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## A Passport to Identity: The Decline of Duality and the Symbolic Appropriation of Québec

*Un passeport pour une identité: le déclin de la dualité et l'appropriation  
symbolique du Québec*

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# A PASSPORT TO IDENTITY: THE DECLINE OF DUALITY AND THE SYMBOLIC APPROPRIATION OF QUÉBEC

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Canadian society is now marked by a growing vocalization of a distinct identity. Politicians promote this identity to overcome tensions that remain, due to a failure to reconcile institutionally the often-contradictory claims that emanate from a plural society. We explore one aspect of these tensions: the decline of duality and a questioning of Québec's place in Canada. While there has been a symbolic rearticulation of the importance of Québec in the new "Brand Canada," this has not been accompanied by a corresponding "doing" of duality, thus not satisfying nationalist pressures in Québec. Symbolic and rhetorical strategies are often employed to deal with public opinion that resists dualism. As we demonstrate in the case of the new (2013) Canadian passport, the Harper government has chosen to symbolically address Québec's claims; however, this reduces Québec to a historical part of the Canadian identity puzzle. While political pressures may be temporarily addressed, the historic pressures that inform debates about the Canadian identity are likely to continue.

C'est un nouveau patriotisme canadien qui se fait entendre au Canada. Les hommes politiques semblent valoriser cette re-définition identitaire pour dépasser les tensions qui subsistent au sein du pays qui n'arrive pas à réconcilier les revendications souvent contradictoires des sociétés multiples qui le composent et qui mettent en péril l'unité. Nous explorons ici un des aspects de ces tensions : le déclin de la formule de la dualité et la ré-articulation de l'importance du Québec dans la rhétorique identitaire canadienne. Bien que l'on note une réintégration symbolique de la place du Québec dans cette nouvelle « image de marque » du Canada, cette démarche n'a pas été suivie d'actions pour prendre en compte l'origine historique de la dualité entre les deux sociétés, ce qui ne satisfait pas les demandes nationalistes au Québec. Des stratégies symboliques et rhétoriques ont été mises en place pour apaiser le grand public qui n'accepte pas que l'on fasse disparaître la dualité. Comme nous allons le démontrer en étudiant le cas du nouveau passeport canadien (2013), le gouvernement Harper a choisi de prendre en compte symboliquement les demandes du Québec. Cependant, cette politique minimise la part du Québec dans l'histoire du Canada en la réduisant à une simple portion du puzzle identitaire. Si Harper a réussi à apaiser temporairement les tensions politiques, les tensions identitaires liées à l'histoire des deux nations sont loin d'avoir disparu.

How many times has the constitutional crisis been presented as the result of pressures arising from Québec nationalism – that eternal troublemaker – rather than as a confrontation of two nationalisms, whose visions are different and sometimes incompatible? (DUBUC 2002, 64-65)

The rise of Canadian patriotism and celebration of "one Canada," rooted in the celebration of diversity and a perceived sense of shared Canadian values, has led to a seeming change in the Canadian identity. No longer a country populated by modest, reserved people, the new Canada that emerged in the

1990s was loud, proud and boisterous, one that previous scholars of Canadian identity would not recognize.<sup>1</sup>

Can this be linked to a value shift in Canadian society? Much has been made of the impact of Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his policy agenda on Canada. He has shown a propensity to use symbols, values, and institutions to reflect his belief that Canada is fundamentally a conservative country in order to advance the Conservative political agenda and displace the Liberal Party of Canada as Canada's dominant political force. Since assuming power in 2006, the Prime Minister has regularly claimed that Canadian and conservative values are one and the same, referring to the Conservative Party, which was only created in 2003, as "Canada's Party," and Canada's "founding party."

Harper has attempted to support these claims through a variety of symbolic and institutional initiatives that emphasize a Conservative reading of Canada and Canadian history (FRENETTE 2014). This also includes rewriting the citizenship guide (TONON AND RANEY 2013), politicizing Canadian history by renaming the Museum of Civilization as the Canadian Museum of History (IBBITSON 2013; COHEN 2013), emphasizing military history (STARING 2013), and generally promoting the "royal rebrand" of Canada that highlights connections to Britain and the monarchy (BOESVELD 2011).

This article examines an underexplored aspect of Harper's symbolic and rhetorical politics: his reframing of Canadian duality, or the partnership between English and French-Canadians, that was an important foundation of Canada's nascent national identity. In particular, it demonstrates how the new Canadian passport, issued in 2013, exemplifies Harper's symbolic politics. This reframing, far from restoring duality, has contributed to the ongoing decline of Canadian duality and the continuing questioning of Québec's place in Canada. The concept of "identity performance" is used along with the Canadian and Québécois political culture literatures to explore this identity shift.

