

Probing the Aftermyth of Seattle

Canadian Public Opinion on International Trade, 1980-2000

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The third ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 1999 failed, spectacularly, with tens of thousands of protestors battling thousands of police. After the long anticipated Battle in Seattle, journalists fretted about the apparent Debacle in Seattle, leaders of civil society organizations proclaimed the dawn of a new era, and serious academics in proliferating symposia began to refer to the post-Seattle era the way they once talked about the post-cold war "new world order."¹ The flamboyant French farmer José Bové claimed that "Public opinion has already made its decision: the WTO and the way it works are already condemned today by the majority of citizens."² The Canadian Minister for International Trade observed

that, "I can say with more certainty than ever that we are in a very, very different kind of world than we were. I think Seattle has really crystallized a lot of forces, emotions, tensions and creative evolutions that have been in the air for the last 50 years."³

The public protests were arguably only one of the battles in Seattle, and not the most important contributor to the failure of the WTO meeting,⁴ but the aftermyth of the street battle shapes how scholars, practitioners and journalists write about the evolving politics of global governance. Internationalists who think that globalization is a Good Thing worry about what they see as evidence of growing North American "globophobia." Some experts

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think that the public is misinformed, and advocate more public “education”, while many in the business community think that greater marketing efforts are needed to “sell” the benefits of free trade to the public.⁵ Some trade officials think that international organizations must now have glass walls. Members of civil society organizations say that the public has made it clear that the era of corporate rule must come to an end, and Sylvia Ostry wonders if trade policy suffers from the end of what V.O. Key Jr. called the “permissive consensus” in international affairs of the earlier post-war decades, that is, the freedom that governments had to act as they saw fit in international affairs.⁶ Others dismiss all the Cassandras and think that since some public polls show that support for trade is undiminished, Seattle was merely a tempest in a Starbucks cup.

In this paper we attempt to probe one aspect of the post-Seattle mythology: Do Canadians support active engagement in the economic institutions of global governance? The policy aspects of the question are pressing for three reasons. The first is the possible perception created by activists that the public thinks that globalization, its supposed agents in multinational firms, and *their* putative agents in the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank, have gone too far. The Canadian trade agenda is heavy, with the prospect of new negotiations in the WTO, new regional negotiations, and further Team Canada missions. The Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in 2001 will likely attract large protests, with a promised aggressive response from security forces. How deep is support for present agreements, and is there support for new ones? The second reason relates to the content of these agreements. There is an international consensus, expressed most dramati-

cally at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000,⁷ that existing institutions of global governance are inadequate in the face of continuing economic integration, unacceptable poverty for billions of people, and environmental degradation. How supportive are Canadians of international efforts to address these challenges? And do they recognize the linkage between trade and human security (broadly understood)? Finally, Canadian and European ministers have promised “to ensure that the [next WTO] Round responds to the *legitimate concerns of society as a whole* about the trading system, through measures that support sustainable development, consumer health and safety and other broad social goals, and through preserving each Member’s right to promote cultural diversity.”⁸ How do we know what the *legitimate concerns of society* are? Part of the answer to these three questions will be found in public opinion data.

The new mythology about decreasing levels of public support for global governance may have a solid qualitative foundation in protest and activism, but we attempt to show in an analysis of available survey research on international trade that, in Canada at least, it has little quantitative basis. We find that “Seattle” had few roots in, or impact on mass opinion in Canada, although many of the concerns raised by protesters speak to underlying public values that could be mobilized were the Canadian government to pursue new trade agreements.

Such a conclusion does not imply that protests in Seattle have had no political implications. In fact, elites may have been more strongly affected than the general public. In American studies of public opinion and international affairs, we learn that officials and politicians both tend to

look to the media and interest groups as indicators of public opinion, and to reject polling results that suggest that the public might hold different views.⁹ Media coverage as well is often driven by institutional, sociological, and technological factors having nothing to do with “public opinion,” and the media often assess public concerns by listening to officials and other elites with expertise in the area. All of this ferment implies that regardless of the quantitative, measurable impact on public opinion of protests against liberalized trade, the cognitive reality of trade policy officials may have changed. This new reality, constructed through an interaction between civil society organizations, trade officials, and the media, may affect mass opinion in the future. The implication of our research is that this effect is likely to be motivated largely by social rather than economic concerns. We find that most Canadians are now convinced that liberalized trade benefits the Canadian economy and Canadian employment, but remain uncertain about the impact of liberalized trade on the domestic welfare state and global human security. And it is on these issues of social programs, human rights and environmental protection, rather than job creation, where the debate will increasingly be joined.

In the first section of this paper we set the context for probing the aftermyth of Seattle, then in the second section we describe the available Canadian data sets on public opinion that have been collected over the past two decades. The third section reports on trends in opinion in terms of the underlying interests and values of Canadians, and the last section offers some conclusions about the data and the implications for Canadian engagement in global governance.

1. The Context

The WTO meeting in Seattle was front page news in December 1999. One Canadian activist claimed that “there is little doubt that the Seattle events heightened world-wide awareness about the WTO and its effects on the lives of people.” Tony Clarke also argued that Seattle demonstrated that “the WTO is currently suffering from a ‘crisis of legitimacy.’”¹⁰ But one year later, after the election campaign of 2000, commentators wondered why trade, globalization, and the issues at the heart of the protests in Seattle had not been election issues in Canada.¹¹ The great free trade election of 1988 was fought on almost nothing else, and NAFTA was an important issue in the 1993 election campaign.¹² Over the past three years, protestors disrupted one international meeting after another. Dozens of Canadian NGOs were formally accredited to the WTO meeting in Seattle, and busloads of Canadians participated in the street demonstrations. Yet even the NDP, which expressed serious reservations about NAFTA and the WTO, centred its 2000 campaign on health care, not trade.

