

Canada in a Multipolar World: A Comprehensive Report

IR 4703G Class of 2025

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With gratitude,

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Glossary

Terms to Define:

Carbon Intensity: A measure of how much greenhouse gas (GHG) is emitted when producing or consuming energy, typically measured in grams of carbon dioxide (CO₂) per Kilowatt Hour (kWh).

Climate-Induced Migration: The temporary or permanent movement of people within or across borders due to climate change.

Global Commons: A system of global internet governance that considers the internet a global commodity with communal ownership.

Hegemon: A state that has sufficient economic or military power to exert unique dominance over regional or international affairs.

Humanitarianism: A broad dedication to and belief in the fundamental value of human life that is mobilized through actions of states.

Humanitarian Assistance: “Assistance designed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of emergencies.”

Irregular Migrants: Movement that takes places outside of domestic laws, regulations, or international agreements governing entry or exit from states of origin, transit and destination. Using ‘irregular’ rather than ‘illegal’ better reflects the fact that international and domestic law do not align on proper refugee protocols.

Isolationism: A foreign policy approach that heavily disengages from international commitments in all of economic, military, and political spheres.

Liberal Internationalism: The foreign policy ideology that promotes freedom and democracy through international institutions and a free market. It recognizes a belief that international progress is possible through the cooperation of states toward freedom and democracy.

Liberal International Order: The global order led by the U.S. after the Second World War, reflecting values of democracy, freedom, the free market, and international institutions.

Middle Power: A state that has less power than a superpower on the international stage but exerts moderate or exceptional influence over international affairs. It may demonstrate leadership on certain sectors, such as humanitarianism or climate change.

Official Development Assistance (ODA): Government aid provided by official agencies (including state and local government), with the main objective of promoting the economic development and welfare of developing countries.

Peacekeeping: Refers to United Nations led Peacekeeping Operations that work to maintain peace and security, protect human rights and help restore the rule of law in regions affected by conflict.

Resource Colonialism: The exploitation of natural resources by external powers or corporations in a way that benefits them while marginalizing local communities. It often involves unequal power dynamics, environmental harm, and limited economic gains for the resource-rich region.

Rules-Based International Order: The global order that upholds legal and moral obligations between states, seeking to embed accountability and cooperation into international relations.

Security Dilemma: Increasing national security through military means creates a cycle ultimately requiring constant military acceleration by all states involved.

Soft Power: Influence exerted in the international system through diplomacy, culture, and co-option, rather than coercion through force.

Superpower: A state that exerts significant influence over regional or international affairs due to their economic or military power advantage.

Triple Planetary Crisis: Recognized as the three main issues facing humanitarianism today by the UNFCCC: climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

Acronyms/Initialisms

ACCA: Accelerated Capital Cost Allowance
AfCFTA: African Continental Free Trade Agreement
ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU: African Union
BRI: Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CAPP: Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
CCS: Carbon Capture and Storage
CCUS: Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage
CETA: Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement
CFLI: Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives
CIDA: Canadian International Development Agency
CNSC: The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission
CPTPP: Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
CRTC: Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission
CUSMA: Canada-US-Mexico Agreement
DFAIT: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
DPRK: Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
EEZ: Exclusive Economic Zone
ECS: Extended Continental Shelf
EITI: Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
ESTMA: Extractive Sector Transparency Measures Act
FDI: Foreign Direct Investment
FIAP: Feminist International Assistance Policy
FIRA: Foreign Investment Review Agency
FTA: Free Trade Agreements
GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP: Gross Domestic Product
GHGe: Greenhouse Gas Emitters
IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency
IBA: Impact and Benefit Agreements
ICC: International Criminal Court
IMF: International Monetary Fund
ISR: In-Situ Recovery
ITK: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
JCPOA: Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JETP: Just Energy Transition Partnership
LDC: Least Developed Countries

LIO: Liberal International Order
LNG: Liquified Natural Gas
MDGs: Millennium Development Goals
MENA: Middle East and North Africa
MIC: Middle Income Countries
NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDP: New Democratic Party
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
NPT: Non-Proliferation Treaty
ODA: Official Development Assistance
OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
R2P: Responsibility To Protect
SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals
SMR: Small Modular Reactors
STCA: Safe Third Country Agreement
TINMCA: Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area
TMX: Trans Mountain Extension
TPNW: Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNDRIP: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNGA: United Nations General Assembly
UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSC: United Nations Security Council
USAID: United States Agency for International Development
WASH: Water, Sanitation, Hygiene initiatives
WHO: World Health Organization
2BT: 2 Billion Trees

Introduction

*By: Ivan Bélanger, Brendan Fox, Kathleena Henricus,
& Ranka Kyriakidou Vuckovic*

The global order is in an era of profound change, complexity, and uncertainty marked by the emergence of multipolarity and the dissolution of American hegemony. The foreign policy of leaders such as Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, and Benjamin Netanyahu have disrupted the belief in the liberal international order that emerged after the Cold War. The Russo-Ukrainian War, the War in the Middle East, and climate change are challenges to the rules-based international order that states must deal with. These crises and the changing relationships between states have transformed the way that scholars, politicians, and citizens must look at the global order and make it imperative that states reconsider how they engage in international affairs. For Canada, this has presented a challenge and an opportunity to reframe its foreign policy objectives and strategies.

It is the goal of this policy paper to suggest the most reasonable, practical, and important ways that Canada can position itself in the changing global order. It recognizes that there is not a single problem nor solution that can define how Canada must engage in the global order. Rather, the paper is a compilation of case studies that explore different sectors of international affairs and the most important issues to Canadian interests. From economic diversification to foreign aid to national security, the seven case studies make unique recommendations that would reframe Canada's international involvement in important ways. Most significantly, it seeks strategies that would help Canada reemerge as a global humanitarian leader and middle power who can leverage its influence to achieve its domestic and international interests. This entails making

significant changes at the national and international policy levels. Without some or all of these changes, Canada may find itself lost in the complicated global order.

Canada as a Middle Power

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Canada sought to position itself as a “middle power”—a peace broker that could empathize with smaller, recently independent states but could also stand among giants, keeping the colonial powers and the emerging U.S. hegemon at bay. John W. Holmes is credited with pioneering the understanding of Canada’s middling position, writing that Canada sought the safety of the middle as it was offered a place on the world stage.¹ This offer was largely due to Canada’s economic gains from the war and its financial support for Britain’s post-war rebuilding.² Canada did not have the stature of the U.S. or Britain, but it was better positioned and more financially stable than smaller states and those recovering from the war, so the term “middle power” was adopted.

John Ravenhill offers the clearest definition of what middle power is in the Canadian context, creating the framework of 5 “C’s”: Capacity, Concentration, Creativity, Coalition-building, and Credibility.³ This idea will be useful in the framing of this paper, as it encapsulates how Canada is seen and defines itself on the world stage. Canada’s greatest capacity in serving the global order is through diplomatic means or soft power, as opposed to hard power.⁴ Canada’s limited influence, compared to the United States (U.S.), means Canada must concentrate its energy on specific foreign policy aims, utilize non-traditional means of control, and continually forge and maintain alliances to protect its global interests.⁵ Due to

¹ John W. Holmes, “Most Safely in the Middle,” *International Journal* 39, no. 2 (1984): 366.

² Adam Chapnick and Asa McKercher, *Canada First, Not Canada Alone: A History of Canadian Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 43.

³ John Ravenhill, “Cycles of middle power activism: Constraint and choice in Australian and Canadian foreign policies,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 52, no. 3 (1998): 310, 10.1080/10357719808445259.

⁴ Ravenhill, “Cycle of Middle Power Activism,” 311.

⁵ Ravenhill, “Cycle of Middle Power Activism,” 311-312

Canada's limitations and reliance on the U.S., many scholars and nations consider the term "middle power" to be self-aggrandizing.⁶ However, at this moment of U.S. turbulence and international division, it is in Canada's best domestic and international interest to live up to this term by strengthening non-U.S. relations, investing in bilateralism in strategic regions such as the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region, and leading with soft power on issues like the triple planetary crisis.

American Unreliability

It is impossible to discuss Canadian foreign policy in a multipolar age without addressing the U.S.. The American unipolar moment may have come to pass, but that does not mean the world's largest power has fallen into irrelevance. At present, Canadian news and public life are dominated by discussions of what the country's relationship should be with its southern neighbour. The *National Post* has described the situation as a "geopolitical marriage on the rocks," while commentators are describing the U.S. under Donald Trump's second term as newly unreliable.⁷ Canada-U.S. relations discourse is operating on the idea that the states are entering unprecedented times. This is not an entirely accurate assessment.

Currently, Trump heads an American government that endangers Canadian interests, enacting tariffs on Canadian goods, threatening Canadian annexation while leading a climate change denialist ideology, and parroting misinformation about fentanyl and migrants filtering through the Canadian border.⁸ However, none of these threats are entirely new. In the 19th

⁶ Chapnick and McKercher, *Canada First, Not Canada Alone*, 43.

⁷ Diane Francis, "A geopolitical marriage on the rocks," *National Post*, 5 February 2025.

<https://financialpost.com/diane-francis/geopolitical-marriage-rocks-us-canada>; Emma Shortis, "The U.S. we thought we knew is gone – and Australians know it," *The Guardian*, 4 March 2025.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/04/australia-us-relationship-trump-albanese-zelenskyy>; Paul McLeary, "Europe braces for a future without the U.S. as a reliable ally," *Politico*, 13 February 2025.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/12/europe-us-unreliable-alliance-munich-00203886>

⁸ Holly Cabrera, "Trump reiterates tariff threat, calls Canada 'nasty' on trade," *CBC* 24 January 2025. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trump-canada-comments-north-carolina-1.7440999>; Eve Darian-Smith, "The Challenge of Political Will, Global Democracy and Environmentalism," *Environmental Policy and Law* 54, (2024).;

century, American Senator Henry Cabot Lodge called for the U.S. to annex Canada.⁹ During his presidency, Ronald Reagan hampered Canadian efforts to resolve acid rain and lake acidification due to misguided pseudoscience, part of a broader American skepticism of climate issues.¹⁰ In the wake of the September 11 attacks, then-Senator Hillary Clinton parroted the popular American misinformation that “everyone knows (the hijackers) came through Canada,” while George Bush left Canada off the list of countries that came to the U.S. aid in the wake of the terrorist attack.¹¹ The U.S. is not newly unreliable—it always has been.

The logical course forward is deviating from American-aligned foreign policy positions, which may feel like an unprecedented situation. Yet, this too would not be a new development. In their invasions of Vietnam and Iraq, the American Government met Canadian opposition.¹² So too did American support for the apartheid regime in South Africa.¹³ Certainly, there have been times of cooperation and friendship between the two North American geographic giants. From events as trivial as a media frenzy from Barack Obama stopping by the Byward Market, to critical historical turning points such as the joint landings in Normandy on D-Day, Canada and the U.S. have a long history of cooperation and partnership.¹⁴ It is highly likely that the two countries will be able to rely on each other again in the future. However, the Canadian government needs to ensure relying on the U.S. is a choice, not a necessity. The U.S. is

The Canadian Press, “White House says Trump plans to follow through on Canada, Mexico tariffs on Saturday,” *CBC* 28 January 2025. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/canada-mexico-tariffs-trump-white-house-1.7443771>.

⁹ Chapnick and McKercher, *Canada First, Not Canada Alone*, 166.

¹⁰ Chapnick and McKercher, *Canada First, Not Canada Alone*, 166.

¹¹ Chapnick and McKercher, *Canada First, Not Canada Alone*, 199.

¹² Andrew Preston, “Balancing War and Peace: Canadian Foreign Policy and the Vietnam War, 1961–1965,” *Diplomatic history* 27, no. 1, 2003. P. 73-111.; CBC News “PM says Canada won’t fight in Iraq,” *CBC News*, 18 Mar 2003. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/pm-says-canada-won-t-fight-in-iraq-1.405808>

¹³ Chapnick and McKercher, *Canada First, Not Canada Alone*, 155.

¹⁴ “Obama leaves with a taste of Ottawa’s famous pastry,” *CBC News*, 19 February 2009. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/obama-leaves-with-a-taste-of-ottawa-s-famous-pastry-1.789884>

unreliable in the status quo, as it has been in the past and as it could be in the future. In a multipolar world, Canada needs to be in a position to forge its own path.

Liberal Internationalism

Canada as a nation of nations is inherently international. In 2006, the House of Commons passed a motion stating “[t]hat this House recognize that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada.”¹⁵ Where much of the rest of the country refers to provincially-funded protected greenspace as ‘provincial parks,’ Québec operates ‘national parks.’¹⁶ The seat of the provincial capital, Québec City, welcomes travellers to the “Capitale-Nationale.”¹⁷ Canada’s international character also comes from its constitutional recognition of three Indigenous groups: Inuit, Métis, and First Nations.¹⁸ In name and in law, Canada has at least a Québécois nation and a plurality of First Nations. Canadian liberal internationalism is thus inherently embedded into the structure of Canada as a country. It governs the domestic and therefore must be reflected in Canada’s global actions.