First, the article explores the historical development of Canadian duality within the context of the Canadian political culture. It then analyzes the emergence of brand politics and the growing emphasis on the symbolic. This has contributed to the decline of duality – by "speaking" of duality more than "doing" duality.

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<sup>1</sup> David Bell (1992: 7) for example, notes how "classic" works on Canadian political culture and political economy focused on disunity and had negative and/or questioning themes that suggested the future of Canada was in peril.

The case of the 2013 Canadian passport is used as an example of the newly written demonstration of Canadian identity, one that absorbs Québec in a teleological historical framework and timeline. New insights into the Canadian political culture are gained by examining the identity performance of Brand Canada. Far from seeing the recent emergence of a new Canadian identity that informs the political culture, it is possible that the decline of duality reflects the disunited roots of the political culture (BELL 1992).

### **Canadian Duality**

Duality is the partnership between English and French Canada that unblocked the political stalemate in pre-Confederation Canada. Rooted in the twin rebellions of 1837, reformers like Robert Baldwin and Louis Lafontaine advocated responsible government and promoted (limited) democracy through the encouragement of recognition of the particularities of French Canadian culture; the uniting of English and French reformers ultimately allowed for Confederation (GRIFFITHS 2002: xvii-xxiii). This outlook was reinforced by Sir John A Macdonald's view that:

No man in his senses can suppose that this country [Canada] can for a century to come be governed by a totally unfrenchified Gov-t [sic]. If a Lower Canada Britisher desires to conquer, he must "stoop to conquer." He must make friends with the French; without sacrificing the status of his race or lineage, he must respect their nationality. Treat them as a nation and they will act as a free people usually do – generously. Call them a faction and they become factious (cited in GWYN 2007: 128).

This reflects the view that Canada has managed to overcome the challenges of diversity, as long argued by John Ralston Saul (see SAUL 1997). This involved the development of institutions and policies that allowed divergent groups to coexist in order to survive and develop a sense of belonging to Canada as a nation, thus explaining why Canada has lacked for the most part political violence and sharp societal tensions present in other countries.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, the emergence of a dualist vision of Canada can be seen as the foundation of Canadian democracy.

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<sup>2</sup> As with any discussion of the creation of Canada, this ignores the impact of colonization on Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Consequently, Québec became quite attached to the significance of pre-Confederation history. For Québec, the united Canada that emerged following the rebellions of 1837-1838 was the first “Canada” that it dealt with as a political partner. The forced unity of 1840 underlines the fact that Québec’s territory and language were appropriated for British Canadian history and for Canadian unity purposes.

The survival of a Canadian identity, from a dualist perspective, has depended on continuous efforts to acknowledge Québec while simultaneously attempting to minimize the impact of phenomena that fostered tension in the country. The idea of Confederation, uniting communities with considerable antagonism towards one another, was powerful. By definition, confederation is a union of states in which each member retains some independent control over internal and external affairs. Confederation thus offered a political platform for the survival of French Canadian culture in Canada and the international recognition of its distinctiveness. Confederation was a binding force; it produced a sense of participating in something greater than the cultural nation, and yet for many it fulfilled the need for recognition and distinction from the US. The ideology of “survivance” thus came to reinforce the powerful concept of the French-Canadian nation, and it was with this nation that Canada was co-founded.

Despite the Confederation bargain, numerous personalities and events threatened this foundational dualism, aggravating the pain associated with memories of the Conquest, the quashed rebellions, and the Durham Report. Federalism and the promise of some power, especially in areas of language, religion, and culture, it was hoped, would restore historical justice. As Silver notes “French Canadians felt themselves to have different interests from those of other British North Americans” (1997: 34). Moreover, Michel Brunet (1969), the famous Québec historian, noted that despite the Conquest, the Canadiens did not give up their goal of surviving and flourishing as a French Canadian nation.

Consequently, the power of the Conquest continued to affect the Québécois and their relationship to Canada. Eminent political scientist Léon Dion (1989: 287) described the Conquest as “the event that brutally altered the course of our destiny,” with the result that “the continent slipped out of French hands.” This ensured that Québec’s pre-Confederation history retained a significance that English Canada could not understand (DUFOUR 1997), something that has continued to the present. Thus, Québec’s 1995 Bill 1, *An Act Respecting the Future of Québec*, stated “The conquest of 1760 did not break the

determination of their descendants to remain faithful to a destiny unique in North America. Already in 1774, through the Québec Act, the conqueror recognized the distinct nature of their institutions. Neither attempts at assimilation nor the Act of Union of 1840 could break their endurance.” This attachment to history is the outcome of parallel historiographies that emphasized and interpreted key events differently.<sup>3</sup>

### **An Evolving Canadian Political Culture**

The institutional workings of the union effectively gave birth to the two solitudes that, by the time of Confederation in 1867, would be rebranded as the two founding nations. A dominant province of Canada, which became (mostly French) Québec and (mostly English) Ontario, would join forces with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to form the new Canada. Because of the importance of Confederation for addressing tensions emerging from duality, French and English Canada would henceforth be seen by many as the pillars of the Canadian nation.