We see two simple explanations of this puzzle. First, Canadians do not think or know that much about trade: almost 2/5 Canadians did not notice that anything at all had happened in Seattle in 1999 (Appendix, question #2), and for most of them what happened was a media event. The public learns very little about trade from typical news stories dealing with meetings or protests. The role of the news media in contemporary politics is to choose voices from the public sphere, and then to organize these voices into competing packages of ideas. The media focuses on public events featuring conflict and visuals, with very little attention to the substance of these conflicts. “Seattle”

as a media event, in short, was about colourful conflict, not about “trade” or the WTO. It is not surprising, therefore, that it had little resonance in public opinion, and apparently no effect on the election campaign. Second, the debate about social programs in the 2000 election was in fact part of the debate about globalization. When citizens actually do think about “trade,” they are really thinking about other concerns and values, such as the future of public health care.

What then is significant about the globalization protests? Protest is not new in the advanced economies, but with the end of the Cold War, the focus shifted towards concerns associated with globalization, beginning with the Rio Summit in 1992. Trade policy officials first noticed the shift in the diffuse protests around the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) in 1997-98, whose demise is often attributed to a hostile public. The protests against APEC in Vancouver 1997, and at the fiftieth anniversary of the WTO in Geneva in 1998, were precursors to the drama in Seattle in 1999. In 2000, protestors attempted to disrupt, among other events, the annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank in Washington and Prague, the ministerial of the Organization of American States in Windsor, and the G-20 meetings in Montreal. What is the message in these protests?

The question could be addressed at four different levels. First, one could examine the relationship between public opinion and the protests, looking at whether the protests were reflecting the preoccupations and opinion of the general public, and, conversely, whether these protests had an impact on public opinion. We focus primarily on this level. Second, one could examine whether the protests have affected elites, who can be affected by

events that leave no trace on public opinion as measured by polls. Demonstrations against globalization may have yet to affect the public, but may have affected how governments view the public. The discourse within the trade community may have changed, now placing much more emphasis on public opinion due to concerns that their own trade agenda may be sabotaged by civil society groups. How elites respond to and understand these apparent public realities will be crucial to understanding future trade developments. Although there have been no studies of elite level opinion, we will comment on the impact of protest on the elite assumptions. Third, one could examine the significance of Seattle for NGO mobilization. And fourth, one could examine the implications of Seattle for global governance, democratic decision-making, the transparency of global institutions, and the opportunities for democratic participation within them. These latter two questions are beyond the scope of this paper.

2. Method and Data of this Project

Our main objective in this paper is to investigate whether “Seattle” had any roots in or effect on mass opinion in Canada, and the factors which explain opinion on Canada’s participation in international trade agreements. Was it part of a trend toward greater unease about globalization? In light of Seattle, does the public support “trade” and has opinion changed since the onset of a more activist trade policy in the early 1980s?¹³ To the best of our knowledge, such an analysis has not been performed in Canada or elsewhere.¹⁴ Answers are difficult to find because studies can be no more than retrospective: nobody knew in 1980 that we would want to know about “Seattle” in 1999.

We relied on three different data sources. First, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) made available copies of their recent surveys on international trade, including electronic data from two Ekos surveys (1990-1999), and a large collection of written reports and briefing notes on older surveys.¹⁵ We used these data to identify how Canadians felt about a large number of quite pointed questions (the effect of trade on jobs, whether trade promotes human rights, whether it is a threat to Canadian sovereignty, etc.) Second, through our access to the Queen's Public Opinion Archives, we examined a large number of older surveys (Enviroics and Decima, 1980-1996). These data were used largely to track opinion evolution, as well as to supplement the DFAIT surveys with additional questions on trade and foreign policy. Third, we supplemented these data with analysis of support for NAFTA at the time of the 1993 Canadian election, using a comprehensive data available through the Canadian Election Study. This source permitted multivariate analysis of opinion on one example of trade liberalization and allowed us to test competing explanations of support or opposition to NAFTA, such as economic self-interest, attitudes toward elites, and core values.

These data have some limits. First, the data available from DFAIT lack a consistent time series of questions that contained, on the one hand, good measures of support for liberalized trade and trade agreements (the dependent variable, for the purposes of our analysis), and on the other, good measures of the underlying values and attitudes which structure, explain and predict changes in support for liberalized trade (the independent variables, for the purpose of our analysis). Second, the data available through the

Queen's Archive conducted by commercial firms suffer from the endemic problems with all such data when academics attempt to make use of them: they respond to contemporary pressures and the interests of clients at the time, and often lack a consistent set of questions. Third, the high quality data available from the 1993 CES contain three major difficulties. The first is that opinion during an election campaign on an issue like NAFTA may be highly influenced by attitudes towards the parties participating in the election rather than by underlying attitudes to the issue. Second, the data from 1993 could be outdated: NAFTA is a settled question that may on first glance appear to be of only secondary relevance to questions of contemporary significance regarding general support for liberalization and global integration. And third, many voters might have associated NAFTA with American domination, and might have responded differently to a question about multilateral trade negotiations.

Nonetheless, these data do have strengths. The data collected by DFAIT allow a general overview of a large number of questions. The data available from the Queen's Archive provides a very useful time series on a number of key questions and agreements. Finally, the data from the CES is particularly useful for a number of reasons. NAFTA had meaning to Canadians in 1993 and was a well-recognized issue, on which Canadians had real views. Today, "globalization," "liberalized trade," and more specific agreements such as the MAI are vague and amorphous to much of the public. In essence, explaining opinion on NAFTA may measure a deep and stable set of attitudes and judgements. Opinion on NAFTA, therefore, is a reliable surrogate for opinion on liberalized trade generally. As well, the 1993 data set contains a good question

measuring support for NAFTA, and a large range of explanatory variables. These variables are likely to be relevant because the underlying values which structure opinion on trade agreements, economic integration, and globalization probably do not change much from year to year. Understanding opinion on NAFTA in 1993, therefore, becomes a useful baseline to begin further analysis on the structure of opinion today.

