a few cases such issues will not feature prominently. To be sure, efforts have been made to increase the visibility of foreign policy issues during elections. The Munk Debates, a [48] not-for-profit organization that was founded in 2008 with funding from Peter Munk, former CEO of Barrick Gold, to hold two major public debates in Toronto each year, sponsored a foreign policy debate between the party leaders during the 2015 election campaign, the first-ever election debate among political leaders specifically on foreign policy (Munk Debates 2015). While that debate was widely seen as very successful (see, for example, the views in OpenCanada.org n.d.), the initiative did not last: during the 2019 election the event had to be cancelled because Justin Trudeau refused to participate (Griffiths 2019). With the end of that initiative, it is likely that we will return to the norm: as the *Globe and Mail* columnist Jeffrey Simpson put it during the 2011 campaign, ‘the world has disappeared from the federal election campaign’ (Simpson 2011).

But Canadians come by that disappearance honestly. The world disappears during election campaigns because there have historically been so few serious differences between Canada’s political parties about Canada’s place in the world. While we can see profound differences between the major parties on the issue of trade with the United States, on virtually all other foreign policy issues there has tended to be broad consensus. Where differences have arisen, it tends to be on how those broad foreign policy objectives are to be achieved.

One of the key reasons for the broad consensus among the political parties that we have seen at work in Canadian foreign policy is that Canadians in general are not deeply interested in foreign affairs. It is true that Canadians love to tell each other that their country is profoundly engaged in the world. But

there is not much evidence to suggest that this is much more than a self-comforting myth. Canadians routinely elect governments that are as stingy as they can get away with being in actually engaging the world. By any measure — the percentage of Gross National Income devoted to development assistance, the percentage of GNI spent on armed forces, size and reach of the federal diplomatic, trade promotion, and intelligence bureaucracies, or number of Canadian government offices abroad — Canadians are far less ‘engaged’ in the world than they think. Moreover, Canadians are generally agreed on the broad elements of that engagement: membership in the ‘West,’ closely allied to and friendly with, the United States, and generally opposed to states in the international system deemed to be threats to the West, such as Germany in the first half of the twentieth century, the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China in the second half of that century, [49] and the Russian Federation and China in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. In short, from this broad consensus, the lack of any need to quarrel over foreign policy issues during election campaigns follows naturally.

It is true that sometimes the silence on foreign policy issues comes from a decision by political parties to purposely keep foreign policy issues *off* the agenda. We can see this phenomenon at work in three recent elections: 2008, 2011, and 2019. In both the 2008 and 2011 election campaigns, both the Liberal and Conservative parties essentially came to an agreement to keep the Canadian mission in Afghanistan from becoming an election issue. While the four political parties in the House of Commons — the governing Conservatives, the Liberals, the NDP, and the Bloc Québécois — had openly used the mission in 2006 and 2007 to try and score political points against each other during the minority 39th parliament (Boucher and Nossal 2017, 84–97), in 2008, the prime minister, Stephen Harper, decided to try to remove Afghanistan as a political issue as the Conservatives prepared for an election expected later that year. Public opinion remained only tepidly in favour of the mission, with strong pockets of opposition throughout the country, but particularly in Québec, where the Conservatives hoped to make electoral inroads against the Bloc (Roussel and Boucher 2008). Moreover, public opinion in Canada stubbornly refused to respond to the different justifications for the mission that the Harper government kept trying out in an attempt to shift the tepid support numbers.

Harper appointed a blue-ribbon panel, headed by John Manley, a former deputy prime minister in the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien, to advise it on future options. In January 2008, the Manley commission recommended that the government extend the mission. Harper announced plans to introduce a motion extending the mission, and intimated that he would regard the vote on an extension as a matter of confidence, which meant that a defeat would trigger an election. Because the Liberals under Stéphane Dion were not ready to fight an election, Dion and Harper fashioned a compromise that both parties could vote for, thus ensuring the survival of the Conservative government.

