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Australian and New Zealand Journal of European Studies
<https://cesaa.org.au/anzjes/>
Vol11 (3)
ISSN 1837-2147 (Print)
ISSN 1836-1803 (On-line)

Middle-power internationalism in-between European 'paradise' and American 'power'? Canada's political role in an age of Trumpism and Brexit

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Abstract¹

Hyper forms of globalization have contributed to the diffusion and de-institutionalization of state power (Chin and Mittelman, 1997) and to growing populism, nationalism, and authoritarianism in Europe that have questioned the liberal international order's effectiveness, legitimacy and authority. What has come under threat is not only the order itself, but the economic prosperity, security, peace, and normative foundations that has nurtured it. In this context of a emerging world order we examine what function so-called middle powers on both sides of the Atlantic could play?

While often overseen in recent years, middle powers are important units of analysis to study because during the times of the 'old' order in the aftermath of WWII they had benefitted most of the stable liberal international order, and as a result they have the most to lose today in case that order changes dramatically or even disappears. In looking back at middle power's presence at creation of the liberal international world order in the aftermath of WWII, we suggest, helps us to comprehend what function middle powers could play in this current wave of changing transatlantic orders. Especially their intra-alliance bridgebuilding function is important in this regard that in the past helped to balance the interests of the major powers. Canada is discussed as a case study.

Key words: Middle Powers; globalization; liberal internationalism; new world order; transatlantic relationship

The literature on changing global orders is long and extensive. During the Cold War analysts spoke of a bipolar world order that switched into a unipolar order at the Cold War's end. In both cases, however, at least in the West, the order was carried by liberal international values and institutions that embody these values. Obvious examples of such are, of course, the Bretton Woods institutions, the United Nations (UN) or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at the end of WWII.

However, since 9/11 analysts started to detect a challenge to the liberal international order's effectiveness, legitimacy and authority (Flockhart, 2016, p. 14), especially at times when hyper forms of globalization have contributed to the diffusion and de-institutionalization of state power (Chin and Mittelman, 1997, pp. 28-34) and to growing

¹ I gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for this project as well as Antoine Rayroux and John Kotsopoulos for their very useful comments and suggestions.

populism, nationalism and authoritarianism (Lind and Wohlforth, 2019).² What has come under threat is not only the order itself, but the economic prosperity, security, peace and normative foundations that has nurtured it (Zakaria, 2019). This is perhaps most visible with President Trump openly questioning the ‘old’ world order, threatening to disregard international law, disrespect international institutions and reverting to an isolationist US foreign policy. This policy has significantly undermined the transatlantic alliance and its commitment to multilateralism.

Our objective here is not to further contribute to this rather extensive literature on changing world orders. Rather, in taking the understanding among scholars as a starting point that the current order indeed is changing and becoming more diverse, our objective is to examine what function middle powers (e.g. Canada, Norway or Denmark) on both sides of the Atlantic can play in this emerging new world order and at times of significant insecurity in Europe’s security institutions (especially the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and NATO).

Why are middle powers important units of analysis to consider? While often overseen in recent years, they are important units of analysis to study because during the times of the ‘old’ order in the aftermath of WWII they had benefitted most of that stable liberal international order: they had grown safer, were protected by their major power allies (e.g. the US, the UK), and as a result have become enormously prosperous under the rules-based liberal international world order that emerged after WWII. So, in case this liberal international world order would continue to be shaken during the emerging new Trump/Brexit order – or even if this order breaks down entirely – middle powers have a lot to lose, perhaps most of all partners and allies.³

In short, in looking back at middle power’s presence at creation of the liberal international world order in the aftermath of WWII, we suggest, helps us to comprehend what function middle powers could play in this current wave of changing transatlantic orders. Especially their intra-alliance bridgebuilding⁴ function is important in this regard that in the past helped to balance the interests of the major powers. While we would not be able to do justice to studying all possible middle powers in the transatlantic relationship, our analysis zooms in on one particular middle power, namely Canada as a case study, to analyze what function Ottawa could have in the emerging new transatlantic order that is heavily influenced and shaped by Trump and Brexit. Such analysis, we argue, might give Canada and middle powers in general a new *raison d’être* in international politics at difficult times of transatlantic change.

Since the term ‘bridgebuilding’ is closely associated with the image of Canada as a middle power, we first briefly explain and discuss that concept. What follows is a succinct discussion of four variants of this liberal internationalism, one of which is bridgebuilding. In the last section we extrapolate from our case study to generalize what functions middle powers could possibly play in the changing world order of today.