Values, Attitudes, and Opinion on Trade

This paper examines what the available survey data tell us about the state of public opinion in Canada on international trade. On issues such as international trade, we will suggest that opinion is more latent than real: most people do not think much about global transaction flows. But latent public opinion has the potential to become activated, and understanding the potential for, and implications of, such activation requires an understanding not of current opinion on "trade," but an understanding of the underlying value structure of Canadians on questions that they link to trade.

We distinguish underlying values and attitudes which structure opinion from opinion itself. Core values can be understood as basic beliefs held by individuals which remain relatively immune to change and which play an important role in individuals' lives and choices, including their political choices. Secularism, racism, traditionalism, and national identity represent a sample. Public opinion literature on decision-making has found that such values play an important role in individuals' political decision-making.¹⁶ "Attitudes" represent an intermediate category between values and opinion. Attitudes are more mutable than values,

but tend to be fairly well-formed views that can be used to assess new issues. Belief in a strong welfare state, for example, is an attitude that can be used to interpret new issues as they arise.

Values and attitudes structure opinion. When new issues arise, individuals first survey their values and attitudes to best figure out how they feel about a new issue. Various values and attitudes may compete for precedence as the debate begins but eventually one or two attitudes will emerge to structure opinion. The fact that values and attitudes come to shape opinion does not mean that opinion is necessarily volatile or weakly held. At the early stages of a debate opinion may be weakly held as different attitudes compete and as individuals attempt to figure out "what the issue is about." Over time, however, opinion may become firmer. Opinion on abortion, for example, is firmly held for most people and is not subject to frequent change. But the opinion itself is largely a product of religious values and attitudes toward gender equality and individual autonomy. In this paper we will suggest that some aspects of the debate on international trade are at a more advanced stage, in particular the impact of previous trade agreements on the domestic economy. Other aspects of the debate, in contrast, particularly the effect of new agreements and globalization on domestic quality of life/social programs and international human security remain at an early stage. Understanding how these debates will evolve requires not an examination of survey questions dealing with questions relating to trade deals, but a broader understanding of the values presently competing for precedence in structuring attitudes toward globalization.

For some scholars, the most important element that will structure opinion toward trade is economic self-interest. The major work on support for European and global integration focuses on the material interests of different voters and how they would fare in a world with fewer trade barriers. These scholars establish persuasive causal models that an individual's economic interests and ability to compete in more open markets govern opinion.¹⁷ Yet these models only explain so much. In the context of European referendums on the EU, some of the explanation for opinion relates to support for party leadership, with voters taking cues from parties they support and trust, and simply endorsing or rejecting the proponents of liberalization.¹⁸ Others point to national macroeconomic circumstances (distinct from individuals' own economic self-interest) as important.¹⁹ Yet these three explanations cannot explain everyone's decisions. We believe an important focus for understanding opinion about globalization is to examine attitudes and values toward the welfare state, social justice, elitism, and traditionalism, as well as individuals' definitions of national identity and national self.

The additional starting point for analysis of opinion on any international issue has to be that the public has little information about foreign affairs generally and trade more specifically.²⁰ Public events can raise awareness of international issues, as occurred during the demonstrations in Seattle, but even then, awareness remains very low. In addition to this low level of information, public opinion on foreign policy generally is not organized — “constrained” — in ways that elites would expect. In the United States, public opinion is not organized around concepts such as “liberal” and “conservative,” or around concepts such as “isolationist” or “interna-

tionalist.”²¹ Nonetheless, it does have some coherence because it is based on cognitive shortcuts, known in public opinion and psychological literatures as “heuristics.”²² These include the core values to which we have referred. In Canada, citizens have a perception of their country as a good cop, a peacekeeper, and a promoter of human rights. It is important for Canadians that they play a positive role in world affairs. This perception is an important aspect of Canadians' sense of identity. According to surveys analyzed by Martin and Fortmann, Canadians generally believe that foreign policy should be based on values rather than power, that national security is undistinguishable from international security. Canadians support peacekeeping and the promotion of human security because it increases Canada's diplomatic influence internationally, it distinguishes Canada from the more militant United States, and it contributes to consensus-building, tolerance, and respect for individual and collective rights, all of which are core Canadian values.²³ Public opinion data provides evidence, therefore, that Canadians generally support using their foreign policy as an extension of their values.

Some American studies confirm that elites are more supportive of international integration and globalization than the general public. Elites are less parochial, more supportive of foreign aid, less supportive of tariffs, and much more supportive of contributions to the IMF. The public is also more afraid that the world is getting more rather than less dangerous.²⁴ In Canada, Ekos found that elites are more supportive of “international competitiveness” as a policy objective than the general public.²⁵ The lack of congruity between elite and public opinion around international trade,

however, has not been subject to extensive study. Some scholars have found evidence that — at least in the US — elites systematically overestimate the public's skittishness for international engagement.²⁶ It is these parallel phenomena — an elite more supportive of international engagement and an elite that systematically overestimates the gap between themselves and the public — that merit careful attention in the future.