Nevertheless, there were two very different definitions of nation at play. One involved citizenship and political nationality, while the other focused on ethnicity and culture. Henri Bourassa and the Bi-Nationalistes advocated for dualism, preaching equality and envisioning a bilingual Canada across the land, with a strong provincial government in Québec. In 1864, Bourassa stated “If the plan seems to us to safeguard Lower Canada’s special interests, its religion and its nationality, we’ll give it our support; if not, we’ll fight it with all our strength” (cited in SILVER 1997: 33).

However, tensions were present from the outset of Confederation: the hanging of Louis Riel, Manitoba’s *Official Languages Act*, Conscription (in both World Wars), and Ontario’s Regulations 17 and 18 combined to make French Canadians more wary of English Canada. Underlying such events, as the sociologist Andre Siegfried (1907) noted, was a belief of English Canadian superiority and a fear of French domination. Consequently, Siegfried argued that the fact that French Canadians were conquered but not annihilated or assimilated meant that Confederation only produced “artificial unity.” For example, many English Canadian leaders saw the provinces as subordinate to

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<sup>3</sup> Bell (1992: 92-95) notes that Québec history books and high school courses pay more much attention to the pre-Confederation era, while students in English Canada learn little about the era.

the central government, a view not shared by French Canadian leaders (SMILEY 1967: 6-7).

While Confederation has been widely understood and promoted as a historical mechanism for French and English Canadian partnership, it also inevitably saw French-Canadians go from being a successful minority in the Canada of the Union to a more reduced minority in the Federation under the name of the Province of Québec. Québec City was named the provincial capital of Québec, gaining symbolic status as the birthplace of the now French-Canadian minority. Arguably, it became not only the provincial capital relative to the Canadian federation; it also became the territorialized home and guardian, not without some resistance from French Canadians outside of Québec, of the French-Canadian minority within the now wider Canada.

By the 1960s, Confederation's promise of equality and survival of a distinct French Canadian language and culture seemed an empty and distant memory. Québécois faced several obstacles to the development of their ambition. They were underrepresented in positions of importance in the Canadian public service, the French language was not used widely in Canadian institutions, and there were no formal mechanisms by which to promote their distinct language and culture. It is in this context that voices such as that of André Laurendeau rose to urge change. Canada had continued to treat Québec as a backward society and showed no signs of a willingness to change. The Quiet Revolution was brewing, and the Québécois, in a period of "refoundation" of their identity, were more and more inclined to self-define as belonging to a "nation" rather than to a "race" or a "nationality."

During the Quiet Revolution, many French Canadians, even within Québec, were not prepared to fully abandon a Canadian identity in exchange for a Québécois identity. Many still connected to the memory of a past where Francophones helped to build the colony, where their language and culture continued to shine in adversity (DUMONT 1993). It was amid this state of early and varied commitment to the realization of a Québécois nation that Pierre Trudeau's brand of Canada, a multicultural Canada, emerged. Like the French "problem" seen by Lord Durham, Trudeau aimed to address the "problem" of French Canada and the growing nationalist movement without doing away with the Canadian federation. His solution was multiculturalism and a redesigned Canadian identity that was rooted not in history but in Canada's exceptional geography and diverse citizenry. A multicultural Canada resonated with the large percentage of Canadians who identified as having distinct ethnic and

cultural backgrounds that were not British or French. While it did include a policy of official bilingualism, it did not privilege French Canadians culturally in the Canadian mosaic that it endorsed.

Liberal visions of Canada involved the multicultural expansion of the “two founding nations” definition of the country. By creating official languages minorities *and* promoting multiculturalism, it further distinguished Canada from the American melting pot. This also transformed Canadian duality. No longer would it be rooted in historical ethnicity; instead, duality would be linguistic.

Many Québécois authors have suggested that the ultimate goal of Pierre Elliot Trudeau was to undermine Québec nationalism. For example, Guy Laforest (1995) argues that Trudeau wanted to undo the framework of two solitudes that informed the evolving Canadian identity. Trudeau, he suggests, dreamed (sic) of tapping Québec’s nationalist momentum for the construction of a country of his own devising, making him a king of postmodern society expunged of its separate and, to his mind, pointless ethno-nationalities.