One of the dominant frameworks for viewing global affairs over the past decades is through the Liberal International Order (LIO), the rules-based, ideological order that emerged after the Cold War with the onset of American hegemony. Liberal internationalism promotes international institutions, the free market, and democracy through intrastate cooperation. The belief in the LIO reflects the understanding that these values have been inherent in the international system since the Cold War. The isolationism of the U.S., aggression of Russia and

¹⁵ “House passes motion recognizing Quebecois as nation,” *CBC News*, 27 November 2006. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/house-passes-motion-recognizing-quebecois-as-nation-1.574359>

¹⁶ “Québec’s national parks,” *Sépaq*, accessed 11 March 2025. https://www.sepaq.com/parcs-nationaux/index.dot?language_id=1

¹⁷ *An Act to grant Ville de Québec national capital status and increase its autonomy and powers*, Bill no. 109, 41st National Legislature (2016).

¹⁸ “Indigenous peoples and communities,” *Government of Canada*, accessed 11 March 2025. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1529102490303>.

Israel, and promotion of illiberalism by superpowers such as China challenge the LIO that Canada has long promoted. The efforts of leaders such as Lester B. Pearson and Lloyd Axworthy demonstrated Canada's commitment to liberal internationalism and a rules-based order. While it must avoid the colonial underpinnings that have long haunted liberal internationalism, Canada must find ways to engage in global leadership if it seeks to promote the values of the LIO.

The United Nations

Canadian involvement in the LIO has been most relevant through the United Nations. The UN and its subsidiary organizations are the bodies through which Canadian leaders have demonstrated their initiative on global humanitarianism, foreign aid, trade, and security through contributions such as Responsibility To Protect (R2P) and peacekeeping. Canada's pursuit of a temporary seat on the UN Security Council has failed twice in the past fifteen years, most recently in 2020, demonstrating that its prominence in the organization and reputation in the eyes of the international community has faltered.¹⁹ If Canada seeks to regain its leadership position in the UN, including a temporary seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), it must demonstrate global leadership in new and significant ways.

The UN's relevance has been threatened by open challenges to its liberal values by Russia, China, the DPRK, and other states, as well as the abandonment of leadership by the U.S.. In a multipolar world where rules-based institutions such as the UN could decline in importance, it is imperative that Canada embraces tactics for direct bilateral and multilateral relations outside of the UN. Nonetheless, the UN has and is likely to continue to be an important body through which Canada can express and pursue its international interests. Even if the UN's legitimacy falters, the 2030 Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and many other commitments

¹⁹ Kathleen Harris, "Canada loses its bid for seat on UN Security Council," *CBC News*, 17th June, 2020.

have tied states to shared objectives and rules.²⁰ The UN is especially important as a mechanism for Canada to build and maintain relationships with developing states, many of whom use the UN as the primary international institution through which they can express their interests. The recommendations of this paper will therefore balance a recognition of the UN's faltering international position with the acknowledgement that Canada's position of global leadership has historically been rooted in the organization and may still be reliant on working through it.

China's Challenge to the Global Order

China is perhaps the most powerful emerging actor in the global order. Through policies such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has expanded its international involvement and extended its influence over smaller states in its region and the wider international sphere. Elizabeth Economy argues that Chinese President Xi Jinping seeks to assert his state's centrality in world politics through an expansionist ideology that "connotes a radically transformed international order."²¹ China's domestic and foreign policy represents a dismissal of liberalism that was often incompatible with the LIO and has diminished China's standing with many states.²² However, in an emerging multipolar world, China's economic capabilities, military strength, and willingness to engage in the international sphere makes it a potential and appealing ally for many states, especially those who are left behind by backtracking from the U.S.. In a variety of spheres such as economic relations, climate change, and foreign aid, Canada has to deal with China's threat to liberal internationalism and its place of prominence in the global order.

Domestic Considerations in Foreign Policy

²⁰ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed 15th March, 2025. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

²¹ Elizabeth Economy, "Xi Jinping's New World Order: Can China Remake the International System?", *Foreign Affairs*, (Jan/Feb. 2022): 52.

²² Yuen Yuen Ang, "How Resilient is the CCP?", *Journal of Democracy* 33, (July 2022): 77.

To position itself as a leader in the international order, Canada must recognize and seek to amend domestic barriers and inconsistencies in its value systems. Most importantly, Canada must commit itself to a more substantive form of liberal internationalism by removing the inauthenticity that permeates its identity—an identity complicated by its mistreatment of its Indigenous communities.

First, the state must enter into the multipolar world with a cultural ethos that reflects its values, rather than a distorted version shaped by empty rhetoric and hollow actions. Canada has often used its liberal democratic identity to mask its shortcomings, engaging with diplomatic partners from a position of condescension and a poignant lack of self-awareness. Canada must recognize that its imposition of a democratic liberal framework does not imply a superior understanding of governance, nor are its values universally applicable across diverse cultural contexts. This colonial understanding reflects an inauthentic commitment to international development. Canada's identity should be rooted in authentic inclusivity and cultural humility by emphasizing a commitment to understanding and respecting diverse perspectives without imposing dominant values. This requires fundamental shifts in how it deals with other states, especially developing nations. It also requires a recognition of Indigeneity within Canada.

The historical relationship between Indigenous communities and the Canadian state is characterized by genocidal violence and systemic disempowerment. Colonial policies were designed to dispossess Indigenous people of their lands and cultural identities, reflecting a broader agenda of assimilation and control. Additionally, state-sanctioned apprehension and abuse of Indigenous children, as exemplified by the residential school system and the Sixties Scoop, represent egregious violations of Indigenous rights and sovereignty.²³ From 1883 to 1996,

²³ Holly A. McKenzie et al., “Disrupting the Continuities among Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and Child Welfare: An Analysis of Colonial and Neocolonial Discourses,” *International Indigenous Policy Journal* 7, no. 2 (20th May, 2016), 2.

approximately 150,000 Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and placed in government-funded institutions that aimed to assimilate them into Euro-Canadian culture while being systematically stripped of their Indigenous identities and traditions.²⁴ The historical injustices faced by Indigenous people not only disrupt familial and community bonds but also contribute to ongoing disparities in health, education, and socio-economic status, ensuring that “[t]he past is not the past when it shapes the present so profoundly.”²⁵

The recent efforts toward Truth and Reconciliation are meaningful attempts at recognizing Indigenous history in Canada. But recognizing an unjust history, while being essential, does not necessitate action. However, recognizing an unjust present creates a moral imperative to rectify the wrongs being perpetuated. As Henry Huntington put succinctly, “injustice is not found only in history” and Canada cannot keep hiding behind its admittance of a harmful past to distract and detract from its harmful present.²⁶ It must recognize and seek to rectify the harmful present in which Indigenous People face disproportionately higher rates of substance abuse, suicide, poverty and poor health.²⁷ Taking decisive action to address the present issues will demonstrate a level of commitment to Indigenous reconciliation that can ensure Canada’s liberal, humanitarian, and internationalist identity becomes real rather than rhetorical.

This paper seeks to ensure that Canada's foreign policy operates within a rectified domestic framework to respect Indigeneity. For Canada to move beyond its moral posturing and uphold the ideals of humanitarianism, diversity, multiculturalism, and equality that it espouses, it must reconcile its rhetoric with substantive actions in regard to its Indigenous population. The value and validity of Indigenous perspectives and experiences must be incorporated in

²⁴ The Lancet, “The Past Is Not the Past for Canada’s Indigenous Peoples,” *The Lancet* 397, no. 10293 (June 2021): 2439.

²⁵ The Lancet, “The Past Is Not the Past for Canada’s Indigenous Peoples,” 2439.

²⁶ Henry P. Huntington, “What Do Land Acknowledgments Acknowledge?,” *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 63, no. 4 (2nd July, 2021): 32.

²⁷ Huntington, “What Do Land Acknowledgments Acknowledge?,” 32.

decision-making processes and cooperation should be a central principle for collective action. This allows Canada to acknowledge that it is a country of diverse nations in which cooperation and engagement necessitates a commitment to incorporating Indigenous voices and respecting the legitimacy of Indigenous self-governance.

By promoting domestic Indigenous political autonomy, Canada will demonstrate its commitment and ability to engage in genuine dialogue and cooperation with diverse nations beyond its borders. Increased cooperation as well as acknowledgement and engagement with its Indigenous communities will illustrate Canada's ability to engage with global trends that challenge liberal democratic values, rather than dismissing them as illegitimate. Cultivating a cultural ethos rooted in mutual respect instead of ideological condemnation allows Canada to enhance its international reputation and credibility, forge stronger, respected alliances with other nations, and increase its soft power capabilities.

Case Study #1: Economic Diversification

By: Shifa Chaudhary & Paul de Moras

Introduction

Dependency in international trade is not simply a transactional relationship; it is a structural vulnerability that can dictate national policy and magnify external shocks. As such, when Donald Trump suggested Canada should become America's "51st state," he prompted a sobering realization: Canada must diversify its economy away from the United States. With 77% of Canadian exports flowing south across a single border, amounting to roughly \$2.5B worth of goods daily, the nation is effectively tethered to the whims of the U.S..²⁸ While its long-held position as "Junior Partner" of the U.S. may have been historically beneficial due to economic and geopolitical realities, Canada now finds itself at an inflection point as the world enters a new stage of multipolarity. Trump's 25% tariff on Canada, the epitome of his 'America First' agenda that replaces international cooperation based on longstanding liberal internationalist structures with aggressive protectionism, directly threatens the integrated supply chains that define Canada-U.S. trade relations. With severe implications for Canadian industry, especially the automotive sector, the 25% tariff will significantly reduce both domestic and international demand, force businesses to downsize or close, trigger widespread supply chain disruptions, and accelerate inflation.²⁹ Moreover, with one in five Canadian jobs directly or indirectly dependent on trade, this economic disruption could result in the catastrophic loss of up to 1.5 million jobs nationwide.³⁰ If Canada retaliates with tariffs, it risks escalating into a full-scale trade war

²⁸ Congressional Research Service, *U.S.-Canada Trade Relations*, January, 2024, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12595>.

²⁹ Bank of Canada, *Monetary Policy Report* (29 January, 2025), <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/publications/mpr/mpr-2025-01-29/>.

³⁰ Ivey Business School, "Ask the Experts: Trump's 25% Tariff Plan," *Ivey Impact*, 28 November, 2024, <https://www.ivey.uwo.ca/impact/read/2024/11/ask-the-experts-trumps-25-tariff-plan/>.

potentially triggering a recession.³¹ With no functional international oversight body to mediate, tensions with the U.S. would likely intensify.

As China builds its BRI, India emerges as an economic powerhouse, and Europe struggles to find alternatives to Russia's natural resources, Canada's infrastructure points stubbornly southward, with ports underutilized, East-West connections underdeveloped, and vast mineral and energy resources laying largely captive to a single market. However, this moment of vulnerability also presents an opportunity for Canada to reimagine itself as an independent force in an emerging multipolar order. From Europe's urgent need for energy security to Asia's growing appetite for critical minerals, and from Africa's infrastructure ambitions to South America's resource partnerships, alternative pathways are available. Canada must seize this moment to fundamentally restructure its trade relationships and infrastructure, leveraging its unique advantages to build resilient global partnerships and ensure economic independence from the U.S.. By strategically deploying its resource wealth through expanded mineral processing facilities, modernized energy export infrastructure, and targeted trade agreements across the Indo-Pacific, Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, Canada can transform into a sovereign supplier of critical resources to nations seeking alternatives to both Chinese supply chains and Russian energy dependence.

Historical Context

From the British conquest of New France in 1760 until the outbreak of the First World War, Canada's economy was firmly tied to that of Britain; in 1900, British investment accounted for over 80% of all foreign capital in Canada and Britain was the destination for over half of all

³¹ Bank of Canada, *Monetary Policy Report* (29 January, 2025).

Canadian exports.³² This imperial connection began shifting dramatically during the First World War when Britain's financial strain forced it to liquidate Canadian investments, creating a vacuum that American capital quickly filled.³³ By 1922, America surpassed Britain as Canada's largest investor, and by 1929, American imports dominated nearly 70% of Canadian commodity imports.³⁴ The shift accelerated during the Second World War through unprecedented coordination of industrial production, establishing joint economic boards and creating lasting continental supply chains that would define post-war relations.³⁵ This industrial integration manifested in trade patterns, with over 80% of Canada's imports coming from the U.S. by 1943-44, while traditional economic ties to Britain weakened significantly.³⁶

The post-Second World War era marked the logical continuation of this fundamental transformation in Canada's economic orientation. By 1965, American capital commanded roughly four-fifths of all foreign investment in Canada, while bilateral trade with the U.S. had expanded to account for over 60% of Canada's total international commerce.³⁷ This period was distinct from earlier eras of economic dependency not just because of the scale of American involvement, but its character. Unlike Britain's earlier dominance, American economic influence penetrated deeply into Canada's industrial structure.³⁸ This restructured Canadian economy was exemplified by treaties like the 1965 Auto Pact that allowed for duty-free trade in vehicles and parts between the two countries, effectively creating an integrated continental auto industry.³⁹ Similar patterns of integration emerged in other sectors, from electronics to consumer goods,

³² Gregory P. Marchildon, "From Pax Britannica to Pax Americana and Beyond," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* no. 538 (1995): 153-156.