3. Canadian Public Opinion on International Trade

We begin by noting that despite the low level of information regarding trade, Canadians recognize that international trade is important, and becoming more so (Appendix, question #4). The recognition regarding trade's importance, particularly with the US, is nothing new (Appendix, question #5). We suspect that the basic structure of opinion observed in the great free trade election of 1988 still holds, when the main issues for the public were enhanced access to a large market and protecting social programs.²⁷ The public is generally supportive of Canada's participation in trade agreements, and this support is deep and widespread (Appendix, question #6). Even most of those who are opposed to the Canadian government's trade agenda would place themselves with the large majority who think that the government should "participate" in trade talks. But such support for trade agreements in principle does not *necessarily* translate into support for particular agreements or their contents. Or, as Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians has put it: "The real question is: what do you want your government to say at those trade talks?"²⁸

Evolution of Opinion Over Time

The changes in support for liberalized trade since the late 1980s are startling and

large (Figure 1. Evidence from elsewhere indicates that attitudes towards European integration evolved very slowly, if at all: the original six EEC members all have much higher and consistent support for European integration than the newer ones, and there is almost no movement in opinion over time.²⁹ Yet attitudes toward trade liberalization in Canada have undergone a dramatic change since the 1980s. For both the FTA and NAFTA, support was weak leading up to the negotiations and in the immediate aftermath. This high level of opposition was also intense, while support was weak.³⁰

Figure 1 also highlights an important reality concerning the public opinion environment: liberalized trade in theory (the top line) is always more strongly supported than particular agreements (the two bottom lines). This ambivalence is in part due to the fact that other issues and values — such as the effect on social programs or the environment — come into play when dealing with specific agreements. On the other hand, few people have any kind of deep opposition to liberalized trade *per se*. Whether tariffs are in principle good or bad is a debate that is largely over. The debate over the precise nature of the content of the agreements, however, continues. The evidence again highlights the distinction in the public mind between the effect of trade generally (relatively positive) and the effect of specific agreements (much more guarded). This dynamic — increased apprehension as the country nears an agreement — is a reality of the public opinion environment.³¹

The evidence also underlines strong retrospective support for trade agreements, but prospective reticence. In addition to the evidence in Figure 1, we can also see the turnaround in attitudes

toward job creation and trade (Appendix, questions 7 and 8). Although the questions are somewhat different, attitudes toward the impact of NAFTA in 1991 and trade in 1999 are striking. Moreover, concerns about job loss decreased consistently in the early 1990s, until the question stopped being asked.

Canadians believe that trade has positive impacts on technological development and innovation, and now recognize that it has a positive impact on jobs (Figure 2). Canadians are divided about the effect of trade on culture and identity — though this is a secondary concern for most Canadians — and the effect on social programs, a concern of a much higher order. Canadians' differing assessments of trade's impact on these things represent one of the pieces of evidence we use to conclude that those in favour of liberalization have made progress in the debates over jobs and innovation, though they have yet to do so on the domestic social front.

Who Supports Liberalized Trade?

One common narrative says that Seattle demonstrates public opposition to globalization. An interest-based or political economy explanation would have trouble here, since most Canadians benefit from trade. We will construct an alternative narrative, one that is values-based, or constructivist, based on an expectation that the expansion of the market through liberalized trade always meets a social response. Our initial research did find that an interest-based model explained some of the variance on support for trade liberalization, although the differences between all socio-demographic groups appear to be relatively small (Figure 3). The knowledgeable and the more highly educated were more likely to support NAFTA, as were those Anglophones who

were able to speak French (a proxy variable for information skills). Those respondents who were currently employed and had not been out of work in the previous year were also somewhat more likely to support NAFTA. Those respondents with higher incomes were also somewhat more supportive. Socioeconomic differences on support for liberalized trade in 1999 mirrored those from 1993, with the additional finding that younger respondents were the *most* supportive of NAFTA (Appendix, question #13). Socioeconomic differences, however, continued to be relatively small.³² Even a generous reading of these data does not lend overwhelming support to a political economy explanation: although differences are in the expected direction, little of the variance in opinion on NAFTA was explained by any combination of skills related and socio-demographic variables.³³

Opinion on liberalized trade also seems to be highly correlated with assessments of the economy (Figure 4). Beyond one's own personal economic situation, items which measure individuals' assessment of macro level performance — both retrospectively and prospectively — appear to be highly relevant. Such an explanation points to macro-level contextual causes — higher support for new agreements in secure economic times — rather than micro-level egocentric cost/benefit assessments. The retrospective macroeconomic assessment was by far the most significant in the analysis. This strong finding regarding the sociotropic retrospective variable lends support not to a rational choice explanation, but a rewards-punishment model, whereby citizens are less likely to support a government in any trade liberalization endeavor when they feel the government has performed poorly in recent times.

Our findings about the determinants of support for NAFTA in 1993 point to a variety of explanations beyond the economy (Figure 4). Even when controlling for variables which measure skills and socio-demographic considerations, a variety of attitudes remain significant. First, all the items which measure traditionalism and secularism are significant, with those respondents who are more religious, support traditional gender roles, and are opposed to abortion rights more opposed to NAFTA. Those respondents opposed to immigration are also more likely to oppose NAFTA, a measure of parochialism. Those respondents who supported deficit reduction ahead of investment in social programs, and those who believed inflation was a bigger problem than unemployment, were more likely to support NAFTA, as were those who were less cynical about politicians. These findings present a picture of opposition to new trade agreements rooted in traditionalism and parochialism for some, but support for the welfare state for others. This pattern also highlights a distrust of elites and a latent populism that also fuels opposition to new trade agreements. We were able to find no correlation between support for NAFTA and environmentalism, perhaps because of the weakness of the 1993 data, and perhaps because the prominent association made by activists between trade liberalization and environmental degradation was just beginning in the early 1990s.

As we have pointed out, on economic issues, most Canadians believe that trade has been beneficial. Opinion on this question is quite predictable based on political economy explanations: Canadians with skills are more supportive, while workers in protected industries and individuals with fewer skills do not believe that liberalized trade has had positive

impacts on the Canadian economy. Canadians are also less likely to support new agreements if they think the economy is performing poorly. But these economic explanations tell only part of the story. Interestingly, Canadians are also assessing liberalized trade on the basis of its impact on the domestic welfare state, national sovereignty, and national identity, and also on the basis of its impact on the well-being of people in less industrialized countries. These factors mean that trade is about values as much as it is about economics. There will continue to be traditional (distributive) political conflict on the basis of skills, but there will also be conflict on the basis of attitudes toward the welfare state and other basic values, such as solidarity with the world's poor. It is not at all clear how Canadians will react if they believe that a new trade agreement would be marginally beneficial to the Canadian economy, but have a negative effect on working conditions, human rights, and the environment developing countries. These debates are in their infancy.