Not surprisingly, this led to an alternative theory of Confederation: the equality of the provinces. The emergence of the neoconservative Reform Party (from which Stephen Harper emerged) in the late 1980s gave political weight to this view, for it had its own form of equality: Québec’s claim for special status, derived from the original compact theory of Confederation, was seen as a threat to the well-functioning of the federation (LAYCOCK 1994).

In reaction to RoC’s emerging multicultural identity, Québec redefined itself as the birthplace of French America, sponsoring historians and a wave of heritage conservation to root its identity in a specific territory with a specific timeline that led teleologically to the effective independence of Québec. From then on, Québec not only grew apart from Canada and, consequently, from French Canadians outside Québec, it developed a distinct place in the international arena. In 1961, it opened a consulate in Paris; this was followed by the opening of consulates in London, Germany, Barcelona, Mumbai, and Tokyo. In 1976, the first Parti Québécois (PQ) government was elected, led by the charismatic former journalist René Lévesque.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Much has been written about René Lévesque’s charisma. Many saw him as the ideal representative of the Québec nation because he could relate to workers, given his life experience, but he could also use his language and communication skills to link Québec to the world. In his

Québec City was reconceived as a cultural national capital through the 1995 creation of the National Capital Commission of Québec (NCCQ). This followed the very close referendum on the sovereignty of Québec that favoured the federalist option and left the independence movement torn and divided. To this day, Québec continues to be widely promoted as the cradle of French America. In fact, as recently as May 2012, the NCCQ published *Québec, berceau de l'Amérique française*, presenting the city as a national capital and international actor responsible for a distinct language and culture.

### Rebranding Dualism

While the fear of Québec separation due to the 1995 referendum stimulated an outpouring of affection towards Québec (“My Canada includes Québec” became a common refrain, and federal cabinet ministers orchestrated the Montreal Rally of October 27, 1995, bringing in people from across the country), former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien discovered soon after the referendum that there was little appetite for actually substantively addressing Québec’s claims in RoC (GREENSPON AND WILSON-SMITH 1997: 337-339). The only solution left was the rebranding of Canadian duality, which was similar to the brand politics that sold neoliberalism to Canadians (NIMIJEAN 2005), emphasizing the articulation of identity and values rather than the “doing” that informs and shapes identity.

The ongoing tensions between English and French Canada encouraged an emphasis on the neosymbolic. Thus, Chrétien’s Federal Sponsorship Program sought to “fly the flag” in Québec, in an effort to convince the Québécois that they could become attached to Canada if they connected with the symbols of Canada. However, in 2004, the Auditor-General of Canada noted irregularities in the administration of the program that produced a full-blown political scandal.<sup>5</sup> That this strategy did not work, and indeed resulted in an increase of support for separation during hearings into the scandal, highlights the poverty

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work as a journalist, he often informed Québécois of complex global issues, effectively broadening the outlook of Québec and diminishing differences with “others.”

<sup>5</sup> The program became a political scandal as allegations of corruption and political favouritism were levelled against public servants managing the program and operatives of the governing Liberal Party. This led to a national inquiry headed by Justice John Gomery, who substantiated many of the claims of political involvement in the program and mismanagement. Gomery’s analysis is available at <http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/206/301/pco-bcp/commissions/sponsorship-ef/06-02-10/www.gomery.ca/en/phase1report/default.htm> .

of an ahistorical and symbolic approach to constitutionalism that ignored the growing gulf between Québec and RoC.<sup>6</sup>

In the wake of an era of intense constitutional negotiation and ongoing frustration, RoC fatigue grew. There was little appetite for embracing creative approaches that recognized Québec's distinctiveness and its constitutional claims under federalism. For example, the last great effort to combine public policy with a recognition of not only Québec's distinctiveness *but also* its constitutional rights, the Federal-Provincial Health Accord of 2004, was treated by one prominent journalist (GWYN 2004) as the arrival of "special status" for Québec: "Quebec now is special because, well, it is just special." Indeed, public opinion in RoC was massively against the Accord due to Québec's perceived preferential treatment, and was interpreted as a sign of RoC disapproval of "asymmetrical federalism" (SEIDLE AND BISHOP 2005).

Canadian political analysis must always incorporate the challenges and tensions emerging from a binational – and increasingly multinational – country. As Dubuc notes in the opening quote, national unity tensions have largely been framed, in the majority English Canada at least, as emanating from the demands of Québec, and not as the tensions emerging from two competing nationalisms that formed Canada. He notes "how difficult it is for English Canada to accept the principle that part of the population can be different, and to formally recognize it - something that constitutes the very essence of respect for diversity" (DUBUC 2002, 74).