² s.f. (Lind & Wohlforth, 2019). For a perspective of the endurance of the ‘liberal world’ and that it must be saved see (Deudney & Ikenberry, 2018).

³ Some commentators even include China in this emerging new world order.

⁴ In the literature, the terms ‘bridgebuilder’ and ‘linchpin’ have been used interchangeably. Winston Churchill, for example preferred to use the latter term before WWII. After the war the term ‘bridgebuilder’ has become more popular.

Image of Canada as a Middle Power

In the immediate aftermath of WWII, the image of Canada as a middle power was shaped by scholar-practitioners who served in the Department of External Affairs. While being public servants, they felt a desire to engage in academic discourse and publish in academic journals (e.g. *International Journal*) (this point has been emphasized by many analysts including Dewitt and Kirton, 1983, p. 4; Hawes, 1984; p. 4; Holmes, 1979, p.14). John W. Holmes, Hume Wrong, and A.F.W. Plumptre were three of those practitioner-scholars who shaped the idea of Canada as a middle power (see Holmes, 1979; Pearson, 1979; and with respect to creating new international institutions see Plumptre, 1977; Reid, 1977). By examining the Canadian involvement in the two World Wars,⁵ they had, based on their personal experiences and ideas (Dewitt and Kirton, 1983), a sense that Canada could make a difference in the post-1945 world order as long as Ottawa's actions were consistent and skilled (Cooper, 1997; Haws, 1984). However, Canadian foreign policy scholarship at the time was non-theoretical and there was no accepted definition of the term middle power. Indeed, various authors offered different definitions based on geographical, functional or behavioural principles.

The scholarly literature also appears to be undecided as to when the term middle power was first associated with Canada. Adam Chapnick argues that its origins can be traced back to the Mackenzie-King government in the 1940s when Canada was striving for representation in the UN Security Council (Chapnick, 2012, 3). When Minister of External Affairs, Louis St. Laurent, delivered the Gray Lecture in Toronto on 13 January 1947 he outlined five principles of Canadian foreign policy: (1) ensuring national unity; (2) promotion of political liberty; (3) respect and promotion for the rule of law in international affairs; (4) promotion of Christian values; and (5) active involvement in international affairs through participation in multilateral organizations (St. Laurent, 1947, cited in MacKay, 1971, pp. 390-93). From this account we can already derive the first important characteristic of Canada as a middle power, namely that it is above all about *Canadian* interests and maintaining order *at home*. Internationally, St. Laurent signaled to Canada's allies that Ottawa would not fall back into isolation and remain committed and engaged in world politics after the War.⁶ Indeed, many Canadian officials at the time perceived Canada as a major international player with unique functions and capabilities, which was a view that was shared by some of Canada's closest allies (e.g. the UK, the US).

The second characteristic emerging from St. Laurent's speech was a clear recognition that international affairs after WWII was depicted by power politics. The Mackenzie King government realized that even though Canada was one of the victors of the war, it did not hold enough weight internationally to be considered a great power. At the same time, Ottawa's self-perception was that it was not a small power either. Against this backdrop, it lobbied the international community to award Canada a special status on the UN Security Council during the negotiations for creating the UN (For a very

⁵ On Sept. 10, 1939, a special session of Parliament approved Prime Minister Mackenzie King's request that Canada join the war in Europe. The decision came exactly one week after Great Britain and France declared war on Nazi Germany. It was the first time that Canadians made their own declaration of war as a sovereign nation. However, Canadians fought in World War II as part of British units. The tactical control of Canadian troops on the battlefields of Europe remained with Great Britain. However, Canadians selected their own senior officers leading the troops into the battle.

⁶ There were signs that isolation was a possibility. During the war Prime Minister Mackenzie-King urged for a collective security system to prevent another war. However, soon after the fighting had stopped, he began to retreat to his pre-war isolationism.

comprehensive analysis of Canada's role in the set-up of the UN (see Chapnick, 2012). Specifically, Ottawa had envisioned a model in which great powers would hold a permanent seat and a veto power whereas middle powers, like Canada, Australia and others, would receive preferential treatment in the selection of non-permanent members. As Chapnick (2012, p. 3) reminds us,

countries such as Canada, are not important enough to be considered great powers, but far too important to be relegated to the category of small powers, sought to create a distinct position for themselves in the international community, one that would be recognized through special status on the Security Council.