³³ Marchildon, "From Pax Britannica to Pax Americana and Beyond," 153-159.

³⁴ Marchildon, "From Pax Britannica to Pax Americana and Beyond," 153-159.

³⁵ Myron J. Frankman, "North American Economic Cooperation: The Wartime Experience," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 16, no. 32 (1991): 40-50.

³⁶ Frankman, "North American Economic Cooperation: The Wartime Experience," 40-50.

³⁷ Marchildon, "From Pax Britannica to Pax Americana," 160-163.

³⁸ Marchildon, "From Pax Britannica to Pax Americana," 160-163.

³⁹ Marchildon, "From Pax Britannica to Pax Americana," 160-163.

creating what economists termed a “branch plant” economy: Canadian manufacturing facilities essentially operating as extensions of American corporate entities.⁴⁰ This arrangement remains largely in effect today and continues to serve as the foundation of Canadian-American trade and diplomacy.

Canadian policymakers were not blind to the potential vulnerabilities this dependency created, and there were several attempts from the 1960s through the early 1980s to reduce Canada’s dependence on the U.S.. The John Diefenbaker government, for example, pursued wheat sales to communist China in the late 1950s and early 1960s despite American criticisms.⁴¹ Simultaneously, it would also attempt to embark on a “Trade Crusade” aiming to redirect 15% of Canada's imports from the U.S. to Britain—a policy that ironically sought to revive aspects of the declining British connection to balance American influence.⁴² However, it was under Pierre Trudeau's government that resistance to American economic dominance reached its apex. After declaring in 1971 that the U.S. was a "danger to our national identity from a cultural, economic and perhaps even military point of view", partly in response to Richard Nixon’s tariffs, Pierre Trudeau’s 1972 "Third Option" policy represented the most comprehensive attempt to reduce Canadian dependency. It sought to develop stronger economic ties with Europe and Japan while simultaneously strengthening domestic industrial capacity.⁴³ This strategy was implemented through increasingly interventionist policies including the creation of the Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA) in 1973 to screen foreign takeovers, the establishment of Petro-Canada

⁴⁰ Marchildon, “From Pax Britannica to Pax Americana,” 160-163.

⁴¹ Greg Donaghy and Michael D. Stevenson, “The Limits of Alliance: Cold War Solidarity and Canadian Wheat Exports to China, 1950-1963,” *Agricultural History* 83, no. 1 (2009): 38–40.

⁴² Diefenbaker Canada Centre. “The Crown in Canada.” University of Saskatchewan, Accessed 11 March, 2025, <https://diefenbaker.usask.ca/>.

⁴³ Robert Bothwell and J. L. Granatstein, *Trudeau’s World Insiders Reflect on Foreign Policy, Trade, and Defence, 1968-84* (UBC Press, 2016), 254-263.

as a state-owned oil company in 1975, and the National Energy Program of 1980, which attempted to assert Canadian control over the strategic energy sector.⁴⁴

Yet these policies, despite their ambition, failed to fundamentally alter Canada's economic or diplomatic position. Canadian-American economic integration only deepened as bilateral trade and continental manufacturing supply chains became more entrenched.⁴⁵ As such, Canada's economic sovereignty remains today, as it has been for the last hundred years, extremely vulnerable to American policy shifts. In the past, diplomatic relationships and multilateral frameworks served as critical buffers to resolve the worst of these disagreements. For example, when Nixon (1971) imposed a 10% surcharge on imports, or when Bush (2002) and Trump (2018) targeted Canadian steel and aluminum with tariffs, Canada relied heavily on institutional mechanisms and negotiated exemptions to protect its economy.⁴⁶ Today, however, this protective framework is rapidly eroding as the U.S. is actively undermining the WTO and threatening to dismantle established trade agreements, presenting Canada with an unprecedented challenge.

Avenues of Expansion

The historical evolution of Canada's economic dependency has resulted in a trade distribution that remains overwhelmingly skewed toward the U.S., with limited economic engagement elsewhere. This imbalance is quantified in current trade figures: a mere 7% of exports reach Europe, 12% go to Asia, 2.26% to Latin America, and less than 2% to Africa and the Middle East.⁴⁷ Despite growing recognition of this vulnerability over the past two decades,

⁴⁴ Marchildon, "From Pax Britannica to Pax Americana," 160-163.

⁴⁵ Marchildon, "From Pax Britannica to Pax Americana," 160-164.

⁴⁶ Davis Forster, "President Trump's 2018 Tariffs on Steel," *Sigma: Journal of Political and International Studies* 39, no. 1 (2022), 72.

⁴⁷ Global Affairs Canada, *Highlights of Canada's Merchandise Trade Performance – 2023 Update*, Government of Canada, 2023.

resulting in 13 free trade agreements outside North America, Canada has failed to meaningfully reduce its structural dependence on American markets. While these agreements symbolize an intention to diversify, they have largely served as diplomatic gestures rather than effective economic pivots. Building on the historical patterns that have created this dependency, this paper will examine regional opportunities where Canada can leverage its comparative advantages to create substantive economic alternatives. The following section evaluates existing trade capacities across key regions, identifies strategic advantages Canada possesses in each market, and outlines targeted approaches to strengthen economic relationships that could counterbalance the century-long gravitational pull toward American economic dominance.

Europe

One of Canada's most ambitious trade diversification efforts is the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), signed in 2017. By eliminating 98% of tariffs on goods and services, CETA granted Canadian businesses access to the EU's \$18 trillion economy.⁴⁸ Since its provisional application, Canada's exports to the EU have surged by 46.4%, with notable increases in mineral ores (+131%), base metals (+143%), energy (+70%), and fertilizers (+225%).⁴⁹ The agreement has also helped boost Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), particularly in pharmaceuticals, green technology, and financial services.⁵⁰ There has been significant demand for Canadian raw mineral exports to Europe, however, logistical challenges

<https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/assets/pdfs/economist-economiste/analysis-analyse/annual-trade-report-2023-en.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Government of Canada, "CETA Explained," *Global Affairs Canada*, accessed 10 March, 2025, https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/ceta-aecg/ceta_exp_lained-aecg_apercu.aspx?lang=eng.

⁴⁹ European Commission, "Factsheet: EU-Canada Trade Agreement (CETA)," *European Commission - Directorate-General for Trade*, https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/canada/eu-canada-agreement/factsheets-and-guides/factsheet-eu-canada-trade-agreement-ceta_en.

⁵⁰ European Commission, "Factsheet: EU-Canada Trade Agreement (CETA)."

restrict CETA's benefits, highlighting Canada's infrastructure deficiencies.⁵¹ Given CETA's success in boosting exports of key Canadian resources, expanding trade with the EU should be a logical priority, particularly as European partners actively seek to strengthen economic ties with Canada. As both Europe and Canada confront declining U.S. reliability, their shared democratic values and complementary economic needs create a strategic opportunity to reinforce stability within the liberal internationalist order while reducing mutual dependencies on increasingly volatile American markets.

Energy is a key area that Canada should capitalize on, particularly as the EU's imports of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) have increased by 66% year-over-year in response to the Russo-Ukrainian war.⁵² With Canada being the fifth-largest producer of natural gas globally and the EU seeking to reduce its dependence on Russian energy, Canada is presented with an opportunity to expand its role in the European energy market,⁵³ yet has largely failed to capitalize on this potential due to infrastructure deficits.⁵⁴ As Europe seeks to reduce its dependence on Russian energy, there is heightened interest in securing LNG from partners like Canada. Beyond energy, the EU's need for base metals, battery materials, rare earths, and other critical minerals is expected to surge as it transitions away from fossil fuels and scales up clean energy infrastructure.⁵⁵ This aligns with EU objectives to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 to achieve climate neutrality.⁵⁶ Canada must now seize this opportunity by negotiating new trade agreements, including more bilateral deals with specific EU countries, and expanding

⁵¹ Mahyar Jahangiriesmaili et al., "Assessment of Canada's Transportation System under the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement," *Transportation Research Record* 2672, no. 11 (2018): 10–18.

⁵² Ben McWilliams et al., "The EU Can Manage Without Russian Liquefied Natural Gas," *Bruegel Policy Brief*, 2023, 3, <https://www.bruegel.org/policy-brief/eu-can-manage-without-russian-liquefied-natural-gas>.

⁵³ McWilliams et al., "The EU Can Manage Without Russian Liquefied Natural Gas," 3.

⁵⁴ Council of the European Union, *Where Does the EU's Gas Come From?*, 31 January, 2025, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/where-does-the-eu-s-gas-come-from/>.

⁵⁵ Council of the European Union, "Critical Raw Materials," *European Council*, accessed 10 March, 2025, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/critical-raw-materials/>.

⁵⁶ Council of the European Union, "Critical Raw Materials."

its infrastructure to secure a position as a key supplier of critical resources and energy for Europe's green transition. Strengthening trade ties with Europe would not only deepen economic relations with an important ally but also reinforce Canada's role in maintaining a balance of power within the Western bloc.

Indo-Pacific

Similar to its European trade relationships, Canada's commerce with East Asia remains predominantly resource-based, operating through diplomatic and trade frameworks established by the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy. While the CPTPP, in effect since 2018, links Canada with 10 Asia-Pacific economies representing 13.5% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP),⁵⁷ Its effectiveness has been hampered by the U.S. withdrawal in 2017, which diminished member countries' incentives for deeper integration.⁵⁸ The surging Asian demand for energy resources and critical minerals presents a significant opportunity for Canada to leverage its comparative advantages in LNG, uranium, potash, and mineral production—sectors specifically targeted in Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, which commits \$2.3B over five years to expand diplomatic and commercial presence across the region.⁵⁹ Despite these initiatives and ambitious targets to increase overseas exports by 50% by 2025, infrastructure deficiencies continue to limit Canada's ability to capitalize on these growing markets, regardless of ongoing efforts to negotiate new trade agreements with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members and support Canadian businesses in strategic sectors.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Government of Canada, "CPTPP Explained," *Global Affairs Canada*, accessed 10 March, 2025, https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/cptpp-ptpgp/cptpp-explained-ptpgp_apercu.aspx?lang=eng.

⁵⁸ Matthew P. Goodman, "From TPP to CPTPP," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, (March 8, 2018), 1.

⁵⁹ Global Affairs Canada, *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy*, Government of Canada, September 3, 2024, <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/indo-pacific-indo-pacifique/index.aspx?lang=eng>.

⁶⁰ Government of Canada, "Uranium and Nuclear Power Facts," *Natural Resources Canada*, accessed 10 March, 2025.

Among the states in the region, Japan and South Korea stand out as established economic partners with significant growth potential. Japan, as Canada's fourth-largest trading partner globally, maintains a robust bilateral merchandise trade relationship valued at over \$25B.⁶¹ Canadian exports to Japan, which reached \$13.4B in 2023, are heavily concentrated in natural resources, notably agricultural products, metals and minerals, and forestry products.⁶² The CPTPP has strengthened this relationship by eliminating or phasing out tariffs on critical Canadian exports, including canola oil, beef, and certain areas of the lumber industry.⁶³ Canada's trade relationship with South Korea, its seventh-largest merchandise trading partner, is similarly structured, with the nation buying upwards of \$7B worth of Canadian goods mostly consisting of mineral fuels and oils, mineral ores, meat products, and wood pulp.⁶⁴ These exports, which have grown roughly 200% over the last quarter of a decade, are likely to increase even further due to the Canada-Korea Free Trade Agreement (CKFTA) signed in 2014 and recent investments by several major South Korean firms in Ontario and Quebec.⁶⁵ Despite these promising relationships, Canada's ability to fully capitalize on the need for raw materials and energy in these markets remains severely constrained by inadequate domestic infrastructure, deficiencies that must be addressed through strategic investments as detailed in subsequent sections.

<https://natural-resources.canada.ca/minerals-mining/mining-data-statistics-analysis/minerals-metals-facts/uranium-nuclear-power-facts>.

⁶¹ Observatory of Economic Complexity, "Canada: Trade Balance, Exports and Imports by Country and Region," accessed 11 March, 2025, <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/can>.

⁶² Observatory of Economic Complexity, "Canada: Trade Balance, Exports and Imports by Country and Region."

⁶³ Global Affairs Canada, "Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) – Japan," accessed 11 March, 2025, <https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/cptpp-ptpgp/index.aspx?lang=eng>.

⁶⁴ Global Affairs Canada, "Canada–Republic of Korea Relations," accessed March 11, 2025, https://www.international.gc.ca/country-pays/republic_korea-republique_coree/rerelations.aspx?lang=eng

⁶⁵ Global Affairs Canada, "Canada–Republic of Korea Relations."