One solution, as Phil Resnick (1994) earlier argued, is that English Canada needs to begin thinking as a sociological nation in order to understand and deal with the more nationalistic senses of identity of Québécois and Indigenous peoples living in Canada. It would also involve recognition from RoC that, far from being disinterested in federalism, a majority of Québécois are profoundly federalist, perhaps more so than Canadians elsewhere, as Balthazar notes:

Les Québécois sont profondément fédéralistes, à une forte majorité. Ils sont probablement même les plus fédéralistes de tous les Canadiens, dans la mesure où le fédéralisme signifie le partage du pouvoir entre deux niveaux de gouvernement. Quand ils ont été tentés par la sécession,

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<sup>6</sup> For example, Québec's pro-free trade stance, supported even by many progressives, angered many in RoC for abandoning progressive values and undermining a sense of Canadian nationality (see RESNICK and LATOUCHE 1990).

c'est essentiellement en raison de ce qu'ils ont perçu comme la faillite du fédéralisme canadien. (BALHAZAR 2006, 49)

Short of this happening, it becomes easy for political debates in Canadian public life surrounding the question of language, official bilingualism, or respect for Québec nationalism to be framed as *irritants* that are unreasonable, impractical, or simply not necessary. For example, Official Languages Commissioner Graham Fraser criticized former Conservative Cabinet Minister John Baird for violating the *Official Languages Act* by carrying English-only business cards along with his bilingual cards. In response, his spokesman Rick Roth dismissed the allegation as “cheap political games” played by the media and opposition, an interesting response to a violation of the law for a “law and order” government (DE SOUZA 2013; RADIA 2013). Most recently, the Premier of Québec, Philippe Couillard, citing Canada’s two official languages, criticized Harper for appointing a unilingual (English) Foreign Affairs Minister, Rob Nicholson, to one of the most senior positions in government.

These examples point not to the impracticalities of duality or the pettiness of the Québécois or French Canadians, but rather to the complexities of Canadian life and the necessity of hard work to live up to the ideals of the Confederation bargain with respect to duality. Prime Minister Harper himself, at one level, has engaged in such hard work. For example, in 2001, he wrote “As a religion, bilingualism is the god that failed. It has led to no fairness, produced no unity, and cost Canadian taxpayers untold millions” (HARPER 2001). A decade later, he has since proclaimed, “As prime minister, I think I’ve given more space to French than any prime minister in the history of the country” (cited in COHEN 2012). This sets the stage for a new historical narrative, placing Québec at the beginning of the settler’s project, given Harper’s declaration that the Canadian state originates with Champlain’s arrival in Québec (COHEN 2012).

Rather than addressing such challenges through institutions and policies, however, there has been an increasing tendency to promote a distinct Canadian identity as being rooted in national values. Thus, Chretien’s “Canadian Way” emphasized core values of tolerance and concern for the less well off (NIMIJEAN 2005), while Harper’s brand of identity emphasizes a masculine, muscular orientation that links strength with pride (RANKIN 2012). This leads to an emphasis on symbolism and communication of national identity rooted in political strategies (NIMIJEAN 2005, 2006a, 2014) rather than having national identity emerge from ongoing collective decisions negotiated between citizens and governments.

This has continued in the Harper era. Harper overcame many of his historic views and policy prescriptions by adopting an inclusive narrative of patriotism that on the surface recognized Québec. As noted in the new passport, Harper has embraced French as Canada's first language and Québec City as Canada's first city. While Canadian patriotism has been central to Harper's political strategy, he has subsumed the Québécois desire for autonomy – whether inside or outside of the federation – into it.<sup>7</sup>

**Image 1**



Source: <http://lasoubrette.blogspot.ca/2008/09/harper-prend-des-forces-conservatives.html>

In 2006, he introduced a federal motion that recognized the Québécois people, but not Québec itself, as a nation, thus undermining the territorial claims to duality advocated by Québec nationalists and the Bi-Nationalistes. He also embraced Québec's arguments about the "fiscal imbalance," labelled Liberals

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<sup>7</sup> For example, "le Québec prend des forces" was the slogan in Conservative ads in the 2008 election (see Image 1. To watch an ad, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAHCGAMcHkk>) and "notre région au pouvoir" was the slogan used in the 2011 election (see Image 2). The Conservatives have attempted to tap into conservative values of the land and the resentment held by rural Québécois against the large urban centres of Montreal and Québec City, thus reconnecting with the idea of a French Canadian and Québécois nationalism that could thrive within the Canadian federation, only because its definition of nation did not involve the state.

as “centralizing,” and demonized the Bloc Québécois as holding Canada hostage in an illegitimate coalition in 2008. He has thus adapted the language of Québec nationalism for his own political purposes. For example, Harper argued on la “fête nationale” in 2008 that he and his party were the “true nationalists,” stressing that a united Canada had room for “a Québec that is confident, in solidarity, autonomous and proud” (Canadian Press, 2008).