Even though this special status never materialized, the image of Canada as a middle power found acceptance among the Canadian public and set the mindset of the country internationally. Inherent in these descriptions was the assumption that the international system was hierarchical and one in which "objective capability, asserted position, and recognized status" (Chapnick, 2012, p. 22) create three classes of states – great powers,⁷ middle powers⁸ and small powers (see Keohane, 1969 for discussion).

Internationally, the middle power image was based on a functionalist assumption, namely that middle powers would contribute their expertise and resources to solving international issues and problems based on their relative abilities and capacities. Moreover, middle powers were described of having ambitions to counterbalance the more powerful states and trying to prevent them from dominating international relations. Lastly, middle powers were often geographically located in between major powers. In the case of Canada, for example, after WWII it was located geographically in the middle between the US and the Soviet Union.

Canada learned through its colonial experience with Britain that one way of dealing with the more powerful US south of its border was to find a counterweight to it. Europe naturally filled that position as did the US earlier to the British Empire.⁹ Indeed, the need to find a counterbalance was one of the primary reasons why Canada joined the NATO in 1949. To use John Holmes's words, "Along with the Commonwealth and the United Nations, it [NATO] would give Canada a multilateral forum in which, by combining with other lesser powers, it could make its weight felt and so be relieved [...] of the inhibitions of life on a continent with one gigantic neighbour" (Holmes, 1976, pp. 127-128). Moreover, NATO permanently entangled the Americans into an alliance and thus ensured their international engagement to world affairs and commitment to multilateralism, having pursued a rather isolationist foreign policy before WWII.

However, Canada in many ways was unique among its middle power peers such as Australia and some Scandinavian countries. First, Canada was in close geographical proximity to the US and shared the North American continent with this superpower. As such, Canada was exposed to American great power resources and interests, which in turn put the Canada-US relationship at the centre of any government's foreign and economic policy in Ottawa. As Charles Doran (1984) argues, both countries value different issues in their foreign policy. The US puts more emphasis on the political-

⁷ The authors counted the US, the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Japan as great powers.

⁸ Australia, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, Mexico, South Africa, Sweden, The Netherlands, and Yugoslavia were seen as middle powers.

⁹ For a greater discussion of Canada's role in world affairs see Fox and Association for Canadian Studies in the United States, 1996.

strategic dimension, whereas Canada was mostly concerned with the good health of the bilateral economic relationship. Thus, from an American perspective, the relevance of the Canada-US relationship was perceived as part of global politics, whereas “Canada tends to look at global politics through the lens of its relations with the United States. In consequence, the United States sometimes looks at Canada in smaller than real terms and Canada often looks at the United States in larger than real terms” (Doran, 1984, p. 139).

Secondly, the conduct of Canadian foreign policy was influenced perhaps more than for any other middle power by the nature of its domestic politics. In the late 1940s, the provincial premiers were gearing for more influence in Canada’s external relations, particularly when it came to foreign economic policies. This was partly the result of the British North America Act (BNA Act), which did not assign specific competencies in the area of foreign affairs to either the federal or provincial government (Nossal, 1997, p. 295).¹⁰ In 1867, a section on these competencies was not required because at the time Canada was a Dominion of the British Empire and thus by definition had no autonomy in its foreign policy decision-making.

Not to forget in this puzzle also is the “Quebec factor” (see Chapter 11 in Nossal, 1997, for more elaborate discussion) in the formulation of Canadian foreign policy. Unlike any other province in the federation, Quebec was concerned about its sovereignty with regards to its economic policies, foreign direct investments and the relationship with the US. Over the years, Quebec acquired the reserve to maintain independent representation at selected international organizations and in foreign capitals, independent of Canada (e.g. Quebec had its own embassy in Paris).

Variants of the middle power image

After WWII, four major variants of the middle power image emerged, including functionalism, middle-powermanship, internationalism and niche diplomacy, unfolded (Hawes, p. 3; Kirton, 2007, p. 9).