People's Republic of China

Of all the potential trade markets available to Canada, the largest and most controversial potential option for economic diversification is China. With China's massive population and growing industrial base constantly demanding raw materials, Canada's abundance of these resources positions it to potentially profit significantly from exports. At the moment, China is Canada's second-largest trading partner, with bilateral merchandise trade reaching \$47B in 2024, despite trade between the two countries having declined significantly since 2023.⁶⁶ Canadian exports to China have been dominated by commodities, with canola ranking as the top export, followed by coal, wood pulp, iron, and copper, the latter showing 57.63% growth year-over-year due to China's green technology investments.⁶⁷ In return, Canada primarily imports manufactured goods from China, including cell phones, computers, vehicle parts, and passenger vehicles, items that the country increasingly requires.⁶⁸ Thus, on paper, China appears to be an ideal partner for a Canadian effort to diversify its economy from the U.S., presenting a large market for goods Canada has in abundance, while simultaneously being able to provide it with cheap technology for the domestic market.

However, Canada's relationship with China faces significant challenges, both economic and political, that make improving relations a difficult and potentially undesirable task. For one, the existing relationship is based on a substantial trade deficit as the total value of Canada's imports from China is about three times that of its exports.⁶⁹ This deficit makes Canada more reliant on Chinese goodwill than the reverse, especially since Russia offers it a viable alternative

⁶⁶ Joe Cash, "China Hits Back at Canada with Fresh Agriculture Tariffs," *Reuters*, 8 March, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/china-announces-retaliatory-tariffs-some-canada-farm-food-products-2025-03-08/>.

⁶⁷ Daniel Lincoln, "Canada-China Trade: Q2 2024," *The China Institute*, (November 14, 2024), <https://www.ualberta.ca/en/china-institute/research/analysis-briefs/2024/2024-q2.html>.

⁶⁸ Lincoln, "Canada-China Trade: Q2 2024."

⁶⁹ Lincoln, "Canada-China Trade: Q2 2024."

to many Canadian goods.⁷⁰ As such, China has not shied away from using its economic leverage against Canada when it so desires, particularly following Canada's 2018 detention of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou at American request, which led to China's retaliatory detention of two Canadian citizens for nearly three years.⁷¹ This hostage diplomacy, coupled with Canadian criticisms of China's policies in the South China Sea, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong, has contributed to a sharp decline in relations.⁷² The deterioration continued with China's 2023 anti-dumping investigation into Canadian canola imports, threatening a trade worth \$3.7B annually and affecting more than half of Canada's total canola exports, and China's 2025 announcement of retaliatory tariffs on over \$2.6B worth of Canadian agricultural products following Canada's 100% levy on Chinese electric vehicles.⁷³

Despite the natural complementarity between Chinese demand and Canadian resources, deepening economic ties with China would be strategically counterproductive given the existing trade imbalance and Beijing's demonstrated willingness to weaponize economic relationships to advance its geopolitical objectives. Canada must therefore strike a careful balance, maintaining necessary economic engagement while implementing strategic guardrails to protect its sovereignty and values. The key to finding this balance lies in infrastructure development that would allow Canada to better leverage its resource advantages and reduce dependency by enabling more efficient export of energy products and critical minerals. The recent completion of the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion has already demonstrated this potential, with Alberta's

⁷⁰ Daisy Xu, Cindy Liang, and Oceana Zhou, "Russia to Increase Oil, Gas Exports to China in 2025 to Sustain Income: Tsinghua," *S&P Global*, (December 12, 2024), <https://www.spglobal.com/commodity-insights/en/news-research/latest-news/crude-oil/121324-russia-to-increase-oil-gas-exports-to-china-in-2025-to-sustain-income-tsinghua>.

⁷¹ Preston Lim, "Sino-Canadian Relations in the Age of Justin Trudeau," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 26, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 32-34.

⁷² Lim, "Sino-Canadian Relations," 25-27.

⁷³ Joe Cash, "China Hits Back at Canada with Fresh Agriculture Tariffs," *Reuters*, 8 March, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/china-announces-retaliatory-tariffs-some-canada-farm-food-products-2025-03-08/>.

petroleum exports to China reaching \$593.13M in early 2024, creating an opportunity to significantly alter the trade deficit if properly expanded.⁷⁴

India

As the world's most populous nation and democracy, India presents Canada with a tantalizing yet frustrating opportunity. Canadian exports to India have surged to \$6.85B in 2023, growing at roughly 12.5% annually.⁷⁵ This flourishing trade depends on a foundation of agreements covering everything from nuclear cooperation to education, potentially paving the way for significant economic and political collaboration as both nations navigate an increasingly multipolar world.⁷⁶ Yet, this economic promise is now held hostage by deteriorating diplomatic relations. The bitter dispute over the Khalistan movement has harmed bilateral ties resulting in frozen negotiations, suspended dialogues, and looming threats of Indian economic retaliation against vital Canadian exports.⁷⁷ The diplomatic impasse comes at a particularly inopportune moment, as India's rapidly expanding industrial base and energy initiatives have generated significant demand for critical minerals, clean energy technologies, and fossil fuel resources that Canada possesses in abundance but currently lacks the infrastructure to supply at scale.

Despite these issues, Canada possesses powerful levers to restore relations, including its Commonwealth ties, shared parliamentary traditions, and the substantial influence of 1.3 million Indian-Canadians who form a vital cultural bridge between the two democracies.⁷⁸ By utilizing these existing ties, Canada could build upon its longstanding foreign policy dialogues with India and potentially create a specialized joint working group focused specifically on addressing

⁷⁴ Daniel Lincoln, "Canada-China Trade: Q2 2024."

⁷⁵ Observatory of Economic Complexity, "Trade Between India and Canada," accessed March 11, 2025, <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/ind/partner/can>.

⁷⁶ Global Affairs Canada, "Canada–India Relations," accessed March 11, 2025, <https://www.international.gc.ca/country-pays/india-inde/relations.aspx?lang=eng>.

⁷⁷ Soutik Biswas, "India-Canada Row: How Ties Hit Rock Bottom between the Two Countries," *BBC News*, October 15, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c89lne2k87vo>.

⁷⁸ Global Affairs Canada, "Canada–India Relations," accessed March 11, 2025.

security concerns. In doing so, the two states could engage in diplomatic discussions regarding mutual security concerns with the goal of establishing a framework that acknowledges both states' sovereignty and security interests. Such a dialogue, while challenging to implement, represents an important pathway toward potentially improving relations, encouraging the counteraction of democratic backsliding, and opening up the resource-hungry Indian economy to substantial Canadian exports. Without such a diplomatic first step, however, India will remain more of an economic mirage than a meaningful alternative to American markets, particularly since infrastructure limitations further constrain the amount of raw materials and natural resources Canada can export to the developing economy.

Middle East and Africa

In contrast to the regions and countries previously discussed, Canada's trade presence in the Middle East and Africa remains marginal, reflecting both limited agreements and performative trade expansion efforts. This untapped potential is particularly evident in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, comprising Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman.⁷⁹ With its high economic growth, strong consumer purchasing power, significant infrastructure development projects, and explicit interest in Canadian expertise—such as energy technologies, machinery, nuclear equipment, technical services—the GCC offers substantial diversification potential.⁸⁰ Though Canada already exports agricultural products, aircraft, and industrial machinery to these nations, the absence of a formalized trade agreement continues to impede market access and investment partnerships that could substantially expand its regional economic footprint.

⁷⁹ Canadian Trade Commissioner Service, *Overview of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, December 2010), 1, <https://www.international.gc.ca/commerce/assets/pdfs/gcc-overview.pdf>.

⁸⁰ Canadian Trade Commissioner Service, *Overview of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)*, 1.

Canada's trade engagement in Africa is even more minimal, largely constrained by the absence of comprehensive trade agreements and a historical legacy of aligning with imperialist economic structures that prioritized extraction over equitable exchange. To break from this exploitative model, Canada must restructure its engagement with the continent through a decolonial framework, emphasizing mutually beneficial partnerships that prioritize African economic sovereignty. By focusing on value-added industries, promoting technology transfer, and supporting industrialization efforts, Canada can strengthen its economic presence in the region without reinforcing extractive economic practices of the past.⁸¹ In this context, Canada's mineral resources could catalyze technological development within Africa, especially when paired with bilateral agreements that deepen engagement with regional trade frameworks like the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), offering a path toward a more just and balanced economic relationship.

Infrastructure challenges, however, present major barriers to realizing the opportunities in both regions. While the GCC is rapidly modernizing its infrastructure to support high economic growth and consumer demand, persistent logistical bottlenecks, primarily limited transport connectivity, could undercut the efficient deployment of Canadian expertise to the region. Meanwhile, in Africa, infrastructure deficiencies are even more deeply entrenched. To address these issues, Canada must leverage the GCC's dynamic development projects to pilot advanced energy and machinery solutions while simultaneously working collaboratively with African nations to modernize critical infrastructure. Such an approach would address the vulnerabilities that currently limit trade potential across both regions, opening up new markets for Canadian

⁸¹ Global Affairs Canada. *Canada's Strategy for Africa*. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2023. <https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/publications/transparency-transparence/canada-africa-strategy-strategie-afrique.aspx?lang=eng>.

goods and expertise while fostering sustainable, long-term partnerships that move beyond traditional resource extraction.

Latin America

Building on the discussion of infrastructure challenges in other regions, Canada's similarly limited trade presence in Latin America nevertheless offers substantial opportunities for deeper engagement. The Pacific Alliance, comprising Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, serves as Canada's primary gateway to the region, accounting for 77% of trade and 73% of investments.⁸² Since becoming an Observer State in 2012 and an Associated State in 2017, Canada has deepened cooperation in trade, education, innovation, and climate action with these nations, presenting a potential pathway for expanding its economic footprint.⁸³ While Latin America's position as a global leader in resource exports reduces its need for Canadian raw materials, Canada can leverage its strengths in technology, clean energy, infrastructure, and digital transformation to enhance its regional presence.⁸⁴

Mexico exemplifies this potential for deeper bilateral engagement within the Pacific Alliance. As Canada's third-largest single-country trading partner and long-time collaborator through Canada-US-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) frameworks, Mexico serves as a model for how targeted technological partnerships can yield mutual benefits. Mexico's expanding renewable energy sector and growing manufacturing base create natural complementarities with Canadian technological expertise and investment capabilities—exactly the kind of relationship Canada should pursue with other Latin

⁸² Government of Canada, *Canada and the Pacific Alliance*, Global Affairs Canada, accessed 27 March, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/pacific_alliance-alliance_pacifique/index.aspx?lang=eng.

⁸³ Government of Canada, *Canada and the Pacific Alliance*.

⁸⁴ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), *Circularity Gap Report: Latin America and the Caribbean*, accessed March 11, 2025, <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/circularity-gap-report-latin-america-and-caribbean>.

American nations.⁸⁵ By applying this targeted approach throughout the region, Canada can establish itself as an essential development partner across Latin America while moving toward greater economic diversification.

Introduction to Infrastructure

The regional opportunities outlined across Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and emerging markets reveal a consistent pattern: while Canada has established preliminary trade frameworks through agreements like CETA and CPTPP, it lacks the ability to process, transport, and export its abundant natural wealth beyond the continental market. Transforming Canada from America's resource hinterland into a sovereign global supplier therefore requires three strategic infrastructure investments: developing domestic mineral processing to break dependency on foreign refinement; constructing coastal energy export facilities to access premium global markets; and implementing targeted domestic incentivization policies to boost industrial capacity and technological innovation while attracting strategic foreign investment in key sectors.

Mineral Extraction

Global demand for critical minerals has surged in recent years, intensifying competition for lithium, cobalt, nickel, graphite, rare earth elements (REEs), and uranium. For the Global North, securing these resources is not just about sustainability as it is also a geostrategic move to maintain technological dominance and energy independence. Meanwhile, emerging economies like India, Brazil, and Indonesia see them as vital for industrial growth, infrastructure development, and energy security, particularly in the fields of nuclear and renewable energy. This demand has reshaped global trade alliances, giving resource-rich nations unprecedented bargaining power. China, which controls nearly 60% of global rare earth mining output and 85%

⁸⁵ Government of Canada, *Canada-Mexico Relations*, Global Affairs Canada, accessed 11 March, 2025. <https://www.international.gc.ca/country-pays/mexico-mexique/relations.aspx?lang=eng>.

processing capacity, dominates the supply of minerals critical for defense, semiconductors, and renewable energy. This near-monopoly strengthens Beijing's grip on global supply chains, exposing the West's growing vulnerability in securing long-term access to these strategic resources.⁸⁶

Canada, as a leading supplier of over 60 critical minerals, is uniquely positioned to counterbalance these supply chain dependencies. With the world's largest potash reserves, second-largest uranium deposits, and a top-five ranking in nickel and aluminum production, Canada's mineral wealth has become increasingly indispensable to advanced economies for both urban development and industrial technology.⁸⁷ Uranium, in particular, is set to experience a 51% surge in demand over the next decade as states transition away from carbon-intensive energy sources.⁸⁸ The combination of its high energy output, minimal carbon footprint, lower marginal costs, and scalable applications in clean power generation has established uranium as a cornerstone of global energy security—an area where Canada's abundant reserves provide exceptional leverage.⁸⁹

A key weakness in Canada's mineral strategy is its underdeveloped processing and refining infrastructure, which forces much of its raw material output to be exported for processing abroad, primarily in the U.S. and Europe. This extraction-heavy model not only reduces Canada's economic returns but also creates strategic vulnerabilities, making it dependent on foreign nations for value-added processing and enrichment. In the uranium sector, for

⁸⁶ Tristan Kenderdine, "China's Role in Supplying Critical Minerals for the Global Energy Transition," *Brookings Institution*, July 2022.
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/chinas-role-in-supplying-critical-minerals-for-the-global-energy-transition-what-could-the-future-hold/>.

