

## Canada and the Five Eyes Partnership: Looking Ahead

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In examining the Five Eyes Intelligence Partnership, there are two important issues for students. First, what does it do, and what are its advantages for Canada and the Western alliance. Second, is the partnership in danger.

The second question arises now because the President of the United States does not attribute value to alliances, or to transnational institutions in general. The threat to the low-profile Five Eyes partnership is limited but still real. If the risks became reality the progress that Canada has made in the past 18 years in putting accurate intelligence at the service of informed decision-making would be lost. This would have a direct impact on Canada's ability to contribute to the resolution of the problems being discussed at this conference.

First, what is the Five Eyes partnership? The partnership grew out of the intelligence cooperation between the US and the UK during the Second World War. The three Commonwealth countries (New Zealand, Australia, Canada) added value in part because their geographic positions extended SIGINT coverage across the Pacific and north from Canada to the USSR. All five countries were allies in both World Wars. All faced Soviet internal and global subversion after World War Two. They were partners because of both history and circumstance.

The partnership was natural because the five countries had a common heritage in their early history, and except for Canada's bilingualism, a common language. They have close ties across many areas of government unrelated to intelligence and security.

The first thing to know about this partnership is that contributions are not equal. US expenditures on intelligence are very large, and none of the partners do, or could, contribute a share proportionate to their population size. The budget request in 2018 for the National Intelligence Program in the US was \$57.7 billion, plus \$20.7 for the Military Intelligence Program. The UK comes closest. The budget in 2016-17 for the three major UK intelligence agencies, not including defence, was just under three billion pounds.

Second, the coverage of the partnership now reaches across multiple areas of intelligence and security. Partners have agency structures which are similar, or at least operationally compatible. All have defence intelligence; all have an anti-terrorist organization. Canada has a National Security and Intelligence Advisor in part to line up with the US structure. The newly-formed Incident Response Group in the Privy Council Office intentionally parallels the UK COBR and similar agencies in other partner countries. Canada and New Zealand do not have separate foreign intelligence agencies, but they have a foreign HUMINT program and established pathways for sharing.

These parallel structures work together and interact constantly. Intelligence and assessments are shared in high volumes. Agencies work together as necessary. Liaison visits are frequent and there are dedicated or designated liaison officials in the embassies and High Commissions. Heads of agencies meet regularly to discuss mutual issues and build personal relationships. The level of intelligence flows from the US to Canada increased markedly after 9/11. Some agencies also exchange secondees.

Third, the security standards are US standards—for clearances, for secure communications equipment, for distribution of materials, and for facilities. Without common standards, intelligence sharing would not be possible. When a partner country lapses in enforcing standards the consequences can be costly.

Fourth, the value of the relationship for all partners is similar—access to a wider range of intelligence that would not be available to a single country. The US comes closest to universal coverage, but even the huge American community can't do everything. The US benefits from the specialized capabilities of partners, and their geographic coverage. Being able to exchange with partners also provides a check against groupthink and cultural biases. Inter-allied exchanges of views can be a stimulus for re-checking sources, analysis and conclusions. US partners frequently emphasize the value of a different perspective, even where the US is able to deploy resources well beyond the capability of partners.

In other ways, each partner brings something different. The UK has a long experience in security and intelligence, a close relationship, for now, to European partners, and technical strength. Although still unequal, this is the most equal relationship to the US within the Five Eyes.

Canada has emphasized SIGINT as its principal contribution to the Alliance, and to long experience adds technical expertise and linguistic capacities in multiple languages and dialects.

Canada and the US are both North American, Atlantic-Pacific nations, with broadly compatible orientations on foreign policy issues. Most significant for the US, Canada and the US constitute an overlapping security environment. Territorial defence, terrorism, criminality, counter-espionage, cybercrime, infrastructure protection and border security can't be effectively managed by the US without a close partnership with Canada.