Volatility and Ambivalence

We have argued that opinion about liberalized trade and globalization more generally are driven by values and attitudes having little to do with trade *per se*. One of our crucial arguments, therefore, is that at the moment, opinion about trade is not really *about* trade, but other concerns and preoccupations. We arrived at this proposition because the answers to survey questions dealing with international trade were highly influenced by the way the question was asked. When respondents have stable views on a question, subtle changes to the wording of the question have only a negligible impact on the result. When opinion is less crystallized, results change dramatically based on the question wording because re-

spondents are not in fact revealing their opinion about the primary issue, but are being cued by other aspects of the question. Different values and attitudes are being primed by the question. The nature of ambivalence is highlighted in a recent US survey:³⁴

- 74% of Americans said they believed countries should be allowed to restrict imports from other countries if they believe that those goods were produced in ways damaging to the environment — a response that could be interpreted as “protectionist” and one that suggests that Americans believe their own government should be able to unilaterally set their own environmental standards.
- Yet the same survey also found that only 33% of Americans believed that it should be up to each country to determine its own environmental standards, and 78% believed that environmental problems are international and can be dealt with best if all countries work together — views that can be interpreted as supporting international standards negotiated in multinational forums.

Americans therefore value environmental protection, simultaneously and equally support the US government refusing the entry of products that they believe were not produced in environmentally friendly ways, and support the US government working with other governments through trade agreements to set minimum standards. In this case, the goal of environmental protection — a “consensus” value — trumps opinion about trade. Respondents are not answering these survey questions with *trade* in mind — they are choosing the option that allows them to express the greatest support for environmental protection, regardless of whether that is

what trade experts would define as a “pro” or “anti” free trade response.

A collection of Canadian polling results on the relationship between human rights and trade highlights the ambivalence. A strong majority of Canadians believe that human rights should be important to our trading practices (Appendix, question #9). Yet two questions that asked about how the Canadian government should deal with human rights abuses produced diametrically opposite conclusions: a 1993 Goldfarb survey showed strong support for cutting back on trade to pressure countries to change, while a 1995 Environics survey showed that a majority favoured increased trade in order to promote better human rights practices (Appendix, question #10). It is not clear which aspect of the questions prompted individuals to respond as they did — the question wording, format, and response choices were quite different — but on their face, these two questions should produce somewhat similar results if individuals had real opinions on the issue of how to trade with countries that abuse human rights. While an earlier generation of public opinion scholars might have referred to these responses as “nonattitudes”³⁵ — i.e. randomly expressed responses revealing no true preferences on the question — more recent scholars would recognize that the responses are not merely random; although they do not reveal a “true preference” in regards to trade sanctions, they do reveal individuals’ predispositions in terms of underlying values regarding human rights.³⁶ One can distinguish between the “affective” and the “evaluative” in public opinion research. It appears that few Canadians have any inherent affective attitudes toward liberalized trade — either liking or disliking it, per se.

What they do have is evaluations of how liberalized trade is impacting upon things they value. "Liberalized trade" is an empty shell that attracts little loyalty or hostility on its own.

Canadian Values and Trade

Canadians want their foreign and trade policy to be consistent with what they understand to be their values. Yet there is great ambivalence because Canadians are unsure whether liberalized trade in fact promotes human security, which mutes their commitment to liberalized trade. They believe that peacekeeping and foreign aid are Canada's most important contributions to the world³⁷ and remain uncertain how trade affects these things. New trade agreements though do offer Canadians an important opportunity to participate in multilateral organizations and play a role in international affairs, things that appeal to other core Canadian preoccupations: concerns about being too dependent on the United States and the desire to have influence on the international stage. New trade agreements will differ from the FTA and NAFTA in one key respect: attitudes toward the US will likely be less important in shaping opinion.

Concerns about the impact of globalization on social programs can clearly be found in recent data, mirroring similar concerns during the 1988 federal election. The dual nature of public opinion at the moment — confidence about the economic impact of trade and uncertainty about the social impact — is particularly striking when one considers the fact that these social concerns are central to many Canadians' sense of their own national identity. The debate over trade is shifting from the economic to the social, and Canadians' core conceptions of who they are will be brought to bear on these debates.

In addition to the impact on social programs, democratic values will likely also be important, but public opinion data cannot yet speak to this question. The last twenty years have witnessed a rise in democratic sensibilities, increased calls for transparency in decision-making, and a decline in deference to governments. Canadian attitudes toward the democratic process may become an increasingly important attitude used to understand globalization. It may be that citizens currently opposed to the trade agenda reject contemporary democratic decision-making processes governed by administrative and bureaucratic decision rules and experts speaking in a specialized language. They may support processes that are more participatory, transparent, and dialogic, and oppose traditional hierarchical models of decision-making. The legitimacy of some international bodies is contested for two complementary reasons: 1) emerging institutions of global governance do not have the same kinds of feedback and accountability mechanisms that allow groups of citizens to affect their decisions, and 2) these institutions have never been democratically and popularly sanctioned to make decisions. Democratic accountability and open democratic processes are fundamental Canadian values and may become important considerations governing opinion on trade.

4. Conclusion

We asked three questions at the outset: how much support is there for new trade agreements, how supportive are Canadians of efforts to address international human security issues, and what are the concerns of Canadians in the face of globalization? Our conclusions come in two parts, the first based on our review of the available evidence, and the second on

our judgement about the implications of that evidence.