Functionalism

Canadian diplomat Hume Wrong demanded in 1942 that Canada’s involvement in world affairs should be based on functional principles—that is the extent of Ottawa’s involvement, Canadian interests, and its ability to contribute to the situation in question (cited in Granatstein, 1969, p. 3). According to Chapnick (2012, p. 74), Prime Minister Mackenzie-King believed that “states with functional interests in international affairs were of greater interest than those without” and argued that adequate representation should be given to those countries that have the “greatest contribution to make to the particular object in question.” (cited in Granatstein, 1993, pp. 24-27). According to Kirton (2007, p. 40), this functionalism had three imperatives: first, it focused on

¹⁰ Constitutional historians and lawyers have debated the official date of Canadian independence from the British Empire for a long time. In 1931, with the passage of the Statute of Westminster in the British Parliament, Canada obtained full jurisdiction over the conduct of its foreign affairs. It remained part of the Commonwealth. However, Canada took a seat at the table at the League of Nations in 1919 as a sovereign country. Nonetheless, even after 1931 Canada was not given independence in amending its constitution, which in a sense leaves the impression that Canada was only a partly sovereign country. This right, however, was given to Canadians in 1982 when the British Parliament passed the Constitution Act, which, among other things, gave Canada the power to amend its Constitution, including the Constitution Act, 1867 and all other acts of the British Parliament that had amended it over the years. Then Canada became fully independent from Great Britain.

Canada's role in the UN system; second, it created a new class in the international hierarchy between super- and small powers; and third, it called for active participation of Canada in world politics. As Kirton charges, Canada "claimed a management or leadership role where its specialized capabilities and interests allowed." (2007, p. 40). This did not, however, mean that Ottawa sought leadership aspirations in all policy fields; only in selected areas where its capabilities were significant.

Middlepowermanship

The second variant of the middle power concept was the so-called middlepowermanship, which clustered powers according to their activities and actions (Kirton, 2007, p. 75). In this sense, Canada's internationalism was based on norms and values of how to conduct international relations. Spreading these norms and values became one of the cornerstones of Canadian foreign policy. At the same time, it marked a departure from the earlier definition of a middle power, namely from states that contribute to international affairs more than small powers but less than great powers to "states that mediated, conciliated, participated in international peacekeeping missions, and were generally good global citizens" (Chapnick, 2012, p. 3). Canada was portrayed as the "helpful fixer" and "mediator" in international institutions (e.g. the UN and NATO), and worked hard to convince other powers of the virtues of compromise, negotiation and conflict resolution, "to lobby so as to avoid dangerous confrontation and to ...reduce tension among nations." (Simpson, 2001, p. 7). Canada's mediation efforts were mostly associated with Lester B. Pearson and his bridge-building efforts and pursuit of greater world peace while trying to convince the US to keep nuclear weapons out of the Korean War in the early 1950s, his work on the three-man Korean ceasefire commission in December 1950, as well as his collaboration with India and Poland on the International Supervisory Commission in Indochina, and his mediation role during the 1956 Suez Canal crisis (Simpson, 1999, p. 80).¹¹ Cooper et al. (1993, p. 19) argue that middle powers could be characterized by "their tendency to pursue multilateral solutions to international problems, their tendency to embrace compromise positions in international disputes." Keating (2002, p. 9) agrees and notes that

policy makers also enjoyed considerable access to the major power centres in London and Washington. Canada's enhanced status, when combined with the country's historical experiences, encouraged a more enthusiastic response on the part of policy makers to proposals for post-war organizations. A more activist strategy of international involvement emerged as the favoured policy option in Ottawa.¹²

Against this backdrop, Dewitt and Kirton (2007, p. 403) define middle powers as "helpful-fixers"; Lyon and Tomlin (1979) argue that middle powers were located in the middle of the ideological spectrum and their role involved special responsibility for functional duties (e.g. peacekeeping).

¹¹ However, the literature is unclear about the origins and causes of Pearson's beliefs. Pearson himself references the battle experiences he witnessed during the First World War; See in particular chapter two in Pearson (1972). Other analysts argue that Pearson's visions stem from others such as John Diefenbaker, British Prime Minister Anthony Eden and others. For more about this debate see From an American perspective see Kissinger (1999, pp. 484-89).

¹² What Keating meant by strategy of international involvement is Canadian multilateralism, that is the "practice of multilateral diplomacy and the policies supporting the establishment and maintenance of institutions and associations that facilitate and support the practice of multilateral diplomacy," p.4.

Internationalism

The third variant of the middle power metaphor was internationalism, which used Canada's development assistance as a key instrument to raise the profile of Canada in the world.¹³ It tried to portray the country as proactive and caring and with great interests for reducing the inequalities between the world's rich and poor. The aftermath of WWII is referenced in this regard, with Canada helping the Europeans to rebuild their countries by offering loans and donations to restore devastated territories, as well as its significant development assistance especially to Africa. Thus, one of the key reference points for Canada's engagement in world affairs was the percentile of Canadian development assistance rated against its Gross National Product (GNP).