Australia is a strategic military partnership with the US. While the US must defend Canada to defend the US, the US-Australia defence partnership is slightly less compulsory, but only slightly, as World War Two in the Pacific illustrated. Australia has developed a high level of expertise in neighbouring countries such as Indonesia.

New Zealand as a small nation is not as indispensable as Australia, but it has significant SIGINT capacity to its North and East in Polynesia and South America.

Firth, and perhaps most obviously, the Five Eyes countries are all English-speaking, except for Canada, whose S&I public servants work in English and French. This means that intelligence does not have to be translated for transmission to partners, and senior officials can communicate easily. The need for translating materials is an important obstacle for intelligence partners who wish to share large volumes of information. Intelligence distributed among the five eyes partners is usually already translated from another language into English. Adding a further translation would increase the dangers of misinterpretation.

For Canada, the advantage of the Five Eyes is access to a far greater body of intelligence than we could ever afford on our own. Our challenge has been making a strong contribution, which we have done with CSE as the centrepiece, but also by contribution through every branch of our security and intelligence community, with foreign affairs reporting added from time to time.

The Five Eyes allies share almost every type of S&I material: SIGINT, HUMINT, Imagery, analysis, and much more. Operational cooperation is high.

What keeps this alliance strong, since it is obvious all five partners have their own interests and foreign policy objectives?

*Historical Closeness:* The Five Eyes Partners have a common historical association and a common philosophical and legal inheritance. This has been reinforced by a history of working together, fighting on the same side, and sharing ideas on many aspects of government. The historic closeness is reinforced by frequent meetings and joint operations.

*Common Values:* All five countries have traditionally had similar approaches to the rule of law, human rights, democracy, open markets and open societies.

*Multiple governmental linkages:* The five countries cooperate across many areas apart from security and intelligence and have historically had a high comfort level in interacting with each other.

*Parallel linkages at the political level:* Although the Five Eyes partnership is run by officials, politicians are very aware that they are drawing on a common intelligence base and will see intelligence reporting and analysis from allies.

*Give/Get:* While contributions to the alliance are not equal or proportionate, all governments have made contributions to the alliance a priority.

*High value for all partners:* All benefit from sharing high quality, properly sourced and verified intelligence.

*No spying on partners:* Intelligence operations against a partner would imperil the alliance. This does not mean there is no seeking of information or writing of assessments. Diplomatic reporting is supplemented by the exchange of information through liaison officers and liaison visits.

*Originator control:* Allies control their own intelligence in which others may not share without permission.

*Distribution caveats:* There is no expectation that countries will share everything. Partners keep some intelligence that is sensitive for policy or collection reasons to themselves. We have Canadian Eyes Only, just as the US has NOFORN. It is common for reporting to be sanitized and non-sharable information removed.

*Recognition of Mutual Threat:* We face similar threats, whether they are cyberattacks, discriminatory trade practices, or the safety of our citizens.

Obviously, even allies have trade disagreements, although the current situation with punitive tariffs imposed on close allies is exceptional.

*Strong Personal relationships:* Agency heads and others meet regularly and build strong personal connections.

Since these are the conditions that maintain the Five Eyes Alliance, the threats to it are also clear. If foreign policies or foreign policy values and goals diverge, the justification for sharing intelligence starts to erode. If partners share less or share less of quality, the overall partnership would lose value. Different legal principles can inhibit sharing and create process blockages. All partners must maintain high-security standards. Adversaries know that penetrating the service on one country will expose intelligence from another country. This is one of the reasons highly sensitive material is often not shared. Sometimes there must be security standards far exceeding the norm, for example in running a high-value penetration agent.

Some of the potential threats to an alliance are currently at play within the Five Eyes

The Five Eyes Partnership is an intelligence-sharing alliance. It exists, however, because the diplomatic objectives of the partners are compatible, the intelligence agency leaders feel a close kinship with their counterparts, and their militaries share common assumptions, general objectives, and even equipment. Political backing for the partnership has been strong. The strong benefit to all partners and the long-standing relationship has protected the alliance even when political disputes have been serious.