We reached a number of conclusions about Canadian attitudes to international trade based on the available survey data. First, "trade" is a constructed category, as is "globalization." Its ontological status is ambiguous and its epistemological status is opaque. Traded services, for example, are famously things that you can buy and sell but cannot drop on your foot, which means they "exist" only as expert abstractions and can be seen only in measurements of transaction flows. Asking a survey question about "trade," therefore, may be asking citizens about something they neither think about nor understand. We found that opinion about trade is not really about trade, but about other concerns, attitudes and values. Canadian public opinion is poorly crystalized, not well informed on the topic, and is characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty. Second, on the question of the impact of liberalized trade on the Canadian economy, individuals with fewer skills are more opposed to liberalization, though this group is a distinct minority in Canada. Third, retrospective macroeconomic judgements are important to opinion about trade agreements, and a recession would provoke far more public skepticism towards an activist trade agenda. Fourth, and more interestingly, the political economy explanations tell only a partial story: while a majority of Canadians have come to believe that trade liberalization has positive impacts on innovation and jobs, they are concerned about its effects on social programs and international human security (broadly defined). Our central argument, then, is that the debate about the domestic economic impact of liberalized trade has been largely won over the past ten years by elites in favour of liberalization (though of course indi-

viduals who have less ability to compete in a liberalized global economy remain resistant). But the debates about the domestic social impact and the impact on global human security are still far from resolved, not least because academics are still divided on whether globalization causes growing inequality, and on what policy can do about it.³⁸ Canada may be entering, therefore, into a period where the debate over trade is changing; the coming debate will be less fuelled by class politics, and more fuelled by attitudes towards the state, along with post-materialist politics regarding values, such as social justice, parochialism, and human rights in developing countries. This debate is only just being engaged, and Canadians have yet to form judgements on these questions.

This last conclusion allows us to move beyond what survey data show to speculate on some of the implications of this research. The central question that the available survey data cannot answer is why elites in Canada appear so concerned about an event that seems to have few roots in public opinion. Put differently, why has "Seattle" become a code word for anti-globalization protest? Part of the answer may lie in the fact that the WTO protests were so much larger than all the other recent protests — tens of thousands rather than thousands of demonstrators. Seattle may have been a bigger protest because the WTO's focus is not the diffuse macroeconomic policies of the IMF or the far-away policies of the World Bank but the microeconomic framework policies whose effects are felt at home. Elites may be right to worry that Seattle was a harbinger, for reasons that have to do with the potential interaction of the factors that structure Canadian opinion and the expanding agenda of the WTO.

When a good or a service moves in international trade, people in different places are brought in to contact in new ways. International trade forces people to become more specialized, and the range of that specialization extends in time and space. Think for example of a simple object, like a running shoe. A given article can be a bundle of new ideas and complex materials. A company can buy the best design from an individual working from a cottage in Ontario, purchase high-tech fabric in Japan, manufacture the item in Shanghai, and sell the result in Florida. In the distant past, these separate functions might have been done by one person, but today production is fragmented. The creation of global supply chains, part of a global division of labour and increasing market integration, also fragments regulation as the discrete parts of the production process are subject to different authorities. In consequence, along with a shoe, we also import the policies embedded in how it was produced (e.g. child labour) or designed (e.g. product safety).

When governance is so fragmented, questions about democracy are urgent. If citizens wish to participate in the process of coming to a consensus on public action, where can they go? How do they obtain information? If as consumers they do not wish to purchase a product made abroad under conditions that would be unacceptable at home, what are they to do? The WTO has come to be seen by some activists as globalization incarnate because trade is the vector that brings policies in different countries into conflict, and when the WTO mediates such conflict, it can be portrayed as favouring multinational enterprises. The WTO may become even more of a lightning rod for concerns about globalization because it seems to displace parliament from its role

with regard to formerly domestic decisions about the environment, human rights and many other policy domains — telecoms, competition, health, education, magazines, asbestos, beef hormones, and others.

Domestic framework policies are now at the heart of the trade agenda. These policies are at issue in negotiations about foreign provision of government services (GATS), in rules for technical standards (TBT), and in new understandings of risk in food safety (SPS). The issues are also part of the debate about whether to protect the environment, labour standards and human rights through the WTO or less formally through, for example, the UN Global Compact. Future public opinion research will likely show that Canadians continue to support efforts to sustain a global market but that they are apprehensive about developments that increase policy fragmentation leading to distant decisions inconsistent with Canadian values.

What narrative will be imposed on new trade negotiations and continued protest? Through what frame will Canadians come to understand globalization? If the future trade policy narrative equates trade with human security and social well-being, Canadians are likely to be supportive, because then trade would be about Canadian values as well as prosperity. On the other hand, new trade agreements could end up being viewed as mere extensions of “corporate rule” leading to environmental degradation. On most issues, the public does not have a preferred plan of implementation; instead they have goals and values, and so long as they believe that the government generally shares these goals and values, they will support associated government action. The narratives through which

Canadians attempt to understand new trade agreements will be crucial. If they believe the government shares their values (for example, in the fight against child labour), they are likely to defer to government on which is the best method to pursue (for example, the reduction of trade barriers).

It is easy to say that globalization was not part of the 2000 Canadian election campaign on the grounds that the word itself was seldom used, but what is “globalization,” and has it really been absent from political discourse? In simple terms, globalization is an expansion in the role of global markets. Individuals can think it a good or a bad thing, but political debate centres on what the state can do about it. The policy response to globalization comes in two broad ways: measures to support the Canadian market and measures to ensure social security. The first response is seen in the attempt to ensure that Canadians are able to compete in world markets through policies that support trade liberalization, tax reform, technological innovation, and so on. As we have seen, the debate on trade liberalization itself is largely over. But the expansion of the global market also raises social concerns; rather than being the dreaded “protectionism,” these concerns take the form of ensuring that the government remains capable of helping Canadians help each other. In concrete terms, this second set of policy responses to globalization means ensuring that social programs are not eroded. When Canadians worry about changes to Employment Insurance and new funds for health care, they are really saying that they still look to the Canadian state to continue to offer some protection against market forces — forces that are now global. Seen in these terms, the effects of globalization may well have been a factor in the 2000 federal

election campaign. What we find in the aftermyth of Seattle, therefore, is that the battles had little direct resonance for most Canadians, but the real struggle for their support of the WTO and the rest of the apparatus of economic global governance may be yet to come.