Niche diplomacy

Niche diplomacy is the 'youngest' of the four variants characterizing middle powers (Cooper, 1995; Cooper and Hayes, 2000; Smith, 1999). It was developed in the early 1990s in light of the fiscal constraints of the federal government demanding that choices be made in Canada's external relations. This reintroduced the notion of specialization of Canadians in selected policy issues and in niches where Ottawa could make a difference in a growingly complex world.

In sum, the middle power concept in Canadian foreign policy was a Canadian-oriented image. It rationalized rather than objectively explained Canada's role and standing in the world, leaving the obvious gap of a comprehensive non-Canadian perspective on Canada's role as a middle power in world politics. The point is that the image of Canada as a middle power was a very Canadian specific image developed by Canadians for Canadians (see also Chaban, 2019, in this Special Issue on the role of images and perceptions).

Secondly, as Adam Chapnick (2012) has shown, the middle power concept was developed by quasi-academics, political practitioners and for domestic consumption in Canada and to achieve certain political objectives, namely to ensure national unity in Canada and to help Canadians to find their role in the world. It thus successfully bridged the predominant rift among "imperialists, internationalists, and continentalists" (Holmes, 1979, p. 128).

Canadian bridgebuilding

As noted, before WWII, Canada's role in international affairs was portrayed as that of a bridge (Fox and Association for Canadian Studies in the United States, 1996, p.32) between its two closest partners, namely the US and the UK (Lyon and Tomlin, 1979, p. 11). One of the first functions of a bridge, as Arthur Lower reminds us, is to be walked upon (Lower, 1978; also Lower quoted by Lyon and Tomlin, 1979, p. 12). Canada liked being a bridgebuilder for some obvious reasons. First, it did not want to get caught in between its two major allies (the US and the UK), especially at a time when Canada was still considered a Dominion and thus not independent in its foreign policy from the UK, in spite of the fact that the Statute of Westminster of 1931 had given Canada a certain degree of political autonomy. Second, Canada used this bridgebuilding policy in order to have access to its allies (at the time primarily political and economic), and vice versa for

¹³ This term is understood here as Canada's foreign aid.

allies to have a channel to talk to one another with Canada perhaps as the mediator. Canada's High Commissioner to London, Norman Robertson explains this policy in greater detail:

Ever since we have been in a position to shape our own policy abroad, we had to wrestle with the antinomies created by our position as a North American country and as a member of the Commonwealth, by our special relationship with the United Kingdom and at the same time, although in less degree with other countries in western Europe as well. A situation in which our special relationship with the United Kingdom can be identified with our special relationship with other countries in western Europe and in which the United States will be providing a firm basis, both economically and probably militarily, for this link across the North Atlantic, seems to me such a providential solution for so many of our problems that I feel we should go to great length and even incur considerable risks in order to consolidate our good fortune and ensure our proper place in this new partnership (Robertson, 1948, quoted in Reid, 1977, p. 132)

Going back in history trying to find examples for this policy, Canadian diplomats were credited with helping to prevent a transatlantic rift between the UK and the US during the Washington naval negotiations in 1921.¹⁴ This was an international conference called for by the US to limit the naval arms race and to work out security agreements in the Pacific area. Held in Washington, D.C., the conference resulted in the signing of several agreements. The relevance of this event is that Canada was asked by the US to put pressure on the UK to abandon their Japanese alliance in form of a naval treaty.

On another occasion, during WWII, Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie was asked by US President Roosevelt to deliver a secret memo to London at a time when the US was not yet engaged in the war (Lyon and Tomlin, 1979, p. 11-12). In other words, Canada took up the role of a transatlantic bridgebuilder between the two English-speaking countries. This was a rather unique instance at the time, considering that Canada was still a Dominion of the British Empire.

In the literature, the notion of 'bridge-building' is used interchangeably with being the 'linchpin'. Erika Simpson, for example, notes that the international community perceived Canada as a "secondary power serving as a bridge or linchpin between Britain and the United States" (Simpson, 1999, p. 7).¹⁵ On the political level, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill is quoted to first having described Canada as the linchpin between Britain and the US (Simson, 1999, p. 11). Either way, over the years the international community accepted Canada's new role as an "indispensable element in the worldwide quest for peace" (Haglund and Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 2000, p. 33). The linchpin metaphor, as David Haglund argues, was the description of an idealistic worldview based on moral values and ideas (Haglund and Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 2000, p. 34). It was associated with the idea that Canada would be able to maintain peace and solidarity within the North Atlantic triangle.¹⁶ US President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Churchill indirectly acknowledged this new role and invited Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King to take part in some of

¹⁴ This conference became formally known as the International Conference in Naval Limitations (1921-22). For Canadian role playing at the conference see for example Brebner (1935); Roskill (1979).