⁸⁷ Government of Canada, *Canadian Critical Minerals Strategy*, accessed 11 March, 2025.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/critical-minerals-in-canada/canadian-critical-minerals-strategy.html>.

⁸⁸ World Nuclear Association, *Uranium Markets*, accessed 11 March, 2025.
<https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/nuclear-fuel-cycle/uranium-resources/uranium-markets>.

⁸⁹ World Nuclear Association, *Uranium Markets*.

example, Canada extracts vast amounts of ore in Saskatchewan's Athabasca Basin, but exports much of it as yellowcake for enrichment elsewhere, preventing it from fully capitalizing on the nuclear energy supply chain. The slow pace of project development further compounds these challenges; delays in projects such as Ring of Fire (nickel, chromite), Nemaska Lithium (lithium), and Wheeler River (uranium) reveal structural inefficiencies in Canada's permitting processes, infrastructure capacity, and regulatory environment.⁹⁰ Moreover, these delays are exacerbated by inadequate engagement with Indigenous communities, whose territories have been subjected to historical land dispossession, through insufficient consultation processes and fractured state-community relationships. Without dedicated development initiatives and more efficient regulatory standards, long-term stagnation in mineral capacities will continue, undermining Canada's capacity to meet its surging mineral demand.

To address these structural weaknesses in Canada's mineral sector, a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability must guide development approaches. In line with the recommendations outlined in section four on Climate Change, In-Situ Recovery (ISR) offers a promising solution for extracting greater quantities of uranium, lithium, copper, and rare earth elements with significantly lower environmental impacts than conventional mining.⁹¹ Beyond improving extraction techniques, Canada must simultaneously invest in infrastructure to transition from simple resource extraction to value-added processing, capturing greater long-term economic value from its mineral wealth.

Achieving this transition requires strategic policies aimed at reducing reliance on foreign refining. This involves tying mineral exports to infrastructure investment commitments while securing FDI from Japan, South Korea, and the EU, economies that already depend heavily on

⁹⁰ Mining Association of Canada, *The Mining Story: Canadian Mining Industry Facts and Figures 2024*, 4 June, 2024. https://mining.ca/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2024/06/Facts-and-Figures-2023-FINAL-DIGITAL.pdf.

⁹¹ Mining Association of Canada, *The Mining Story: Canadian Mining Industry Facts and Figures 2024*.

Canadian minerals for EV batteries, semiconductors, and clean energy technologies. By offering tax incentives, equity stakes, and long-term supply agreements, Canada can motivate these strategic partners to co-finance domestic processing facilities, decreasing dependence on China-dominated supply chains. Additionally, expanding infrastructure financing through multilateral institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) would complement these bilateral arrangements by supporting the development of crucial transport corridors, refining hubs, and export infrastructure. Together, these coordinated investments would strengthen Canada's position in global critical mineral supply chains and secure its role as a dominant supplier in the clean energy economy.

Oil and Gas Exports: Refineries and Ports

In addition to significantly improving its mineral extraction and refining capabilities, Canada must develop the necessary infrastructure to effectively leverage its oil and gas industry on the international market if it seeks to diversify its economy. In 2023, a staggering 97% of all Canadian crude oil exports were directed to the U.S., representing approximately 16% of Canada's total export value.⁹² Given Canada's record-high crude oil production, of which over 80% is exported, the country's heavy reliance on trade with the U.S. poses a substantial economic risk while also limiting its ability to fully capitalize on the value of its resources.⁹³ Crucially, Western Canadian crude oil, primarily sourced from Alberta's oil sands, is consistently sold to American refineries at prices substantially discounted from global benchmarks.⁹⁴ The economic consequences of these price discounts are substantial; the Fraser Institute estimates

⁹² Canada Energy Regulator, "Market Snapshot: Almost All Canadian Crude Oil Exports Went to the United States in 2023," Government of Canada, 20 August, 2024, <https://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/en/data-analysis/energy-markets/market-snapshots/2024/market-snapshot-almost-all-canadian-crude-oil-exports-went-to-the-united-states-in-2023.html>.

⁹³ Canada Energy Regulator, "Market Snapshot".

⁹⁴ Gerry Angevine, *The Canadian Oil Transport Conundrum* (Fraser Institute, September 2013), 25-30, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/canadian-oil-transport-conundrum-rev.pdf>.

that the annual losses of these discounted oil prices during that period translated to approximately \$17B per year.⁹⁵ While the price of oil has since significantly decreased, given that total oil production has increased by over 40%, this number is likely to still be significant.⁹⁶

This substantial discount is a direct consequence of Canada's inadequate export infrastructure, underscoring the unfortunate reality that its extensive oil reserves remain effectively landlocked. These losses not only impact oil producers and the wellbeing of the close to 150,000 Canadians involved in the industry, but also significantly reduce government revenues through lower royalties and taxes, as both Alberta's and Saskatchewan's royalty structures are tied to oil prices.⁹⁷ To address this dependence, Canada must undertake several significant investments in the industry, including developing coastal areas and pipeline infrastructure, improving its refinement capabilities, and improving its transportation system. Without these critical measures, the country will continue to face economic losses, limiting growth opportunities and weakening its competitive position in the global energy market.

Developing coastal access points for Canadian oil exports is one of the most contentious yet strategically vital components of the nation's economic diversification agenda. Currently, only a single pipeline, the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline, moves oil out of the Western Canadian Sedimentary Basin to the Pacific coast and its capacity is severely constrained. In an ideal scenario, Canada would complete comprehensive pipeline projects to both the East and West coasts, ensuring unfettered access to premium Asian and European markets that offer higher prices than those available in the U.S. Midwest.⁹⁸ However, this ambitious infrastructure

⁹⁵ Angevine, *The Canadian Oil Transport Conundrum*, 25-30.

⁹⁶ "Oil and Natural Gas 101," CAPP, 27 January, 2025.

<https://www.capp.ca/en/oil-natural-gas-you/oil-natural-gas-canada/#how-much-oil-and-natural-gas-does-canada-produce><https://www.capp.ca/en/oil-natural-gas-you/oil-natural-gas-canada/#how-much-oil-and-natural-gas-does-canada-produce>

⁹⁷ Angevine, *The Canadian Oil Transport Conundrum*, 25-30.

⁹⁸ Angevine, *The Canadian Oil Transport Conundrum*, 5-22.

vision requires navigating a complex intersection of challenges: environmental impacts and climate change implications (detailed in the Climate Change section); interprovincial disagreements and domestic security concerns (explored in the National Security section); and the imperative for meaningful partnership with Indigenous nations whose traditional territories intersect with proposed development corridors (discussed in the Introduction). While not impossible, finding a compromise on this issue that satisfies all stakeholders would be incredibly difficult and time-consuming.

For this reason, Canada should seek less controversial short-term infrastructure goals while it works toward broader pipeline expansion consensus. Expanding port infrastructure represents one such pragmatic priority, particularly as Canada currently lacks adequate LNG export terminals on both Pacific and Atlantic coasts.⁹⁹ Developing these LNG export capabilities represents a massive economic opportunity. Reaching a production capacity of 30 million tonnes of LNG annually would generate over \$7.4B in economic growth and create approximately 65,000 jobs across the country.¹⁰⁰ Although major projects like the Port of Vancouver's Roberts Bank Terminal 2 expansion, projected to increase container capacity by 30% and enable \$100B in annual international trade, and Prince Rupert's Fairview Container Terminal expansion, intended to raise capacity to 1.8 million TEUs, represent steps in the right direction, both continue to face significant delays, limiting their immediate impact.¹⁰¹ Strategic development of

⁹⁹ Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP), *Canadian Oil and Gas Export Infrastructure*, January 2025. <https://www.capp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Canadian-Oil-and-Gas-Export-Infrastructure.pdf>.

¹⁰⁰ Natural Resources Canada, *Investing in Liquefied Natural Gas*, last modified 27 June, 2023. <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/energy-sources/fossil-fuels/investing-liquefied-natural-gas>.

¹⁰¹ *Port Authority Submits Roberts Bank Terminal 2 Permit Application to Fisheries and Oceans Canada*, Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, 28 October, 2024. <https://www.portvancouver.com/article/port-authority-submits-roberts-bank-terminal-2-permit-application-fisheries-and-oceans>; *Prince Rupert Port Expansion: Improving Canada's Ability to Move Critical Goods and Supplies*, Prince Rupert Port Authority, 2 February, 2022. <https://www.rupertport.com/prince-rupert-port-expansion-improving-canadas-ability-to-move-critical-goods-and-supplies/>.

ports, expansion of existing facilities, and enhancement of infrastructure would enable Canadian producers to handle increased oil and LNG export volumes to Asian, European, and other international markets, providing direct access to global markets where they could secure prices more closely aligned with international benchmarks rather than accepting discounted rates from a single market.

Beyond pipelines and ports, Canada must expand its refining capacity. Currently, Canada finds itself in a paradoxical situation where it exports vast quantities of crude oil to the U.S. only to reimport refined petroleum products at significantly higher prices, placing additional costs on the Canadian economy and furthering its dependence on the U.S.. The economic rationale for expanding refining capacity alone is compelling: refined petroleum products typically command a significant premium over crude oil inputs, while the expansion has the possibility of employing tens of thousands of high-skilled, high-wage jobs across the country.¹⁰² Furthermore, by integrating carbon capture technology with refining operations, Canada could market its refined products as lower-carbon alternatives compared to competitors.¹⁰³ The Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission's Sturgeon Refinery is an example of this in practice, generating \$273.4M in EBITDA in 2023-2024 whilst employing advanced carbon capturing technologies that mitigate its environmental impact.¹⁰⁴ Strategic investments in specialized refining technology would also significantly reduce vulnerability to U.S. policy changes and trade disputes, particularly relevant given recent tariff threats. Thus, this approach would substantially increase economic returns in a comparatively low-carbon manner, strengthening Canada's economic sovereignty while creating a more diversified energy sector.

¹⁰² Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission. *2024 Annual Report*. 30 May, 2024, 3-13, <https://www.apmc.ca/public/download/files/247620>.

¹⁰³ Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission. *2024 Annual Report*, 16.

¹⁰⁴ Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission. *2024 Annual Report*, 3.

Together, these infrastructure investments would fundamentally improve Canada's position in global energy markets while reducing its economic dependence on the U.S.. By expanding its port infrastructure and refining capabilities, Canada could significantly increase its export revenue, enhance economic growth, and strengthen its hand in future trade negotiations all without significantly harming the environment. Addressing the infrastructure deficit—while working toward consensus on pipeline expansion to both coasts—would thus convert Canada's current vulnerability into a strategic advantage, allowing more effective leveraging of its energy resources while building resilience against external shocks. While these changes would be expensive in the short-term, particularly when coupled with the necessary environmental safeguards to ensure sustainable development, this comprehensive approach would position Canada more favourably in the emerging multipolar energy landscape, significantly enhancing national sovereignty and prosperity.

Domestic Incentivization

Canada's primary economic challenge lies not in resource scarcity, but in the systematic underdevelopment of its domestic industrial capacity. To address this, the government should implement conditional crediting systems, such as tax breaks or subsidies, explicitly tied to infrastructure investments in domestic processing, advanced manufacturing, and technological innovation. These incentives would stimulate industrial growth while enhancing Canada's attractiveness as an investment destination and encouraging FDI in sectors that align with national economic priorities. A relevant precedent for this approach is China's Medium-Long Range Plan for Science and Technology, adopted in 2006, which successfully bolstered its manufacturing and technology sectors through a coordinated strategy of direct subsidies, preferential procurement policies for domestic producers, and targeted R&D investments aligned

with long-term development benchmarks.¹⁰⁵ By adopting a similar framework with a clear emphasis on strengthening domestic enterprises, Canada could mitigate economic vulnerabilities, foster self-sufficiency in key industries, and develop globally competitive national industries without excessive dependence on foreign capital.

Conclusion

During the post-Cold War era, American economic hegemony reshuffled global markets through a combination of overwhelming commercial power and institutional architecture that effectively locked nations into a liberal international order. This unipolar moment is now giving way to multipolar competition as China's rise provides alternative economic patronage networks, allowing smaller states to strategically leverage great power rivalries for more advantageous arrangements. In this environment, economic power underpins power transitions, with countries gravitating toward partners offering tangible economic benefits. By expanding mineral processing capabilities, developing coastal energy export infrastructure, and adopting state incentivized-based industrial policies to bolster domestic production, Canada can transform its natural resource wealth into a springboard for economic independence. These efforts, coupled with carefully targeted trade agreements across the Indo-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East, would diversify Canada's partnerships and fundamentally strengthen its position in a changing global order. Beyond merely protecting domestic interests, this strategic pivot would establish Canada as an essential resource partner for nations seeking secure supply chains outside existing power structures. Breaking free from its historical role as America's resource auxiliary, Canada must seize this pivotal moment to forge its own economic destiny as a

¹⁰⁵ Cong Cao, Richard Suttmeier, and Denis Fred, "China's 15-Year Science and Technology Plan," *Physics Today* 59 (2006), 39.

sovereign power capable of wielding its resource wealth to reshape geopolitical alliances and secure its place at the table where the future world order will be decided.