Notes

¹ For examples of the proliferating symposia on the meaning of “Seattle,” see *Journal of International Economic Law* 3:1 (June 2000); *Monthly Review* 52:3 (July/August 2000); *Studies in Political Economy* 62 (Summer 2000); *Millennium* 29:1 (2000).

² José Bové, leader of the Confédération paysanne, Millau, France, June 30, 2000.

³ Notes For An Address by The Honourable Pierre S. Pettigrew, Minister For International Trade, on “Seattle: A Collision Between Two Worlds to the Global Forum 2000, Washington, D.C. May 15, 2000.

⁴ John M. Curtis and Robert Wolfe, “The WTO in the aftermyth of the Battles in Seattle,” in Maureen Appel Molot and Fen Osler Hampson, eds, *Vanishing Borders? Canada Among Nations 2000* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2000). We borrow our title (by way of Randle Wilson) from “The aftermyth of war” a 1960s satire of inflated British wartime memories. See Alan Bennett, Peter Cook, Jonathan Miller and Dudley Moore, *The Complete Beyond the Fringe* (London: Methuen, 1987).

⁵ Edward Alden, “Protests make mark on trade leaders,” *Financial Times* (20 November 2000), 6, reporting on a EU-USA meeting of the Transatlantic Business Dialogue.

⁶ V.O. Key, Jr., *Public Opinion and American Democracy*, (New York, 1963), 35, cited in Sylvia Ostry, “WTO: Institutional Design for Better Governance,” (paper delivered to the

conference Efficiency, Equity and Legitimacy: The Multilateral Trading System at the Millennium, Kennedy School, Harvard University, June 2-3, 2000)

⁷ See UN Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55/2) and Kofi A. Annan, *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century* (New York: United Nations, 2000).

⁸ Canada-European Union Joint Statement on the WTO, June 2000. [emphasis added]

⁹ Steven Kull and I. M. Destler, *Misreading the public: the myth of a new isolationism* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1999). Canadian studies of elite opinion are less common, but see Paul Buteux, Michel Fortmann and Pierre Martin, "Canada and the Expansion of NATO: A Study in Élite Attitudes and Public Opinion," in David G. Haglund, ed. *Will NATO Go East: The Debate Over Enlarging the Atlantic Alliance* (Kingston: Centre for International Relations, Queen's University, 1996), 147-179.

¹⁰ Tony Clarke, "Taking on the WTO: Lessons from the Battle of Seattle," *Studies in Political Economy* 62 (Summer 2000), 7, 8.

¹¹ Heather Scoffield, "Parties ignore opposition to globalization," *Globe and Mail* (November 23, 2000), A10.

¹² Trade was not a factor in the 1997 election, and the Canadian Election Study of that year did not ask any trade-related questions.

¹³ The trade policy activism represented by the negotiation of the FTA, NAFTA and the WTO began with *A Review of Canadian Trade Policy* (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1983).

¹⁴ Post-Seattle polls in the United States, such as the Harris poll reported in *Business Week*

(April 24, 2000), do not report on the evolution of opinion over time.

¹⁵ Ekos Research, 1999, 2000; Goldfarb, 1999; Angus Reid, 1998, 1999. Surveys conducted for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

¹⁶ James McCann, "Electoral Choices and Core Value Change: The 1992 Presidential Campaign," *American Journal of Political Science*, 41:2 (1997), 564-583.

¹⁷ Matthew J. Gabel, *Interests and integration: market liberalization, public opinion, and European Union* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

¹⁸ Anders Todal Jenssen, Pertti Pesonen and Mikael Gilljam (eds). *To Join or Not to Join: Three Nordic Referendums on Membership in the European Union*. (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1998.)

¹⁹ Calum M. Carmichael, "Economic Conditions and the Popularity of the Incumbent Party in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 23:4 (December 1990), 713-26; Richard Nadeau and André Blais, "Economic Conditions, Leader Evaluations and Election Outcomes in Canada," *Canadian Public Policy* 21:2 (June 1995), 212-218; and Richard Nadeau and André Blais, "Explaining Election Outcomes in Canada: Economy and Politics," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 26:4 (December 1993), 775-790.

²⁰ For example, the answers to questions 1 and 2 in the Appendix suggest that the public pay less attention than might be expected to trade events, and the majority answer to question 3 is factually wrong.

²¹ Ole R. Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lipmann Consensus," *International Studies Quarterly* 36:4 (December 1992), 439-66.