¹⁵ For a greater discussion of the bridge-building and linchpin metaphor see Brebner, 1970; Haglund, 2004/2005; Haglund and Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 2000.

¹⁶ For a detailed examination of the North Atlantic triangle see for example Brebner, 1970; Haglund, 2004/2005; McKercher and Aronsen, 1996.

their war deliberations, which at the time was unheard of for middle powers (Lyon and Tomlin, 1979, p. 11).¹⁷

Others, such as historians Brian McKercher and Lawrence Aronsen, argue that the metaphor of Canada as the linchpin was first used in the aftermath of the Imperial Conference in 1926 (McKercher and Aronsen, 1996, pp. 4-5). The conference was an important event in Canadian foreign policy because it accepted the Balfour declaration, which acknowledged that Dominions such as Canada would be treated and ranked equally to the UK.

There are several examples of Canadian bridgebuilding post WWII. To start with, it was Canadian diplomats who helped to convince the reluctant and somewhat isolationist US to sign onto both the NATO as well as the UN (for a detailed account of this time see Reid, 1977; for an account of Canada's specific role see Chapnick, 2012). Canadian diplomats also helped to ease the tensed relationship over the Suez Canal crisis in the 1950s that threatened war between the US and the UK, two of Canada's closest allies (Nossal, 1997, p. 58). Moreover, Ottawa assisted the British government in its transition from empire to the Commonwealth (Lyon and Tomlin, 1979, p. 18). In short, Canada's global engagements suggested that Ottawa played the role of a community builder and organization maintainer.

As part of this intra-alliance bridge building, Canada exercised a moderating influence on Washington. Its policy makers assumed that it was easier to influence their neighbour down south through international institutions, because Canadian officials were familiar with the US's political system and culture, which in turn increased its chances for influencing the decision-making process in the US machinery of government (e.g. Congress). In addition, Canadians are perceived by the US as their closest friends, a privilege that gives unprecedented access to decision makers in Washington and provides a level of trust (Keohane, 1969; Stairs, 1974). For example, until this day Canadians are among the few countries that the US trusts to put their forces under Canadian command (as seen in Afghanistan).

In sum, the international community quickly realized and respected Canada's unique abilities and occasionally asked Canada to help talking to the US on their behalf when relations with the US became difficult. In part, this international confidence that other countries had in Canadian diplomacy was a reflection of Canada's quiet diplomacy style that it used as a tool of its foreign policy vis-à-vis the US (Tucker, 1980, pp. 18-22; 85-86). This policy of quietness espouses Canada-US institutional collaboration to isolate North American issues from international ones. This was Canadian functionalism at best and allowed experts to solve the more technical issues of the relationship (Zyla, 2008). Over time, Canadian policy officials came to see the world through the prism of US foreign policy (Doran, 1984, p. 139) – that is international issues were defined by looking at their importance to the US.¹⁸

¹⁷ Even though it is not historically proven yet if the British Prime Minister and his American counterpart were really committed to let Mackenzie King take part of the deliberations as an ally. Thus, it is more likely that they invited the Canadian Prime Minister as a gesture of politeness and encouragement for Canada's behaviour in international affairs.

¹⁸ There is large agreement in the literature that Canada's role perception is not static; it changes over time. Monton (1974), for example has researched Canada's role perceptions between 1957-72 extensively. His work is based on earlier works of Holsti (1970) in the US.

Bridgebuilding redux in the period of Trump and Brexit

Against this historical excursion of Canadian bridgebuilding policy that is deeply embedded in its role as a middle power, we can infer what role Ottawa might play in the age of Trump in the US and Brexit in the UK and whose governments are both highly divisive and openly disrespecting values of multilateralism and the rules based international order. To ignore both countries (the US and the UK) is not really an option for Canada (and the EU for that matter) moving forward. The reality is that the US will always be a vital partner in North America, economically, politically and militarily. Due to space constraints, the Brexit must suffice here as an example.