Case Study #2: Foreign Aid

By: Brendan Fox & Shaylee Talbot

Introduction

To position itself strongly in the emerging multipolar global order, Canada should reinvigorate its foreign aid program. As a “potential catalyst for development,” aid promotes international development and economic growth.¹⁰⁶ Improving its aid programs is a realistic and strategic way for Canada to establish a role as a humanitarian middle power in the changing global order. Canada can use foreign aid to create new allies and trading partners in the Global South, mitigate the influence of alternate aid providers—such as China and Russia—and fill the gap left by an increasingly isolationist U.S..

However, becoming a foreign aid leader does not simply entail increasing aid allocations. Neither Conservative or Liberal governments have increased aid allocations significantly since 2008, and the opposing parties have similar records of total aid funding despite divergent priorities in foreign policy.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, economic instability and American tariffs make it unlikely that the incoming government, whether Conservative or Liberal, will commit to increased aid funding. Instead, it is imperative for Canada to improve the effectiveness of its Official Development Assistance (ODA).¹⁰⁸ Foreign aid has long been an important part of Canadian foreign policy but has suffered from significant weaknesses in recent decades that have undermined its ability to promote development, alleviate poverty, and support human rights. Despite the continued inability of donor countries to meet the standards and objectives of international aid institutions, “more and more aid projects are succeeding in meeting their

¹⁰⁶ Roger Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 175.

¹⁰⁷ Brian Bow and David Black, “Does Politics Stop at the Water’s Edge in Canada? Party and Partisanship in Canadian Foreign Policy,” *International Journal* 64, no.1 (2008): 11.

¹⁰⁸ The emphasis of this section will be on ODA, since emergency assistance is often responsive and highly variable. The sections on MENA, Human Rights, and Climate Change will cover humanitarian and disaster assistance; Evelyne Goulet and Reid Groeneveld, *Canada’s Foreign Aid Policy Review*, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, (Ottawa, ON: I-Affairs Canada, January 2021), 1.

immediate objectives than in the past.”¹⁰⁹ If Canada follows modern aid criteria, its development assistance can achieve tremendous results. Thus, Canada does not need to challenge the status quo theories and institutions of foreign aid. Rather, by implementing existing international aid criteria into its programs, Canada can improve its aid in ways that will allow it to project leadership in the global order and pursue its international interests.

International Actors/Aid in the Multipolar World

The United Nations (UN)

Canada provides a significant portion of its aid through multilateral institutions, especially UN programmes (Figure 1). The UN oversees specialized, independent aid agencies including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as aid programmes and funds, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).¹¹⁰ Canadian contributions to these funds are crucial to its image as an international aid provider. By improving its own aid effectiveness, Canada can influence UN programs to adhere to similar frameworks and project its humanitarian leadership to the world stage.

United States of America

The U.S. has historically been one of the world’s largest aid donors. In the 2023 fiscal year, the U.S. allocated over \$68B to foreign aid.¹¹¹ However, their commitments are rapidly declining. Under Trump’s first term from 2016-2021, he began the process of reducing involvement in the international sphere through withdrawals in commitments such as the Paris Agreement of Climate Change, the nuclear deal with Iran, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership.¹¹² His continued withdrawals since being re-elected in 2025 have enlarged the void left in the

¹⁰⁹ Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, 181.

¹¹⁰ Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, 84.

¹¹¹ “FA.Gov,” Foreignassistance.gov, <https://foreignassistance.gov/>.

¹¹² C. Vinodan and Anju Lis Kurian, *US–China Relations in the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2023), 3.

international sphere by retreating American contributions, threatening the liberal international order and opening the door for other powers to expand their influence. Already, Trump's significant cuts to United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have undermined the global order and humanitarian efforts. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the World Food Programme, which previously received more than \$4B from the U.S., have been forced to make budget cuts, reduce their staff, and close offices.¹¹³ While the U.S. and Canada have shared many aid programs and objectives since the Cold War,¹¹⁴ Canada should diverge from America's isolationist foreign policy and pursue aid leadership.

People's Republic of China

China's developmental aspirations in the past decades has led to them becoming significant contributors to international development. Xi Jinping's BRI, announced in 2013, has become a major source of international development aid in many developing countries.¹¹⁵ The BRI's reach has extended across Eurasia and Africa, allowing China to fill the gap that the U.S. has left in these developing regions.

Chinese analysts describe the BRI as an initiative to "encourage peace as well as stability" via bilateral partnerships.¹¹⁶ However, many researchers in the Western sphere perceive the BRI as a method for pursuing global domination.¹¹⁷ In pursuing developmental aspirations in the Global South, they are advancing their own economic, political, and geopolitical interests, disguised by providing vital developmental aid.¹¹⁸ In doing so, they are establishing leverage

¹¹³ "World Food Programme to close office in southern Africa after Trump aid cuts," *The Guardian*, 3 March, 2025.

¹¹⁴ Marcuse, G. & Whitaker, R. *Cold War Canada : The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957*. [Online]. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 1. For more, see Section 1.

¹¹⁵ The BRI's objectives are enhancing regional infrastructure and policy coordination, eliminating trade barriers, and boosting cultural bonds to amass support for the expansive policy. Vinodan and Kurian, *US-China Relations*, 49.

¹¹⁶ Vinodan and Kurian, *US-China Relations*, 50.

¹¹⁷ Jennifer Hillman and David Sacks, 2021, "China's Belt and Road: Implications for the United States," *Policy File*, Council on Foreign Relations, vi.

¹¹⁸ Hillman and Sacks, "China's Belt and Road," 9.

over recipient countries that can be used to pressure these states for support and shape discourse on China's controversial issues.¹¹⁹ While Canada can not compete with China's aid on the level of the U.S., positioning itself as an alternative source of effective and local-oriented aid can act to counter Chinese influence and mitigate the threat of China's aid on global democracy.

Historical Context

Cold War

Canada's role as a leader in global humanitarianism was most notable during the Cold War. The 1969 Pearson Commission, led by Lester B. Pearson and other Canadian officials, established a development spending target—0.7% of Gross National Income—for wealthy nations within the UN.¹²⁰ This goal continues to be a benchmark for foreign aid over 50 years later, although very few states are anywhere near achieving it. By reinvigorating its own programs, Canada can leverage its historical precedent to project aid leadership on the global stage, most obviously by echoing the Pearson Commission and proposing to the UN or Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to adopt its aid frameworks at the international level.

For decades, the official stated objective of Canadian foreign aid has been to focus on poverty reduction in developing countries.¹²¹ In doing so, humanitarian aid was primarily framed as religious and moral. Starting in the 1960s, Canada provided funding to NGOs to provide aid overseas. In 1966-1967 there were 32 religious non-governmental agencies that operated in every continent except Oceania and Antarctica.¹²² Religious NGOs covered a wide range of aid

¹¹⁹ Hillman and Sacks, "China's Belt and Road," 10.

¹²⁰ Brianna Botchwey, "Governing Foreign Aid: Explaining Donor Responsiveness to Global Development Goals," Dissertation, (University of Toronto, 2021), 117.

¹²¹ Robert Bothwell and Jean Daudelin, eds., *Canada among Nations, 2008: 100 Years of Canadian Foreign Policy* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 186.

¹²² P. Ryback, *Canada Non-Governmental Agencies in International Aid and Development 1966-67*, (Ottawa: External Aid Office, 1967), 3.

including community development, credit unions, agriculture, education, medical aid, refugees, and women's support.¹²³ International development has been criticized for being used as a form of neocolonialism, an issue that Canada is no exception to.¹²⁴ For example, aid provided to India and Nigeria by the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, a Toronto-based evangelical organization, was given the goal "to stimulate patriotism and to inspire loyalty to the [British] Crown."¹²⁵ These types of programs were not only wrongly intentioned but also ineffective because when aid follows a moralistic or religious framework it prioritizes its intentions rather than its impact.¹²⁶ They misjudge their success and fail to consider local conditions that create long-term development.

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

The CIDA, formed in 1968, was the primary body for distributing government foreign aid until its dissolution in 2013, when it was merged into the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). The CIDA controlled between 75% and 80% of Canada's ODA.¹²⁷ The primary issue since the CIDA's founding was that their program was considered "intellectually incoherent."¹²⁸ The organization lacked a clear framework which hindered their ability to deliver effective aid and demonstrate clear leadership on the international stage. By focusing on three "priority themes" — increasing food security, stimulating sustainable economic growth, and securing the future of children and youth — rather than sectors, the CIDA's policy became unclear.¹²⁹ The issue with these themes was that they involved the

¹²³ P. Ryback, *Canada Non-Governmental Agencies in International Aid and Development 1966-67*, 3.

¹²⁴ Themrise Khan, Kanakulya Dickson, and Maïka Sondarjee, eds., *White Saviorism in International Development : Theories, Practices and Lived Experiences*, (Wakefield, Quebec: Daraja Press, 2023), 3.

¹²⁵ P. Ryback, *Canada Non-Governmental Agencies in International Aid and Development 1966-67*, 62.

¹²⁶ Khan, Dickson, and Sondarjee, *White Saviorism*, 3.

¹²⁷ Bothwell and Daudelin, *Canada among Nations*, 184.

¹²⁸ Bothwell and Daudelin, *Canada among Nations*, 184.

¹²⁹ Stephen Brown, Molly den Heyer, and David R. Black, *Rethinking Canadian Aid: Second Edition*. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2016), 91.

jurisdictions of multiple different organizations.¹³⁰ This prevented effective organization and accountability for aid projects.

From its creation, the CIDA was a politically dependent body, as it relied on DFAIT, the Prime Minister's office, the Department of Finance, and other government organizations to increase its budget and funding.¹³¹ As a result, achieving legitimacy with foreign governments (and partner IGOs) required the CIDA to gain significant support from Canadian government partners, since without it, they could not operate effective programs that raised its credibility.¹³² Many of the failings of the CIDA's aid effectiveness can be attributed to its catering to the agendas of Canada's various centers of bureaucratic power, since the Agency lost its direct control over a comprehensive aid agenda.

The decision to dissolve the CIDA into DFAIT was short-sighted. While the CIDA had many structural issues, it was important as a central agency to guide aid funding and allocation. While a lack of framework was its glaring issue, it was also the only agency that could develop a comprehensive aid-specific framework for Canada to follow. If DFAIT or GAC creates mandates and frameworks for Canadian aid, they are lost in the set of foreign policy frameworks within the department; moreover, they are likely to serve the agendas of other government departments and prioritize other elements of foreign policy, rather than being aid-specific. There is a need for a new centralized agency.

UN Development Goals

One of the most important UN frameworks for foreign aid was the 2000 Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs were a set of eight international objectives designed to

¹³⁰ Brown, et al., *Rethinking Canadian Aid*, 91.

¹³¹ Gregory Chin, "Shifting Purpose: Asia's Rise and Canada's Foreign Aid," *International Journal* 64 no.4 (2009): 994.

¹³² Chin, "Shifting Purpose," 994.

alleviate significant factors of under-development by 2015.¹³³ During that time, it halved the rate of extreme poverty, halved child mortality rates, and gave 2.3 billion people clean drinking water.¹³⁴ However, the MDGs are recognized as having *not* been met.

In 2015, the UN established the SDGs to continue the work of the MDGs on eradicating poverty while adding new objectives and extending the framework's reach to sectors such as climate and gender equality.¹³⁵ Since the SDGs unite many countries under common international objectives, they are a critical way for Canada to frame its foreign aid improvements as important for the international community. Through its current foreign aid commitments, Canada has pursued a leadership role in the SDGs by promoting SDG #5, Gender Equality, and by acting as the co-chair of the Group of Friends on SDG Financing.¹³⁶ However, there is still room for Canada to do more. If improving the effectiveness of Canadian aid is framed as an effort to better achieve the SDGs, it can demonstrate that Canada is an important contributor to global issues and enhance its position within the UN and other international institutions.

Aid Effectiveness

In the 1990s and 2000s, aid effectiveness became the focus of international aid analysis because despite increasing aid flows, countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and former Soviet states saw little improvement in socio-economic conditions.¹³⁷ In 2005, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was established by the OECD. Although its relevance has declined, the Paris Declaration was a landmark international institution that prescribed commitments for improving

¹³³ "What Are the Sustainable Development Goals and Why Should You Care?," Plan Canada. https://plancanada.ca/en-ca/stories/what-are-the-sdgs?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCOiA8q--BhDiARIsAP9tKI2EWQ6hA5HOT08lkIVv9x3rlUE494k63qQ1FE3dNIhet049RsJYnNkaAj-_EALw_wcB.