Above all, the common civilizational heritage of the Five Eyes partners provides the most essential adhesive of all—a common set of values. With common values, a partnership can survive transitory disagreements on specifics. Without common values trust will falter.

These foundational elements are not as solid as they were. Relationships between the allies have become tense, although this has impacted NATO and key bilateral pacts, but so far not the Five Eyes.

The United Kingdom is leaving the EU, after which it may lose some of its value as a link with European partners. Many observers feel the UK will suffer economically from Brexit. This could lead to a loss in intelligence capacity if it generates severe budget problems.

All Five Eyes Partners are working to achieve a balanced relationship with China, but not all have come out in the same place. Australia has increasingly pushed back against aggressive Chinese economic and political activities in Australia. New Zealand has been less alarmed, although that too may be changing. Canada is trying to achieve a positive trade relationship while there are increasing concerns about the infrastructure risks of too much Chinese participation in the Canadian economy. The US is engaged in a tariff confrontation with China, with allies supportive at least of the objective, but unconvinced that a tariff war is the best way forward. Most are also suffering from damaging tariffs imposed on their own economies by the United States.

The most significant change, of course, is the retreat of the United States from alliance leadership under the current presidency, accompanied by a brutal disregard for friends and a puzzling enthusiasm for authoritarian rulers.

There have been tense moments in relationships between Canada and the US in the past, but the recent interactions between Canada and the US are unique in recent decades. We have seen instances of poor personal relationships between a US president and a Canadian Prime Minister before, but not volleys of personal insults. Disagreements over facts are common in trade disputes, but the pure invention of statistics undermines mutual confidence. The tough bargaining of the Yankee trader is embedded in Canadian literature as well as direct experience, but a threat to destroy the Canadian economy by attacking the auto sector

with a knockout blow is tough to endure from a former close friend. And of course, classifying the export of Canadian steel and aluminum as a security risk to the United States means that either Canada is not a reliable partner for the US, or the US is not a reliable partner for Canada.

Do we all have similar values? Even after discounting the occasional instance of virtue signalling in Canada, it is apparent that the values gulf is wide and getting wider. The Five Eyes systems support democracy. The adherence of intelligence communities to a high standard of ethical behaviour is an essential protection against the harm that can result from tempting shortcuts. If the essential elements of democracy at home and abroad are diminished, will the ethical standards of the S&I community hold?

The centrifugal pressures may prove to be temporary. Even if they persist, it is quite possible that the strong internal coherence of the Five Eyes partners will remain despite turbulence at the political level.

Is there a serious possibility that the Five Eyes Partnership is at risk?

It is a lower profile than NATO. Unlike NATO there have not been serious issues around funding—everyone knows why contributions are unequal. The leaders of the intelligence communities are officials, and politicians seldom come together as representatives of the Five Eyes, and when they do the meetings are private and communiqués are not normally issued.

The danger to the partnership is anything that would cause public attention and debate.

We have already seen one crisis generated by a critical foreign policy divergence—the invasion of Iraq. Canada was not part of the armed coalition and there was a serious threat of diminished access to US intelligence, and to our standing within the alliance. It is possible that this situation could be repeated if the US took aggressive action against a country while Canada did not participate.

A related danger would be manifest if there was a feeling that Canadian intelligence was being used for purposes Canada did not support. This arose in the Mahar Arar case, with Canadian-supplied suspicions being used to justify his rendition to Syria. As a result, more restrictive security intelligence sharing rules were implemented.

I think the US intelligence community has won the debate with the President over whether torture is acceptable, but if that position changed, Canada would have to be extremely wary of the origin and reliability of intelligence on terrorism risks.