The Brexit poses a critical moment for the alliance to re-adjust its inter-institutional relationship with the EU, as well as what has been appreciated in the literature as the ‘transatlantic link’ that has bound Europe with its two north American partners (the US and Canada) together since the end of WWII.¹⁹ Against this backdrop, we can hypothesize that the Brexit will undoubtedly have significant policy implications for all transatlantic security actors and institutions involved in the management thereof, in Britain, in NATO, and in the EU (see Hofmann, 2018).

Above all, with the Brexit looming, the Americans are losing their ‘preferred’ ally in the EU and one that in the past has helped them to understand the EU. Historically, the British held a special relationship with the US (Oliver, 2016; Cyr, 2018). This special relationship dates back to Victorian times and has truly solidified itself with the US’s entry into WWI (Campbell, 2007). It is thus important to note that the discussion of Britain’s relationship with NATO, certainly in its early days, has to a large extent been driven by that special relationship between the British and the Americans (Ackerman, 2016; Ryan, 2016). With the UK leaving the EU, we are likely to see that the UK will revert to NATO as its essential source of international legitimacy and influence over European security affairs and policy and step up its commitment in the alliance for precisely that reason, especially in terms of increasing their postings of additional military and political officials that would support NATO’s military and civilian missions. This is a logical consequence of a report published by the British House of Commons warning that the Brexit will lead to a significantly reduced British influence in the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016). Given that the UK currently is one of seven NATO countries²⁰ that meets the 2 per cent defence spending as a share of national GDP target, we are also likely to see the UK joining the US that call upon Europeans to significantly increase their defence spending. It would also be difficult to dispute the position as NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR), which traditionally is reserved for the UK (Chalmers, 2017, p. 2). Meanwhile, the benefit for the alliance undoubtedly is that it will be a strengthened pillar of Euro-Atlantic security as well as a rules-based international order.

Moreover, since the creation of the EU with the Coal and Steel Community in 1952 that helped to economically integrate and coordinate the large number of funds from the US Marshall Plan, the British were the US’s political ear in the EU, and it is thus no surprise that Britain’s politics *vis-à-vis* the EU largely resemble the US views, especially in the

¹⁹ Some analysts have suggested that the Brexit would make it incredibly difficult for the U.K. to continue to cooperate with the EU in the areas of foreign-, security- and defence policy. See Bond (2015); Kerr (2016).

²⁰ Out of the 29 NATO members in total, these seven include Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the UK and the US.

domains of security and the economy. With the UK leaving the EU in early 2020,²¹ the US' preferred ally in the EU will be gone, with significant political consequences. Above all, the US will be losing a partner that has always pushed against deeper EU integration, which has been a long-term goal of the Americans. On the other side of that coin is the US losing a close diplomatic ally that could convey and amplify its views among EU member states. This is particularly important in times of crisis when channels of communication are vital. As a result, it is likely that NATO will be strengthened in this regard and pay more attention to Article 4 of the Washington Treaty enhancing political cooperation in the alliance.

While Canada historically has enjoyed political, cultural, economic as well as security ties with the EU (especially Britain and France), its diplomats could easily help the UK to transition its focus from the EU to NATO, which in part clearly is in Canada's interest as a non-member of the EU. Ottawa can have no interest in the UK turning to an isolationist foreign policy (see Biscop, 2018) as a result of the Brexit, as it might indeed contribute to forming what former Secretary of Defence, Robert Gates, has called a two-tier alliance—that is an alliance of states that share collective burdens and are engaged in the alliance and those states that do not.²² Thus, it is close to being certain that what NATO needs after the Brexit is a new political commitment among the allies to re-vitalize Article 4 of the Washington Treaty, namely to “[...] consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened.” This will foster the political relationships among NATO allies, as well as underline the multidimensionality of transatlantic security and defence cooperation. This is where Canadian bridgebuilding and middle powermanship can make a significant difference—that is to rekindle the political nature of the alliance, which has been Canada's interest in the alliance since its creation in 1949 (Zyla, 2015). Indeed, re-committing to Article 4 will most likely improve NATO's resilience against external shocks and insecurities. In brief, a new political commitment to NATO and its allies is desperately needed to assure NATO members, especially those in central and south-eastern Europe, that the organization is robust and healthy. These countries need to be reassured that there is no need to leave the alliance, or that in case the Brexit materializes, they are going to be forced to decide whether they side with the UK to keep NATO as the foremost institution governing European security affairs, or with France and Germany who continue to push for a more integrated EU defence policy (Zyla and Kammel, 2018).