In this case, the parties agreed on a policy option not because they agreed on the policy, but for reasons of pure electoral expediency. But it served to ensure that the issue of the mission to Afghanistan simply disappeared from the Canadian political agenda in 2008. Indeed, when Harper asked the Governor General to dissolve Parliament and call an election for [50] 14 October, he went out of his way to remind voters that Afghanistan was, in essence, off the table as an election issue. And neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals raised the Afghanistan mission during the election. Even when the cozy silence created by the two major parties was interrupted in mid-campaign by Kevin Page, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who reported that the mission would cost \$18.1 billion, not one of the political parties chose to discuss Page's findings. Instead, the two minor parties merely announced their opposition to the mission in their campaign platforms, but not did not stress the issue on the hustings.

A similar dynamic occurred during the 2011 election campaign. Both the Liberals and Conservatives came to an understanding with each other about the future of the mission. While the Conservative government wanted to withdraw entirely from Afghanistan in 2011, the Liberal front bench had decided that Canada should remain in Afghanistan to train Afghan troops, a decision that produced huge dissension within the Liberal caucus. An agreement between the two major parties was fashioned: if the Conservatives abandoned their promise to withdraw entirely in 2011, the Liberals would not try to take political advantage of the government's reversal. For their part, the Conservatives promised not to take advantage of the deep division in the Liberal caucus created by the decision to embrace a training mission. In particular, the Harper government agreed that it would not hold a vote in the House of Commons on the transformation of the mission, since that would expose the deep Liberal divisions; instead, the training mission would be approved by the government without the issue being debated by Parliament. But this agreement created the need for more silence, a silence that extended to the election campaign in 2011. Once again, neither of the major parties raised Afghanistan as an issue; and once again the NDP and BQ repeated their 2008 campaign strategies of opposing the mission, but only in their campaign platforms (Boucher and Nossal 2017, 111–14).

We can see a similar silence during the 2019 election campaign, though that silence was not produced by the kind of explicit agreements between the two major parties that we saw in 2008 and 2011. Rather, the silence about foreign affairs that descended on the 2019 campaign was driven by the reticence of all of the political parties about the two key foreign policy issues facing Canada in 2019. The first was the relationship with the administration of Donald J. Trump in the United States, and particularly the fate of the renegotiated free trade agreement. The sour relationship between Trump and Trudeau — Trump had mean-tweeted Trudeau after [51] the G7 summit in Charlevoix, Québec, in June 2018, calling the Canadian prime minister 'Very dishonest & weak' (Trump 2018) — was a major concern.

The second fraught policy issue was the profound deterioration in Canada's relationship with China in 2019, the consequence of the Canadian government complying with a United States government request to arrest the chief financial officer of Huawei, Meng Wanzhou, so that she could be extradited to the United States to stand trial for fraud. In response, the Chinese government froze the relationship with Canada, imposing sanctions on Canadian products, and seizing two Canadian citizens who happened to be in China, Michael Spavor, the director of an organization that promoted business in North Korea, and Michael Kovrig, a Canadian diplomat on leave from Global Affairs Canada who happened to be visiting China, and holding them without charge. The Chinese authorities also changed the sentences handed down to Robert Schellenberg and Fan Wei, two Canadians convicted of drug offences; in both cases, the Canadians were sentenced to death (Paris 2019).

These were two important issues that one might have thought appropriate — indeed required — issues for discussion during an election. But the parties remained completely silent on both issues. For their part, the Liberals had no desire to raise either of these issues, and indeed a concern that the prime minister could not avoid talking about them appeared to be a key factor in prompting him to avoid the Munk Debate. But there was also reticence on the part of the opposition parties, particular the Conservatives under Andrew Scheer and the NDP under Jagmeet Singh. While both issues could easily have been politicized by the opposition and used to good advantage to thump the governing Liberals, there appeared to be a self-censoring recognition by the opposition parties that politicizing these issues could backfire badly given Trump's thin skin and his quite unpredictable mercantilist protectionism, or China's quite predictable aggressive bullying of smaller countries like Canada.