**Image 2**



Source: <http://blogs.canoe.com/davidakin/politics/ndp-launches-quebec-anti-conservative-campaign/>

However, Harper has ignored the substance of Québec’s claims for full partnership in the federation. For example, in 2008, he reduced the claims of the Bi-Nationalistes to linguistic survival in the name of the greater common good: “Our federation was born of a desire by English- and French-speaking Canadians to share a common future, and it was built on respect for the language and culture of all Canadians. Linguistic duality is a cornerstone of our national identity, and it is a source of immeasurable economic, social and political benefits for all Canadians” (Canada 2008). That this is a revisionist

vision of history is not surprising, for minimizing tensions with Québec was a key plank of his “three sisters” strategy (see MILEWSKI 2011 for a description) to promote conservatism as the dominant force in Canadian politics. This was part of a broader strategy to use nationality, history, and symbols to rewrite the Canadian narrative in such a way as to minimize the significance of duality.

### **Harper and Rebranding Duality: The Case of the Revamped Canadian Passport**

The new Canadian passport, announced in 2012 and issued in 2013, shows how Harper has rebranded duality. Since Canada does not have a program of Canadian national history, the new passport gives Canadian travellers a referential identity through a series of national images and symbols. The selected images illustrate the renovation of Canada’s representation of self with respect to the decline of duality. The Conservative program is clear: to regain and reclaim the identity of Canada as a moral leader despite Québec’s different value system, and protect its territorial unity despite multiple sovereignty treats.

According to then-Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird, the new Canadian passport’s (officially an “ePassport”) “iconic images” make the new passport “*more* reflective and representative of who we are as Canadians. (...) Our government is tremendously proud of Canada’s rich history. We urge all Canadians to learn more about the events and people that shaped Canada and the great sacrifices made to secure our freedom” (Canada 2012a). Given this emphasis on narrative, especially since the government chose to focus on history, rejecting bureaucratic advice to focus on images of flora and fauna (RAJ 2012), we can examine images contained in the passport to explore how Harper has rebranded Canadian duality.

The ePassport uses a postcard-like representation of Québec City as one of the sixteen Canadian appropriated symbols to decorate its pages.<sup>8</sup> Alongside the eagle feather and the Inuit’s Inuksuk, the figure of Samuel de Champlain illustrates the rhetorical predator’s approach to identity construction and a new attempt at giving the Canadian nation historical roots. Monuments, landmarks

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<sup>8</sup> The images and symbols in the passport are: Symbols of Aboriginal peoples; Samuel de Champlain; The Fathers of Confederation; The Last Spike, 1885; the Canadian North; Images of the Prairies; Halifax Harbour as a symbol of immigration; the Centre Block of Parliament; Niagara Falls; the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France; Québec City; the RCMP; The Grey Cup and the Stanley; the “Famous Five” and Terry Fox; images of Canadians in war; Cape Spear as a symbol of Canada’s maritime history.

of Canadian regions, military history, and the monarchy have replaced the multicultural ethos emphasized by the former Liberal governments in the Museum of Civilization and in its citizenship guide. The new passport aims to equip every travelling Canadian with a miniature showcase of the country's nationally and culturally diverse symbols, presenting Canada as a fun,<sup>9</sup> culturally diverse, approachable, and safe space. Minister Alexander stated, "Every one of the chapters that you see on both sides of me, of our history as represented now in our passport represent another phase of that diversity" (ALEXANDER 2013).

The Harper government has therefore reinforced the narrative of Canadian history as a never-ending series of events and personalities that continuously add to the expanding definition of the Canadian identity noted by Minister Alexander. Any diversity defines this identity, thus diminishing the historic importance of Québécois and Indigenous peoples not only in the creation of Canada but of Canadian diversity. There is a decline of its mythical rhetorical duality and a vivid impression of the appropriation of Québec as but one component of a rebranded Canada alongside various other historical contributions.

The ePassport constitutes an identity catalogue that reflects the decline of duality, even as it seemingly repairs Canada's bridges to Québec and the Canadian Francophonie. This occurs because it teases out the specifics of Québec and appropriates them in a renewed historical Canadian nation. Along with other branded images, the passport presents a strong pan-Canadian national narrative based on diverse and easy to identify folkloric elements reinterpreted as Canadian values, and the cultural enjoyment of Canadian geography reinterpreted as our land and, ultimately, projecting a very peculiar sense of nation, one that is highly moral and unified both in history and in geography.