If Canada could play a significant political role in helping the UK to transition its security interests (or at least parts of it) from the EU to NATO, this would allow the alliance to focus on its most pertinent security threats at the moment. These include a resurging and nationalist Russian foreign policy that is openly threatening NATO's most eastern member states (and Canada's north for that matter). In short, the most serious threat facing both NATO and Europe's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) over the short term clearly is Russia, along with the instability permeating the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as well as threats to its internal cohesion from the rise of nationalism and political extremism in several EU member states (e.g. in France, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Poland) (MacGillivray, 2016). Moreover, the UK leaving CFSP and its security architecture is exacerbated by the uncertainty surrounding the future of NATO that primarily stems from the US, Turkey, and recently France. French

²¹ At the time of writing this was the date that Prime Minister Johnson had requested in his letter to the EU asking for an extension on the Brexit negotiations in the UK House of Commons.

²² For evidence that Canada is indeed a net contributor to the alliance and *not* a free-rider see Zyla (2015, 2019).

President Macron has called into question the reliability of the alliance and America's ~~their~~ commitments to it (Trump, 2016). The problem with Turkey is aggravated by its problematic civil-military relations, offensive invasion in northern Syria, as well as its political proximity with Russia. Turkey has recently bought Russia's S-400 missile defense system at a cost of circa \$2 billion. The problem with the system is that it was designed to down NATO warplanes. A further rapprochement with Russia could also complicate decision-making processes within NATO and risk the procurement of the F-35 fighter jets. All this calls into question Turkey's reliability as the second largest NATO military. As a result, the alliance must be strengthened as a political alliance where allies increase their efforts in diplomacy rather than diplomatic spats.

Canada could also augment its political role in the alliance by building a political 'bridge' between the UK/EU and the US on the one hand, and between the US and the EU on the other hand. As it was the case in the past, this bridgebuilding function continues to be in Canada's interest today. First, Ottawa has no interest of both the EU and the US getting in conflict with one another. And second, a healthy relationship would help to strengthen Canada's economic ties, and thus allow continued access and diversification of its trade relations while reducing its economic dependency on the US. This is Canadian functionalism *par excellence*. For this to happen, Ottawa must not be afraid to be bold, make better use of its foreign service and the career diplomats, and develop healthier relations with subject experts in academia and the think tank community.

On the other side of the bridgebuilding coin is the view from Europe. It is no secret in Brussels that most of the EU member states disapprove of the US' unilateralism and its disregard for international institutions (with few exceptions). Canada, with its unique geographic and political position, could help to keep the communication channels open so that the Europeans (indirectly) could continue to talk and convey their messages to the US via Canada (and *vice-versa*). This would help maintaining political relations across the Atlantic and keep each other engaged. This is precisely what a bridge intends to do – to connect different shores.

Conclusion

Historically, Canada's foreign relations were complicated because of its status of a dominion in the British Empire that limited Ottawa's autonomy in this area. Between 1867 and the early 1930s, any decision with regards to Canada's external relations was made by Westminster. It was not until 1931 that Canada gained some autonomy in its foreign policy. This was demonstrated in September 1939 when Canada declared war on Germany one week after the British did. After 1945, Canadians were searching for their role and identity in a post WWII environment and were striving to get recognition for their actions. After all, Canada came out of WWII with the third largest navy and as the fourth largest air force. The accepted wisdom at the time was that the two great powers – the Soviet Union and the US – would dominate the countries in their spheres of influence, particularly small powers with weaker power resources and influence to carry out policies on their own.

Canadians' participation in the two World Wars as a part of the British Empire shaped Canadian identity and reputation. The struggle for recognition in international affairs was coupled with Ottawa's push for greater independence from the UK and recognition from others in order to locate itself in a superpower world. Above all, the image of Canada as a middle power and a transatlantic bridgebuilder helped foreign policy

officials in Ottawa to help Canadians to understand their country's relative power capabilities, and how it could contribute to international politics. This was Canadian functionalism *par excellence*.

This functionalism is a skill that might be made use of at difficult times of Trump and Brexit that helped to create the current transatlantic crisis. If applied successfully, it would help both, Canada as well as its allies in the EU and NATO re-establishing the primacy of politics in the transatlantic relationship that would allow allies to 'talk things over' in a dialogue, find diplomatic solutions to difficult policy problems and thus help overcome current institutional fragmentations on both sides of the Atlantic. This would build a bridge that is much needed these days to help rejuvenate an aging Strategic Partnership with the EU, especially in light of US's indecisiveness thereof.

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