¹³⁴ "What Are the Sustainable Development Goals and Why Should You Care?," Plan Canada.

¹³⁵ Botchwey, "Governing Foreign Aid," 1.

¹³⁶ Botchwey, "Governing Foreign Aid," 117.

¹³⁷ Laura Grant and Benjamin Zyla, *Canada as Statebuilder? : Development and Reconstruction Efforts in Afghanistan*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021), 67.

aid donorship.¹³⁸ There were five key commitments from the Declaration: 1) Ownership, 2) Alignment, 3) Harmonization, 4) Managing for Results, and 5) Mutual Accountability. The detailed commitments described criteria for aid effectiveness as well as evaluatory indicators for donor states' success in achieving them (Figure 2).

Ownership is the first and most important commitment of the Declaration. It refers to the leadership of recipient countries over aid strategies and development policies. It promotes the involvement of local government and CSOs in planning and implementing aid programs rather than oversight by IGOs or foreign governments, as donor countries are instead expected to align with local plans and use local systems for aid delivery.¹³⁹ Ownership is necessary for recipient states because without it, they are unlikely to adopt commitments for long-term growth and may prioritize donor interests over their own.¹⁴⁰ This can lead to foreign-owned programs that fail to consider local conditions, thereby limiting their ability to meet local needs.

In 2008, over 3000 CSOs, 80 developing states, the UN, and other multilateral institutions met to formulate the Accra Agenda for Action, which added four more commitments to aid effectiveness: Predictability, Country Systems, Conditionality, and Untying.¹⁴¹ Yet, despite the wide international involvement in their creation, the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda have not been followed well. In reference to the goal of ownership, only 32% of aid funds are managed by partner country governments, private sector firms, or NGOs combined (Figure 3).¹⁴²

The failure of the MDGs, SDGs, and Paris Declaration to achieve their objectives reinforces the lack of progress of international ODA in promoting the development of the

¹³⁸ OECD, "Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, *OECD*, 2005.

¹³⁹ Euan Ritchie, Charles Kenny, Ranil Dissanayake, and Justin Sandefur, "How Much Foreign Aid Reaches Foreign Governments?" *Center for Global Development* (blog), 24 May 2022. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/how-much-foreign-aid-reaches-foreign-governments>.

¹⁴⁰ Grant and Zyla, *Canada as Statebuilder?*, 72.

¹⁴¹ OECD, "Accra Agenda for Action," *OECD*, 4 September, 2008.

¹⁴² Ritchie et al., "How Much Foreign Aid."

world's most impoverished states. In 1971, more than thirty countries were recognized as the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) by the UN Committee for Development Policy.¹⁴³ Only a handful of states have graduated from LDC status and many have failed to achieve their expected growth or targeted 'promotion dates.'¹⁴⁴ It is clear that addressing world poverty has not been successful over the past fifty years and that development assistance can, and must, be made more effective. International institutions such as the UN and OECD have recognized this and attempted to provide frameworks for improving aid effectiveness, but states remain reluctant. Canada can position itself as a global leader on aid simply by adhering to international initiatives that already exist but are not being met, including the Paris Declaration, SDGs, and others.

Analysis of Issues in Canada's Current Aid

Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP)

When Trudeau announced Canada's current foreign aid strategy, FIAP, in 2017, he argued that Canada would take on a "new leadership role internationally."¹⁴⁵ FIAP focuses on improving the lives of women in developing countries, resulting in an overall improvement on the quality of life. It consists of six action areas: gender, human dignity, growth, environment, inclusive governance, peace and security.¹⁴⁶ Through FIAP, the government is committed to ensuring 80% of Canada's bilateral international assistance and 15% of its development aid goes to issues of

¹⁴³ Umme Mim Mohsin, "Graduation from the Least Developed Country Category: A Case Study of Bangladesh." Dissertation, Dalhousie University, 2023, 1.

¹⁴⁴ LDCs are given estimated dates in which they are expected to be promoted from LDC status, such as Bangladesh's expected promotion date of 2026; Mohsin, "Graduation from the Least Developed Country Category," 1.

¹⁴⁵ Botchwey, "Governing Foreign Aid," 96.

¹⁴⁶ Global Affairs Canada, "Canada's Feminist."

gender.¹⁴⁷ By 2021-22, they sought to achieve 95% of Canada's bilateral international development assistance initiatives focused on gender.¹⁴⁸

In its formation, FIAP has described that it could increase its effectiveness in providing international assistance through a detailed set of action plans, including better-leveraged investment; more integrated assistance; more responsive and accountable assistance; focus on becoming a feminist donor; more effective partnerships; working with governments; engaging civil society; and responding better to needs and opportunities.¹⁴⁹ These action plans intend to maximize Canadian foreign aid to best help the “poorest and most vulnerable people” in the world.¹⁵⁰ The FIAP therefore reflected the Paris Declaration commitments. However, the complex set of action plans prevented aid programs from having a coherent mandate or evaluation tools, especially since action plans such as “engaging multilateral institutions” and “working with governments” contradicted each other.¹⁵¹ Moreover, an audit of Canada's implementation of FIAP determined that its commitment to the SDGs “lacked a clear governance process or means of implementation.”¹⁵² These limitations stem from DFAIT's incapacity to implement these processes and the incoherent mandates set out by FIAP.¹⁵³ A centralized aid agency with similar SDG objectives but clearer frameworks for aid could mitigate the FIAP's shortcomings.

The FIAP's effectiveness has also been heavily debated. As of 2023, the goal of 15% of development aid towards issues of gender was unmet.¹⁵⁴ The 80% goal of bilateral international

¹⁴⁷ Megan Daigle, “3 Canada: Seizing the Political Moment,” in *Humanitarian Action in the Era of Feminist Foreign Policy: Narratives, Ambition and Opposition in Canada and Germany* (ODI, 2024), 26.

¹⁴⁸ Global Affairs Canada, “Canada's Feminist.”

¹⁴⁹ Global Affairs Canada, “Canada's Feminist.”

¹⁵⁰ Botchwey, “Governing Foreign Aid,” 116.

¹⁵¹ Botchwey, “Governing Foreign Aid,” 116.

¹⁵² Botchwey, “Governing Foreign Aid,” 109.

¹⁵³ Botchwey, “Governing Foreign Aid,” 108.

¹⁵⁴ Daigle, “3 Canada,” 30.

assistance was met in 2019-2020 with 88% of GAC projects listing gender equality as a significant goal, rising to 90% in 2020-2021.¹⁵⁵ However, projects may do as little as “simple gender-based data collection” to qualify as considering issues of gender.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, the metrics in which the Canadian government claims to meet their goals are inflated. FIAP has not propelled Canada’s cause of gender equality nor its reputation in the way it was intended.

Moreover, FIAP has not led to the ownership prioritization it claims. At the heart of the issue is that “feminism” and “gender equality” have different meanings in different cultural contexts.¹⁵⁷ Even by promoting its aid as “feminist,” Canada undermines local ownership of aid by some countries who may not recognize “feminism” as a priority. While promoting gender equality is an admirable goal, it has not been an effective framework for Canadian aid.

Ownership

One of Canada’s biggest issues is the lack of recipient country ownership in its aid programs. The Canadian government rhetorically recognizes the importance of including recipients in aid program design and implementation. For example, Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs identified that partnerships with local communities and civil society are essential to achieving aid objectives in her 2022-23 Report to Parliament on the Government of Canada’s International Assistance.¹⁵⁸ However, it is notable that the word “ownership” is never used in Joly’s statement, and while she states that adhering to local interests is “key to succeeding”, she never establishes it as a requirement for Canadian aid.¹⁵⁹ This demonstrates that the Canadian government sees ownership as a tool but not an obligation for its foreign aid programs.

¹⁵⁵ Daigle, “3 Canada,” 26.

¹⁵⁶ Daigle, “3 Canada,” 30.

¹⁵⁷ Themrise Khan, “Stop thinking of foreign aid as a tool for global influence,” *Policy Options*, 13 November, 2023.

¹⁵⁸ Global Affairs Canada, “Report to Parliament on the Government of Canada’s International Assistance, 2022-23.”

¹⁵⁹ Global Affairs Canada, “Report to Parliament on the Government of Canada’s International Assistance, 2022-23.”

Assessments of current aid programs makes it obvious that there is room for improvement in terms of recipient ownership and participation.

First, Canadian aid frequently prioritizes the use of Canadian CSOs and international NGOs over local CSOs (Figure 4). Even the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), a flagship program directly designed to promote *local development* in recipient countries, failed to engage meaningfully with local organizations. According to GAC’s evaluation in 2023, the CFLI adopted an approach to risk management that “often resulted in missions’ reluctance to partner with newer, less experienced local organizations.”¹⁶⁰ In the CFLI and many other programs, Canadian donors are afraid to engage with local organizations because of their lack of experience. This can reflect colonial understandings of local actors in developing states as being incapable of managing social and economic growth on their own, instead needing a “white savior”—a generous developed state—to facilitate their development.¹⁶¹ Canadian aid programs need to recognize the value of local CSOs and aid programs. These CSOs know better than any Canadian CSO, the local conditions that create and sustain cycles of under-development and are more likely to engage with communities where trust of foreign involvement is low.

Moreover, Canada does not design programs in line with local priorities. Experts have found that “donors less likely to channel aid through partner governments are also considerably less likely to draw their country aid objectives from partner country-led frameworks.”¹⁶² For Canada, working through Canadian CSOs and NGOs rather than local governments and CSOs means pursuing objectives that may not be meaningful to local communities, thus reducing the confidence of recipients in aid programs as well as the programs’ effectiveness.

¹⁶⁰ Global Affairs Canada, *Evaluation of the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) 2015-16 to 2020-21 : Evaluation Report*. (Ottawa: Global Affairs Canada, 2023), 4.

¹⁶¹ Khan, Dickson, and Sondarjee, *White Saviorism*, 3.

¹⁶² Ritchie et al., “How Much Foreign Aid.”

Lack of administrative capacity and frameworks

Canadian aid programs frequently lack the expertise and resources necessary to carry out aid programs to their maximum effectiveness. The CLFI is one example, which cited that missions lacked the relevant knowledge, skills, and access to carry out some of the program's activities.¹⁶³ This comes in part from a lack of engagement with locals, as working directly with leaders in recipient communities could promote greater understanding of these communities. A consequence of a lack of expertise and resources is long processing times, cumbersome programs, and ineffective management, as was found in the Evaluation of the Partnerships for Development Innovation Branch.¹⁶⁴ Ineffective management and bureaucracy not only limits the effectiveness of existing aid programs but also the capacity for taking on new initiatives. For instance, the Evaluation of International Assistance Programming in Middle-Income Countries - 2014-15 to 2020-21 found that an abundance of nations seek Canadian expertise on gender, health, and security programs but could not access programs.¹⁶⁵ Thus, Canada needs to increase its *administrative capacity* for foreign aid management.

Administrative issues and a lack of centralized aid framework also led to overlapping and less effective programs. In the Middle Income Countries (MIC) evaluation, GAC identified “regional and bilateral programs planned separately, each sometimes unaware of the activities of the other, limiting opportunities to identify and contribute to common objectives.”¹⁶⁶ GAC reports have continuously shown that a lack of suitable framework or evaluation tools has made it more difficult for aid programs to assess long-term outcomes. For example, GAC found that there were “multiple interpretations and understandings of what the CFLI is and what success

¹⁶³ Global Affairs Canada, *Evaluation of the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)*, 4.

¹⁶⁴ Global Affairs Canada. *Evaluation of the Partnerships for Development Innovation Branch 2015-16 to 2019-20: Evaluation Report*. *Ottawa: Global Affairs Canada, 2021), 1.

¹⁶⁵ Global Affairs Canada, *Evaluation of International Assistance Programming in Middle-Income Countries*, 4.

¹⁶⁶ Global Affairs Canada, *Evaluation of International Assistance Programming in Middle-Income Countries*, 34.

looks like.”¹⁶⁷ While flexibility in program strategies can be good, a lack of a cohesive objective makes it difficult for programs to design strategies that actually target desirable outcomes for Canada and its aid recipients.

Long-term Development

A significant issue in current Canadian aid programs is a lack of focus on long-term growth. An evaluation of more than 130 Canadian aid programs in Afghanistan since 2003 deemed Canadian aid “ambitious and highly productive” in terms of short term outcomes for security, gender and education, but much less productive in facilitating long-term economic and political development.¹⁶⁸ In the evaluation of the MIC aid programs, it was found that “most bilateral programs did not have long-term or trade-focused development country-level plans that fully identified or responded to middle-income country-specific transition needs.”¹⁶⁹ This is a particularly important example of a missed opportunity in Canadian aid, as transitioning MICs from aid recipients to trade partners is an essential goal of aid to these countries and an opportunity for Canada to capitalize on the benefits of its aid programs.

The lack of long-term emphasis in Canadian aid programs is also demonstrated by its lack of emphasis on aid that creates sustainable growth within the recipient economy. Canada has allocated nearly double the amount of aid to meteorological systems (0.28M) as tax collection (0.18M).¹⁷⁰ It is telling that tax collection—one of the most important mechanisms of creating long-term development in developing countries—is underemphasized. In total, Canada only spent 41.11M on aid directed to domestic revenue generation in 2023.¹⁷¹ While short-term outcomes can be meaningful, it is long-term development that contributes to the eradication of

¹⁶⁷ Global Affairs Canada, *Evaluation of the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)*, 4.