Using Foreign Policy for Electoral Purposes

If foreign and defence policy issues are rarely issues in Canadian elections, and indeed if silence about foreign policy issues is the norm, we are faced with a puzzle. Why do political parties, particularly those in opposition, frequently make foreign policy promises during election campaigns that are obviously designed to appeal to voters?

[52] On occasion, the foreign policy promises are broadly based, aimed at all voters. Certainly that was the case with the 'foreign policy elections' surveyed above: in each case, political parties implicitly or explicitly promised to pursue a policy option that was designed to attract votes from across the spectrum. In 1891 and 1911, the Conservatives promised to abandon free trade while the Liberals promised to pursue it. By 1988, the party positions on free trade had been reversed: the Liberals promised to abandon free trade, while the Conservatives promised to pursue it. Likewise, the three elections that turned on matters of war and peace featured very broad promises on conscription in 1917 and 1940, and on nuclear weapons in 1963.

But sometimes the target of a foreign policy promise is exceedingly narrow. The most iconic example was the promise by Joe Clark, the leader of the opposition Progressive Conservatives in 1979 that if a PC government were elected, the Canadian embassy in Israel would be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (Takach 1989). This would have involved a signal departure in Canadian foreign policy. While the government of Israel had declared Jerusalem as the capital after the city had been captured from Jordan during the Six Day War in 1967, many countries, including Canada, had not recognized Israel's annexation of Jerusalem. Had Canada recognized Israel's claim to Jerusalem, it would have dramatically furthered the efforts of the government of Israel to legitimize the incorporation of Jerusalem. But Clark and the Progressive Conservative campaign had more narrowly-focussed hopes. They hoped that promising to make this highly pro-Israeli move would prompt members of Canada's Jewish community to abandon their historical support for the Liberals, and vote Conservative. The promise was targeted at Jewish voters in a small number of Toronto ridings, in particular Eglinton–Lawrence, Willowdale, and St. Paul's, where approximately a quarter of the voters in each riding was Jewish. Party polls taken in April 1979 had shown that only a few percentage points separated the Liberals and Conservatives in these ridings. Charles Flicker, a graduate student who interviewed all of Clark's key political advisers in 2002, reports that the consensus among Clark's inner circle was that 'electoral concerns were undoubtedly the main impetus' for the promise (Flicker 2002–2003, 122). Indeed, William Neville, Clark's chief of staff, told Flicker explicitly: 'What more could you call it than political opportunism? That is, we thought we could take five seats with this, so we did it' (quoted in Flicker 2002-2003, 122). In the event, a minority Progressive Conservative government under Clark [53] was returned in the 22 May elections; and PC candidates were elected in Willowdale and St. Paul's. However, Clark decided to abandon his promise after Arab states threatened Canada with economic sanctions (Ripsman and Blanchard 2002; Thompson 2017).

While the Jerusalem embassy promise demonstrates the willingness of Canadian party leaders to believe that highly specific promises on foreign policy will draw voters to their candidates, in fact it is an unusual case. Much more common is the tendency of political parties to make very specific international policy promises in the hopes of broadly attracting votes. This has been particularly noticeable in the defence area, where two Liberal prime ministers, twenty years apart, played from exactly the same playbook.

In 1993, the opposition Liberals under Jean Chrétien decided to use the purchase by the Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney of a new helicopter for the Canadian Armed Forces as a partisan cudgel to attack the governing party. In 1992, the Mulroney government had purchased a fleet of fifty helicopters for anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and search and rescue. Partly because the cost of the EH101 helicopters, manufactured by a European consortium, was \$4.4 billion, the