This would also be a danger if there were a divergence on the major policy question, not necessarily leading to war. If Canada felt its intelligence supported policies it opposed, such the US rejection of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action dealing with Iran's nuclear program, this could hinder full sharing. The same could apply to US intelligence used by an ally to argue against US policies.

A related possibility would be a suspicion on the part of Canada that the flow of intelligence to this country was being dictated by the political priorities of a partner. Before 911 intelligence had restricted acceptance in Canadian foreign policy formulation because of suspicions among diplomats that American intelligence reflected American diplomatic priorities. This will always true to a degree—countries collect the intelligence they think they will need. It is more serious to mutual confidence if intelligence is filtered for political impact on a partner, and not just for reasons of internal decision-making or security.

Another potential danger is punishment for a security lapse. All of the Five Eyes partners are the focus of attention by Russia, China, and other intelligence services, but high-security standards are essential for the preservation of the alliance. Canada had to take swift action after the Delisle case. There have been many US intelligence defeats as well as victories, but this would not protect us from access retaliation if Canada were responsible for a major loss of allied intelligence during a period

of tense allied relationships. After all, most of the intelligence and assets at risk are those of the United States.

We might see a shift in the type of person who leads US intelligence agencies. So far we have seen professionals or partisans with a strong intelligence community background or commitment. But there have been multiple personnel changes in the White House and in major departments of senior officials who do not meet the President's expectations. The Five Eyes has put a lot of emphasis on ensuring that officials know each other and are comfortable in their interactions. If senior US officials were less attached to the value of the partnership, one of the other crises might be more likely—exclusion of a partner, manipulation of the intelligence flow, lack of confidence in a partner's intelligence, or punishment for a security lapse.

Some of the issues, particularly those relating to process and the treatment of individuals, are particularly relevant to terrorism, still necessarily a preoccupation of Five Eyes intelligence agencies.

The US pullback from leadership and the questioning of the value of alliances comes at a very bad time. We have entered a long era which will be dominated by three global forces.

First, a new bipolar global power structure is being established. One pole is China—authoritarian, ambitious, and economically strong. It is establishing a global trade network placing China at the centre of a network of countries contributing raw resources, knowledge and markets. This new empire is based on wealth, careful planning, authoritarian governance and a willingness to exploit every advantage, regardless of the norms of the international community.

The alternate pole, as it has been for decades, is the United States. Until now it has been the willing leader of a global network of open democratic and open market countries believing in human rights and freedoms. The US and friends have worked for a coherent international

order that promotes prosperity and avoids war. The United States was often criticized for falling short of its own ideas, but the ideals were there.

China is increasing its attractiveness as a partner for many countries. The United States is pushing allies away.

The second major force is the new phase of the information revolution—the accelerating move to artificial intelligence. This will change everything from industry to scenarios for military conflict. It is also very likely to eliminate many jobs from industrial societies, escalating the discontent that is already evident as the current wave of IT and trade transformation eliminates many of the middle-income careers that softened the gap between rich and poor. Economic instability drives political realignment.

Third, we have already reached the era of high impact global climate change, and the harm to every aspect of life and governance will intensify. Governments will be increasingly preoccupied with disaster costs, global immigration, food security and personal and national mitigation strategies. National and global instability is at high risk.

The various forms that the western alliance takes—NATO, the EU, the Five Eyes—provide forums for concerted action. International organizations have been forums for debate and reconciliation—imperfect without a doubt, but still, the best hope for global leadership to resolve global problems.

The Five Eyes partnership is low profile and is not a political organization. This gives it some potential for durability even in difficult times.

If the current tensions within the western alliance continue beyond one presidential term, the risks to the Five Eyes Alliance will increase. This would be disastrous for the Canadian intelligence community, and

harmful to its role in protecting Canada, contributing to global conflict resolution, and supporting informed decision-making.

It would signal a further loss of unity in the western alliance. At a time when strong leadership from the western democracies is critical to human rights, global prosperity, and the health of the biosphere, this would be an irredeemable tragedy.

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