- ²² Ole R. Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1996).
- ²³ Pierre Martin and Michel Fortmann, "Canadian public opinion and peacekeeping in a turbulent world," *International Journal* L:2 (Spring 1995), 370-400.
- ²⁴ John E. Reilly, ed. *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy 1999* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1999).
- ²⁵ Ekos Research, *Rethinking Government, 1996-1997*.
- ²⁶ Kull and Destler, *Misreading the public*.
- ²⁷ Chapter 5 in Richard Johnston, André Blais, Henry E. Brady and Jean Crête, *Letting the People Decide: Dynamics of a Canadian Election* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).
- ²⁸ Barlow is quoted in Naomi Klein, "Lies, damn lies, statistics, and (your choice of) polls," *Globe and Mail* (26 April 2000), A13.
- ²⁹ Richard C. Eichenberg and Russell J. Dalton, "Europeans and the European Community: the dynamics of public support for European integration," *International Organization* 47:4 (Autumn 1993), 507-534.
- ³⁰ According to CES data from 1993, 35% of all respondents said they very strongly opposed NAFTA, while another 27% said they opposed NAFTA somewhat strongly, 6% said they opposed the agreement "not very strongly." Only 5% said they very strongly supported the agreement, 20% somewhat strongly supported it, and 6% supported the agreement "not very strongly."
- ³¹ A similar dynamic existed with the FTA, with much higher support for free trade be-
- tween Canada and the US until the Mulroney government began negotiations, with opposition building as the contents of the agreement received more publicity. One can find evidence for this generally high level of support for the concept of free trade going back to the 1960s: 50 percent supported the concept of Canada-US free trade in 1963, and 56 percent did in 1968. John H. Sigler and Dennis Goresky, "Public Opinion on United States-Canadian Relations," *International Organization* 28:4 (Autumn 1974), 637-68.
- ³² Goldfarb Survey, 1999.
- ³³ Support for NAFTA in 1993 was around 30%. The bars in Figures 3 and 4 represent those groups that demonstrate statistically significant differences from the average. All of the results are simply the product of bivariate contingency tables, with percentages representing the deviation from the mean level of support for NAFTA. All were subject to multivariate testing (OLS regression), controlling for all of the other variables presented, as well as several other possible determinants of opinion on trade. Only those variables which were significant at the $p < .01$ level were retained.
- ³⁴ Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA). Poll on globalization reported online at <http://www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/Globalization/1.html>
- ³⁵ Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in David Apter, ed. *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: Free Press, 1964), 206-261.
- ³⁶ If any conclusion can be drawn from the answers to these and related questions, it would seem to be that many Canadians believe that increasing trade is likely to promote human rights and democracy (see Appendix, questions 11 and 12).

³⁷ When asked the open-ended question, "What is the most positive contribution that Canada, as a country, makes to the world?" by Environics in 1995, 34% said peacekeeping and 19% said foreign aid. The next most frequent answers were "nothing,"

given by 13% of respondents, and "immigration," given by 6% of respondents.

³⁸ Ethan B. Kapstein, "Winners and Losers in the Global Economy," *International Organization* 54:2 (Spring 2000), 359-84.

Appendix: Additional Questions

- 1) Have you heard, seen or read anything about the talks between Canada and other countries for a proposed international agreement on investment called the “Multilateral Agreement on Investment,” or MAI? (Angus Reid, January 1998).
Yes, 26% No, 74%
- 2) Would you say that you are very aware, somewhat aware, not very aware or not at all aware of the recent World Trade Organization meetings held in Seattle, Washington? (Angus Reid, December 1999).
Yes, 63% No, 37%
- 3) Do you think Canada exports more than it imports, or imports more than it exports? (Ekos, March 1999).
Export, 38% Import, 47% Don’t Know, 15%
- 4) Over the past 10 years, do you think international trade has become less important or more important in terms of its contribution to the Canadian economy? (Ekos 1999).
Yes, 82% No, 7% Don’t Know, 11%
- 5a) How important is trade between Canada and the United States to the Canadian economy: very important, somewhat important or not at all important? (Enviroics, 1987).
Very, 59% Somewhat, 33% Other, 5%
- 5b) How important is trade between Canada and countries other than the United States to the Canadian economy: very important, somewhat important or not at all important? (Enviroics, 1987).
Very, 54% Somewhat, 38% Other, 6%
- 6a) In general, do you support or oppose the concept of Canada participating in trade agreements with other countries (Goldfarb, 1999).
Strong, 28% Somewhat, 39% Other, 9% Don’t Know, 24%
- 6b) In general, do you support or oppose the concept of Canada’s participation in trade agreements? (Angus Reid, 1999).
Strong, 35% Somewhat, 50% Other, 12% Don’t Know, 3%
- 7a) Now I’m going to name some different things and I’d like you to tell me, for each one, what effect a three-way free trade deal between Canada, the United States, and Mexico might have on it. For each one, please tell me if a three-way free trade deal would help a great deal, help somewhat, not make any difference, hurt somewhat, or hurt a great deal? How about the maintenance of job security for workers in Canada? (Decima1991)
Help, 20% Hurt, 66% Don’t Know, 12%

- 7b) What impact would increased trade with other countries have on the number of jobs in Canada? (Goldfarb, 1999).
Help, 57% Hurt, 14% Don't Know, 28%
- 8) Very concerned about job loss due to NAFTA. [Exact question wording unavailable.]
1992, 56% 1993, 46% 1994, 41%
- 9) How important a consideration should human rights be in trade relations between countries: Very, somewhat, not very, or not at all important? (Starch Research Services, 1995).
Very, 58% Somewhat, 32% Other, 8%
- 10a) If another country does not have a good record for maintaining human rights, what should Canada do in terms of its trade with that country? (Goldfarb 1993).
Stop trade, 34% Cut back on trade, 53% Maintain trade, 11%
- 10b) A number of countries in the world are non-democratic and violate the human rights of their citizens. Which do you think is a better way for Canada to promote human rights in these countries? 1) Increase trade links with these countries to try to open them up to progress and democratic ideas or 2) cut back on trade with these countries to try to pressure them to change their practices? (Environics, 1995).
Increase trade, 50% Cut back on trade, 39% Don't Know, 11%
- 11) For each of the following options concerning aid to developing countries, please tell me if you agree or disagree: We will help poor countries more if we focus on developing trade with them rather than giving aid (Environics 1995)
Agree, 79% Disagree, 16% Don't Know, 5%
- 12) A number of countries in the world are non-democratic and violate the human rights of their citizens. Which do you think is a better way for Canada to promote human rights in these countries? Increase trade links with these countries to try to open them up to progress and democratic ideas; Cut back on trade with these countries to try to pressure them to change their practices (Environics 1995).
Agree, 50% Disagree, 39% Don't Know, 11%
- 13) As you may know, Canada, the US, and Mexico have entered into a three-way free trade agreement. Generally speaking do you support or oppose this agreement? (Goldfarb, 1999).
18-34 yrs old, 79% support; 35-54, 72% support; 55 and over, 69% support