procurement was widely criticized when it was announced. At the forefront of the critics was the New Democratic Party: it claimed that the EH101 was far too expensive, and was quite unnecessary given the end of the Cold War. The NDP castigated the Mulroney government for buying what they called a ‘Cold War helicopter’ and a ‘Cadillac,’ and promised to cancel the contract if the NDP formed government after the next election. The highly negative public reaction to the decision prompted the Liberal opposition to join the criticism, and the party included the helicopter procurement as part of its general attack on the Conservatives in preparation for the election expected in 1993. Chrétien started to appropriate the NDP criticisms: he began claiming that because the Cold War was over, the threat that the helicopter was being acquired to meet — anti-submarine warfare (ASW) — had ceased to exist. He also started to use the description used by the Canadian Peace Alliance that these were ‘attack helicopters’ that were ‘an obscene waste of tax dollars.’ Chrétien also appropriated the NDP promise to cancel the program if a Liberal government were elected, and even appropriated the trope first voiced by the NDP, and began referring to the aircraft as ‘Cadillacs’ (Nossal 2016a, 63).

[54] The attack on the EH101s and the promise to cancel became deeply embedded in the 1993 election campaign that ran from 8 September to 25 October. By this time, Mulroney had retired. Kim Campbell, the minister of national defence who had overseen the EH101 purchase, had won the leadership of the PC party and had taken over as prime minister on 25 June. During the election Campbell was persistently attacked on the issue of the helicopters. At the very beginning of the campaign, however, she implicitly acknowledged the opposition attacks by announcing that her government was going to trim the procurement from fifty to forty-three. Chrétien’s response was immediate: ‘We don’t need them. We don’t even need one. Forty-three is as ridiculous as fifty.’ And when Campbell characterized her decision to cut the seven helicopters as ‘the most difficult decision I have ever had to make,’ Chrétien countered that he would have no trouble at all making the decision to cancel: ‘For me, I’ll take one piece of paper and I’ll take my pen. I will write: “Zero helicopters—Chrétien.” That will be it. I will not lose one minute of sleep over it’ (Sallot and Howard 1993; Makin 1993; Plamondon 2010, 125).

And that, indeed, was it. In the general election of 25 October 1993, the Liberals won a majority and the Progressive Conservatives were reduced to just two seats, with every minister except Jean Charest losing their seat. Chrétien and his cabinet were sworn in on 4 November and held their first cabinet meeting that very afternoon, deciding to cancel the helicopter contract, incurring costs of \$478.3 million to cancel the contract and terminate work in progress (Plamondon 2010, 150). While in his memoirs Chrétien tried to spin the cancellation as a cost-saving (Chrétien 2007, 54), the reality is that Canadian taxpayers ended up spending vastly more than \$4.4 billion to acquire new ASW and search and rescue helicopters. For despite the cancellation, Canada still needed new helicopters, and the Chrétien government spent the next decade dealing with the consequences of the 1993 promise, costs that not only

included the expenditure of more money on this procurement, but also military capability as it would not be until the early 2020s that the last of new helicopters would be delivered (Plamondon 2010; Nossal 2016a).

During the 2015 election, the Liberals under Justin Trudeau borrowed the same play from Chrétien's 1993 playbook. When the election writs were issued by the Governor General in August, the Liberals had just 36 seats, and were trailing in third place behind the governing Conservative Party of Canada under Stephen Harper and the official opposition NDP under Thomas Mulcair. Among the many promises that Trudeau [55] embraced in order to attract votes for the Liberals was a promise that if a Liberal government were elected, it would never buy the Lockheed Martin F-35, a fighter jet that the Harper Conservative government had originally purchased in 2010 to replace the existing fleet of CF-18 Hornets being flown by the Royal Canadian Air Force (Nossal 2012–13). Because the CPC had politicized that purchase (Nossal 2016a, 75–76), the Liberal party under Trudeau's predecessor, Michael Ignatieff, had decided to return the favour, and the resulting Liberal campaign to delegitimize the F-35 as being too costly had eventually prompted the Conservative government to abandon the purchase and 'reset' the program in 2012. In the middle of the 2015 election campaign, Trudeau promised that a Liberal government would not replace the CF-18s with the F-35, but would run an open competition to choose another jet fighter and give the putative savings to the Royal Canadian Navy. While this promise was deeply problematic — there would have been no savings if another fighter was chosen and it would have been illegal, since under Canadian law, there is no way to exclude a firm from bidding in an open competition — it nonetheless showed up in the Liberal campaign platform (Liberal Party of Canada 2015, 70; Blanchfield 2015). And when the Liberals were returned with a majority in the election on 19 October, Trudeau had to borrow again from Chrétien's playbook and find imaginative ways to ensure that the F-35 was not selected, including inventing a bogus 'capability gap' in Canada's jet fighter capability that supposedly required the sole-source purchase of Boeing Super Hornets — and then, when that plan fell apart, the purchase of second-hand 40-year old F-18 Hornets from the Royal Australian Air Force (for details, see Nossal 2016b; Stephenson 2017).