Through the representation of symbolic images, the new passport introduces landmarks as overlapping criteria for belonging and identifying with the historical, regional, and symbolic elements of the Canadian identity. A common history and a unified territory form the core of this revisited national meta-narrative. This is derived from crystallized images of heroes and founders, the

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<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, when placed under a dark light, the images transform from staid images to bright, vibrant scenes celebrating or performing these symbols. To see how they appear see O'Connor (2015).

landscape, symbols of indigenous peoples, and images of Québec, all of which reflect heroic representations of strength, perseverance, and long-term determination.

As shown in the passport, Canada as a place of national identity consists in the distribution of geographic space and symbols on a timeline. This resembles the strategy adopted by Québec as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century – an epoch of conservative values. This identity matches the narrative line of a cultural group, one defined through history and geography, instead of the story of the plural identity that informed Canada. This evolving identity employed diverse natural and human resources that, while recognizing duality, embraced other forms of diversity, leading to a growing differentiation between Québec and the RoC.

The inclusion of indigenous symbols, the representation of Québec City celebrating its 400 years of history, and the reference to immigration as a foundational Canadian experience (Pier 21) are examples of the creation of a more inclusive, albeit static, identification platform, both on the geographical and historical axis. These symbols help to define a unified Canada or reconciled nation, a nation that is “one.”

Natural resources and traditional icons of the Canadian landscape are represented to demonstrate the extent, unity, and sovereignty of the territory: Niagara Falls, the Prairies, oceans, and Québec City, where the proposed colony of Canada was established in 1608. If the North is represented by the expedition of Captain Bernier and the West by the “last spike,” the Maritimes are represented by the Bluenose. Silencing the provinces’ denomination or attributes to return to a vision of regions with specific resources, perseverance in exploration and exceptional beauties reinforce the political and geographical unity of the Canadian identity and the current strategies over natural resources and land sovereignty.

These selected images are indicative of the desire of Canadian unity made possible by a harmonized territory and a monumentalized heroic, peaceful, and statuesque history, invoking national symbols that transmit common values. Unlike national heroes like the Fathers of Confederation or the Famous Five, unlike national sport symbols like the Stanley and Grey cups, unlike the wars of Vimy Ridge or 1812, Québec City, Pier 21, and Indigenous symbols do not, in their essence, have a definitional Canadian quality. Their representations, however, are similar. Indeed, it is not the proper characters, immigrant stories or landscapes that are represented but the monuments to these, monuments that

were built by Canada or displayed in the capital, Ottawa. It is the monumentality of Canada that is celebrated rather than the inspiration for these.

### Image 3



Source: <http://www.rcinet.ca/en/2013/07/02/canada-new-passport-features-images-from-canadian-history/>

This identity renovation effectively performs a rhetoric of unity rather than of duality. This began with a persuasion of the “Other” (Québec) via a rhetoric of seduction, where the Other is differentiated, and a third object is created (English Canada + French Canada = Canada). The Canada of duality was one consequence of that performance. However, a rhetoric of appropriation is now at play. The Other is no longer dancing with the RoC. The current rhetoric of appropriation diminishes the “Otherness” of the Other (RICOEUR 2004); this allows for the Canadian Unity performance to literally swallow Québec and make it part of the new Canadian identity for good. Rather than the Québec identity forming a constituent element of the Canadian identity, Canada is appropriating the specificity of Québec history and making it relevant to

Canada's performance and reconstruction of its national identity, in which Québec is but one of many diverse elements.<sup>10</sup>

History has become a new identity marker for Canada, and this includes the French language and culture; increasingly, Québec becomes a “cool” historical city to visit and the birthplace of the first Canada. It is part of “Brand Canada” and serves as an exotic, European, and “Big C” cultural destination that is different from the rest of Canada, yet an integral part of Canada at the same time.<sup>11</sup> The French language is dominant in Québec but French is taught and spoken all over the country, even by the Prime Minister abroad. Instead of being something that fed Canadian duality, Québec is now part of a broader Canadian identity, an identity that differentiates itself from the United States, which gives a special flavour to this member of the Commonwealth. Extreme compatibility between Canadian and American cultures forced the English Canadians, after the fall of Britishness, to reconceive themselves in terms of other definitional elements. For a while, the “presence of Québec,” that is to say, the country's linguistic duality, served this role. Given ongoing tensions between Québec and RoC, the rebranding of duality has served as the political recourse for recent Canadian governments.

