

Professor Turenne-Sjolander examines why the government of Canada is working hard to change some of fundamental mythology of Canadian foreign policy. One of the ways the government has tried to do this is by celebrating two years ago 200 anniversary of the war of 1812. Professor Turenne-Sjolander explores the current process of reconstructing and reinforcing Canadian identity which is moving from a peacekeeper country to be a warrior one, and answers what political agendas are behind the process.

Previously, Canadian defines what it is Canadian by the way they project themselves internationally. Since the 1950s, that projection has been associated with peacekeeping and being a middle power. Canadian believes passionately that Canadian identity is intrinsically what Canada do internationally by serving the international community through peacekeeping, providing development assistance, supporting the global community, and respecting for international law as well as promoting humanitarian values. Canadian identity is frequently associated with a world peacekeeper.

Starting from 2006, however, the government found the new mythology, the 1812 war, around the Canadian identity could be articulated. The 1812 war, as new national narrative, not only allows the government to begin recasting the voice of the war more generally on Canadian popular history, but also constructs a script of intelligibility making sense of a Canadian past in order to claim the legitimacy of Canadian present. The War 1812 is a war that cast Canada as a country born out of conflict, instead as a peacekeeping nation.

Interestingly, somewhat a domestic political agenda also works in this reframing this new identity. The government (Conservative Party) creates a space in which it becomes possible to respond to and to reframe the identity furnished for decades by the liberal party of Canada. The reframing Canadian identity is always against the particular context: the Canadian internationalism that has long associated with the Liberal Party of Canada.

Professor Turenne-Sjolander also identifies that this reframing new identity will have consequences to the characteristic of Canadian foreign policy to some extent: (1) the war 1812 narrative seek to project the Canadian authoritative internationally by casting as a prudent but potentially belligerent country. Canadian foreign policy will no longer reflect soft-pacifist views associated by conservative supporters with the liberal internationalist. (2) Canada will be also far from the posture associated with peacekeeping that would not seek to mediate a resolution of conflict. Yet, Canada would rather choose side wisely and be prepared to fight. (3) This new rhetoric is also powerfully gendered because war 1812 were perceived as men's works and the narrative obviously put the women invisibly. In conclusion, the current process of reconstructing and reinforcing new Canadian identity, for Canadian, seems "through a looking glass": a kind of looks the same, but it is a kind of backwards.