The use of defence procurements as an election ploy by Chrétien and Trudeau demonstrates the paradoxical nature of the electoral connection, however. It is clear that on both occasions, the Liberal party leadership believed that the promise — to cancel the EH101 contract and to refuse to buy the F-35 — would win the party some votes. Yet we do not know whether voters in either 1993 or 2015 were moved to vote for a Liberal candidate because of the party's position on those issues. What we do know, however, is that the party paid no political price for politicizing defence procurement for electoral purposes. The Chrétien Liberals were handily re-elected with a solid majority in 1997; and while the

Trudeau Liberals were re-elected in 2019 with a minority, there is no evidence that their policies on the F-35 played any part in determining the outcome of that election.

[56] Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the electoral connection plays a paradoxical role in Canadian foreign policy. Generally speaking, foreign policy does not play an important role in shaping electoral outcomes in Canadian politics, and even in those cases of ‘foreign policy elections,’ it is not at all clear that the election turned on the issues that appear in the historical rear view mirror to be the determining issues. Likewise, I have argued that the silence on foreign policy issues that has marked so many Canadian elections more often than not occurs authentically, since Canadians are generally in agreement on foreign and defence policy issues. I have argued that the lack of impact of foreign policy on electoral politics makes the frequent use of foreign policy promises by Canadian politicians during elections puzzling and paradoxical, since there is so little evidence that foreign policy issues shape voter behaviour in Canada.

However, that does not mean that in some cases, there is not a clear connection between foreign policy and domestic electoral and partisan considerations. By way of conclusion, consider the case of Canadian light armoured vehicles (LAVs) sold to Saudi Arabia in 2014. In this case, the domestic political/electoral implications were crystal clear. When the Conservative government of Stephen Harper negotiated a contract with the government of Saudi Arabia to supply \$15 billion worth of LAVs manufactured by General Dynamics Land Systems Canada in London, Ontario, it is likely that Conservative ministers around the cabinet table were highly cognizant of the long-term employment and other economic benefits that would be generated by this contract. Moreover, it is likely that they recognized that this sale would benefit the Conservative Party of Canada, since voters in the six ridings in the greater London area would be likely to reward the political party that had brought the negotiations to fruition. The electoral implications of the sale would have been central in the consideration of the pros and cons of selling this potent weapons system to a government that had the kind of appalling human rights record, both domestic and external, as Saudi Arabia did.

By the same token, however, when the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau came to power in November 2015, and needed to issue export permits for the LAVs, the domestic political implications were equally clear. If the newly sworn-in government refused to issue permits because of Saudi Arabia’s long-standing human rights record; or because of the war being waged by Saudi forces in Yemen since 2015; or because of [57] the murder and dismemberment of Jamal Khashoggi, a *Washington Post* journalist, by Saudi security forces in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018, it would not only put at risk the 3,000 jobs associated with the Saudi purchase, but it would ensure that the Liberal Party of Canada would likely be blamed by voters in London (and perhaps elsewhere) for the unemployment and

economic losses that would result. That calculation is why, at the time of writing, Canadian LAVs continue to be shipped to Saudi Arabia. In short, while the electoral connection in Canadian foreign policy is often hard to see, in some cases it can be very real.

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