## Conclusion

The new passport effectively transforms Canadians travelling abroad into ambassadors of Canada. It allows Canadians to travel in the imagination of Canadian territory and time by flipping through its electronic pages while waiting to go through customs, making every citizen the owner of these symbols redefined as Canadian. The passport has not become a history book, even if it has a new diplomatic mission. National images that are both symbolic and pragmatic enhance our individual and collective security. Mirroring the

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<sup>10</sup> In such a manner, the federal government can overcome tensions surrounding the decision to include the representation of Samuel de Champlain's statue in the passport. Champlain's true portrait is unknown, this specific statue is located in Ottawa, not in Québec City, and this statue is extremely controversial. The federal government's referral to Champlain as “the Father of New France” and possibly the Father of Canada (Canada 2012b), by ignoring the tensions, diminishes the “otherness of the other.”

<sup>11</sup> For example, the Canadian Tourism Commission heavily emphasizes Québec's cultural distinction – as a place with “French Canadian culture” – whereas other provincial descriptions are largely (though not exclusively) based on links to the land and “things to do.”

See <http://caen-keepexploring.canada.travel/explore/places-to-go#/exf-sortby/recommended/exf-view/grid>.

principles of bilingualism and multiculturalism enshrined in Canadian law, the passport “plays safe.”

However, this denies Québec’s own performance of nation that proclaims a heritage of overcoming hardship to bloom into an open, secular, egalitarian nation that produces culture in the French language. In the Québec performance of national identity, the nation is simultaneously burdened by and free from past oppression; it retains its identity as a nation of “survivors” and works towards a new independence, as noted earlier by Dion and the preface to Bill 1.

The challenge for Canada is to diminish tensions linked to Québec nationalism, both in terms of national unity and in terms of political pressures in RoC, while finding a way to embrace Québec’s distinctiveness, as it has sought to promote a distinct Canadian brand to the world (NIMIJEAN 2006b). Not only does “Old Québec” play an important role in French immersion exchange programs and family vacations, modern Québec and especially its cultural outputs in film, art, and music have become an important element of Canada’s presence on the world stage.

While duality is central to a unique Canadian political culture and identity, it has also contributed to the ongoing fragile state of the Canadian political culture. Raney’s claim (2009: 6) that “the national unity crises of the past 25 years no longer occupy central political stage in Canada” unintentionally reflects the tendency to use a RoC outlook on Canada. Québec and its claims for duality are only really noticed when the country is threatened. Similarly, the celebration of military history, highlighted by the celebration of Vimy Ridge as a formative event in the Canadian identity, ignores Québec’s complex relationship with the two World Wars (on Vimy, see MARTIN 2011).

Thus, Harper’s broader political strategy necessarily contains contradictions. The challenge is how to manage tensions that are regularly expressed in Canadian public opinion surrounding Québec and official bilingualism. For example, a poll in *Sun News* (DUNN 2012) claimed that Québec was “coddled” compared to other provinces, whereas another revealed a majority view that bilingualism doesn’t unite Canadians and that most people in RoC did not feel that it was important to speak two languages (THOMPSON 2008). This poses serious political challenges for governments: how do you reconcile starkly different outlooks on issues that are fundamental to (dualist) visions of the country? The fact that Harper, in the 2011 election campaign, travelled with a huge Canadian flag as a backdrop for events and played the national anthem

before they started when in RoC, but only used a Québec flag and did not play the national anthem ([canada.com](http://canada.com) 2012) when in Québec, suggests that his political motivations won out over any attempt to use the same symbols across the country, never mind develop institutions and public policies that reflect the Bi-Nationaliste spirit.

Unlike Brian Mulroney who promised his party and RoC that Québec could become a partner with RoC if it was dealt with honourably (à la Macdonald), and thus staked his political career on the Meech Lake Accord, Harper has preferred a rhetorical and symbolic strategy that speaks to Canadian ideals and symbols that bridge diverse communities but has the effect of subsuming Québec in a redefined national narrative. Will this work electorally? It remains that the 2011 “*vague orange*” that saw Québécois massively support the NDP, shows no signs of abating as the 2015 federal election nears. Even with the collapse of the BQ, the defeat provincially of the PQ, and the removal of any immediate prospect of Québec separation, Québec is still very different from Harper’s Canada. As Louis Balthazar (1997) noted, Québec nationalism will not simply disappear, especially given the sense of “deep diversity” in Québec (TAYLOR 1991). If the unity issue is to disappear, it will be because Canadians have recognized and acknowledged this sense of difference by “doing” duality. Simply acknowledging duality through rhetoric or symbols – as in the case of the ePassport – will ensure that the unity crisis will continue for many years yet.

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