¹⁶⁸ Grant and Zyla, *Canada as Statebuilder?*, 1.

¹⁶⁹ Global Affairs Canada, *Evaluation of International Assistance Programming in Middle-Income Countries*, 30.

¹⁷⁰ Global Affairs Canada, *Statistical Report on International Assistance 2022-2023*, 2024.

¹⁷¹ Global Affairs Canada, *Statistical Report on International Assistance 2022-2023*.

poverty. Programs need to create sustainable means of development through which aid recipients can build the skills, technology, and management capacities to facilitate growth on their own without foreign assistance. Otherwise, they may become trapped in aid dependency.

Over-Prioritization of Canadian Commercial and Political Interests

One of the most important issues in modern aid is the prioritization of donor interests over recipient needs, leading to unsustainable and even counterproductive aid programs. When aid is designed on commercial and political interests from donor states, it increases aid volatility — the fluctuation of aid funding on a year-to-year basis — and undermines the capacity of recipient communities to select projects that cater to their highest priorities.¹⁷² These impacts limit long-term planning and thus prevent aid projects from having long-term, sustainable impacts.

Another issue is aid conditionality. Conditional aid requires recipient states to demonstrate progress on donor-identified priorities, typically economic and political reforms.¹⁷³ For example, during the Cold War, Marshall Plan aid from the U.S. often required states to grant American control over internal policies, while in the 1980s and 1990s, the Washington Consensus pushed states to liberalize their economies and adopt neoliberal policies.¹⁷⁴ The Washington Consensus was especially damaging to recipient economies in Asia and Africa because the Western policies it pushed clashed with local social and economic conditions, leading not only to low aid effectiveness but economic stagnation.¹⁷⁵ In 2023, Canada spent \$729M on “government and civil society” aid, but 40% of it was through multilateral channels

¹⁷² Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, 359.

¹⁷³ Joseph Wright and Matthew Winters, “The Politics of Effective Foreign Aid,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, (2009), 71.

¹⁷⁴ Marcuse and Whitaker, *Cold War Canada*, 128.

¹⁷⁵ Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, 363.

such as the IMF or World Bank, which have improved in reducing the harms of conditional aid but continue to impose political interests that may not align with local conditions or interests.¹⁷⁶

Tied aid is a similar issue. Tied aid requires recipient countries to buy Canadian exports and materials in exchange for aid grants. It often promotes debt cycles because of the high costs of exports for these states, especially when they cannot engage in competitive trade with alternative providers.¹⁷⁷ Tied aid increases the costs of aid for recipients by 15-30%.¹⁷⁸

Mining developments are particularly an area where Canadian commercial interests have superseded local interests. In Mongolia, Canadian aid promoted the rapid intensification of mining, a decision that was “donor-driven and resulted in apparently poorly designed projects with limited potential to advance Canadian aid's objective of reducing poverty.”¹⁷⁹ A similar issue occurred in Peru where Canadian interests led to intensification, rather than reduction, of the country’s dependence on the mining industry, leading to short term profits but long term unsustainability.¹⁸⁰ These programs also prevented domestic taxation and the growth of local businesses, instead funneling funds into Canadian companies.

Recommendations

The goal of this case study is to provide recommendations to improve the effectiveness of Canadian foreign aid. We make five primary recommendations:

1. Recreate the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) as a central organization for Canadian foreign aid programs.
2. Develop more rigorous frameworks, objectives, and evaluation tools for aid programs under the CIDA to improve the management of Canadian aid programs.

¹⁷⁶ Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, 363

¹⁷⁷ Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, 100.

¹⁷⁸ Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, 100.

¹⁷⁹ Stephen Brown, “Mining Self-Interest? Canadian Foreign Aid and the Extractive Sector in Mongolia,” *Revue Canadienne d'études Du Développement ahead-of-print (ahead-of-print)*, 2023, 1.

¹⁸⁰ Stephen Brown, “Foreign Aid, the Mining Sector and Democratic Ownership: The Case of Canadian Assistance to Peru,” *Development Policy Review* 38 (2020), 13.

2b) Provide the new CIDA with an improved mandate, based on the following three recommendations:

3. Emphasize recipient *ownership* in foreign aid programs.
4. Prioritize *long-term development* as an objective of foreign aid programs.
5. Recognize the damaging effect of prioritizing Canadian commercial, political, and strategic interests in foreign aid, and ensure that aid is a genuine effort at promoting development in recipient states.

These recommendations are general guidelines by which aid programs should be designed, implemented, and assessed to increase aid effectiveness, *not* recommendations relating to specific programs—which should be determined on a case-to-case basis by aid experts.

Current aid funding on an international scale is far below what is actually needed for global poverty alleviation and development. Thus, increasing aid budgets would be the most direct way to increase aid impact on a global scale. However, failed aid programs involve hundreds of millions of dollars a year globally.¹⁸¹ Such failures contribute to the image that foreign aid is ineffective and a waste of state resources. Thus, before exploring increases to its aid funding, Canada must first increase its administrative capacity by targeting aid effectiveness, frameworks, and policy objectives. This is also a more achievable objective in the status quo, with economic uncertainty and American tariffs decreasing the likelihood of the new Canadian government increasing aid allocations.

Recreating the CIDA

Since it has its own purposes and functions, aid should not be seen as a small portion of Canada's foreign affairs agenda but rather an independent institution. Creating an independent foreign aid department would project Canada's leadership on aid to domestic and global audiences. It would also allow for greater harmonization between Canadian aid programs, IGOs, and aid recipients. Thus, Canada should re-create the CIDA with new motivations and

¹⁸¹ Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, 184.

procedures, while leaning on existing resources and personnel to make the transition smooth and cost-effective. Recreating the CIDA with an improved, comprehensive framework for aid programs is essential for improving Canadian aid outcomes.

Strategic Frameworks, Objectives, and Evaluation Tools

A fundamental role of the new CIDA will be addressing the lasting issue of Canada's lack of frameworks and evaluation tools in its aid programs. Since the 1990s, there have been two distinct meanings of effectiveness: 1) development progress and the material improvement in the quality of life for recipient communities; and 2) the operational goals and the success of aid interventions in relation to donor-driven criteria and standards.¹⁸² Achieving success in “donor-driven criteria” requires Canada to have established goals and evaluation tools for their aid programs. Under a reorganized CIDA, the implementation of such administrative tools can more easily be achieved, as the organization's mandate specifically entails overseeing aid programs, unlike DFAIT. With a clear mandate promoting aid effectiveness, a new CIDA would be able to organize aid strategies around the following three sectors: Ownership, Long-term Development, and Prioritization of Local Interests.

Ownership

As addressed by the Paris Declaration, recipient ownership is an essential element of effective aid, so Canada should work toward ensuring that aid meets local demands and works within the context of recipient communities. Canada should re-orient its foreign aid programs away from Canadian CSOs and towards local CSOs and community groups, while improving the education of its aid administrators. Canada must recognize that giving ownership of aid programs to recipient governments and CSOs is more likely to facilitate social and economic growth.

¹⁸² Jamey Essex, “The politics of effectiveness in Canada's international development assistance.” *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 33, no. 3 (September 2012), 339.

To avoid putting aid funds into the hands of corrupt officials, it is recommended that Canada adopt a consultation process for deciding whether to work with recipients directly. Roger Riddell suggested that aid donors could use existing aid programs, governance criteria, and meetings with local aid organizations to assess whether recipient countries are responsible and capable enough to receive direct bilateral aid.¹⁸³ If they are, then Canada should use bilateral aid that promotes greater aid ownership. If they are not, Canada should go through multilateral channels or Canadian CSOs to implement aid programs to avoid corruption, while meeting directly with recipient communities to understand and address their unique conditions. The recreated CIDA has a greater administrative capacity to carry out these evaluations.

Moreover, working with recipient-based CSOs is a way to avoid providing funds to local governments while maintaining crucial links to the communities where aid is being delivered. Local CSOs often have more direct interest and knowledge of local community needs than do foreign or even domestic governments, and may allocate resources more effectively. For example, instead of promoting mining programs that perpetuate the resource curse in Mongolia and Peru, local CSOs may recommend that Canadian aid be directed toward promoting economic diversification. Adhering to local industry needs also promotes long-term growth because revenues remain within the local economy rather than being transferred to foreign operators, and because it promotes entrepreneurship. These are benefits that require local aid ownership.

Long-term Development Strategies

Emphasizing sustainable long-term development strategies must be a priority if Canadian aid is to contribute to the eradication of poverty. This will require increasing the timeline of aid programs and acknowledging that results need to be assessed over the long term. It also means

¹⁸³ Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, 391.

decreasing aid volatility by providing more consistent and predictable aid flows to certain sectors, countries, and issues.

Knowledge transfer is an avenue for increased Canadian aid in line with the goal of long-term development and local ownership. Knowledge transfer has historically entailed a colonial practice of preaching economic or political programs from the West that are seen as the only viable options for development. To avoid pushing Canadian (and Western) policies onto recipient nations, knowledge transfer must be conducted with an acknowledgement of local conditions and needs. For instance, in Africa, a significant issue is the existence of foreign extractive industries who are taxed significantly less than they should be.¹⁸⁴ Since it is primarily Western companies exploiting tax laws, tax treaty reform is an example of policy programs that can be encouraged through knowledge transfer that actually counter, rather than reinforce, colonial paradigms. Taxation is also a mechanism for promoting sustainable local development.

Recognizing the Impacts of Canadian Interests and Altruism

Canadian programs need to prioritize genuine efforts to assist states in their growth, not the promotion of Canadian interests. Achieving long-term Canadian interests should be an *outcome*, not a goal, of Canadian aid programs. If poorer nations develop their political and economic capabilities with help — but not oversight — from Canadian aid, they could grow into regional allies and international trade partners. Moreover, Canadian commercial interests are promoted if states emerge with strong, diversified economies; in places like Peru or Mongolia, Canadian mining companies could benefit from an economy with a stronger dollar and greater wealth in the middle class. Thus, Canada can achieve its national interests without pushing

¹⁸⁴ Oladiwura Ayeyemi Eytayo-Oyesode, “Fostering Implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in Africa: Prospects of Revenue Generation under the Tax Treaties Signed by Nigeria, Tanzania, and Botswana,” Dissertation, (Dalhousie University, 2022), 2.

liberal or democratic values onto states, prioritizing commercial interests, or blindly adopting geopolitical strategies to guide aid. Instead, an improved framework of aid effectiveness would lend itself to these interests by promoting long-term development in recipient states.

An example of the improved CIDA's mandate in action could be improving Canada's aid programs for improving water systems, which would prioritize providing knowledge transfer and resource ownership to local communities who would be able to build and sustain the systems themselves over the long term.¹⁸⁵ Rather than pursuing altruism, the program would appeal to Canadian interests by facilitating the growth of the recipient state into a trade partner and international ally in the long term. Most importantly, a move away from aid conditionally and tied aid must be made. Canadian aid has long promoted political interests through conditional aid and commercial interests through tied aid, but in the process undermined local development by incidentally creating debt cycles and economic stagnation.¹⁸⁶ In place of aid conditionality, Canada should provide recipients with support to develop local capacities and recognize that their priorities are more likely to have sustainable impacts. Untied aid differentiates Canada from China and the BRI, which imposes strict conditions on aid such as access to infrastructure and exclusive trade relationships. Thus, by eliminating aid tying, Canada can become the preferred alternative to China for developing states who are seeking to replace American aid flows.

Conclusion

Enhancing the quality of Canada's foreign aid provides the opportunity to become a leader on the world stage and combat illiberal influences from China and Russia. While some of Canada's foreign aid programs are successful, especially in short-term outcomes, there is a need

¹⁸⁵ In Eastern and Southern Africa, 226 million people do not have access to basic water service, a significant issue that has long been a focus for Canadian aid programs. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/brief/afe-water>

¹⁸⁶ Wright and Winters, "The Politics of Effective Foreign Aid," 71.

for an overhaul in the frameworks, objectives, and administration of Canadian aid. By emphasizing working with local groups, focusing on long-term growth, prioritizing aid-receivers, and establishing clear evaluation frameworks of its aid, Canada would be able to increase the quality of its aid. These markers of aid effectiveness should be made into the expectations and the norm of Canadian aid programs, not merely a stated objective, which can be facilitated through the re-creation of a centralized aid agency. These recommendations will require significant adjustments in aid strategies and administrative costs, but it does not entail a large increase in foreign aid investment. In fact, the intention of aid effectiveness is exactly the opposite in the long term: increasing the efficiency of aid in generating development outcomes means that less funds can achieve more. This means that the recommendations are practical and more likely to be supported by the incoming Canadian government and the public. Moreover, through these recommendations, Canada can position itself as a humanitarian leader and middle power in the new global order. It can fill the gap left by the U.S., combat the influence of China, and regain its position as a leader in the United Nations through aid leadership.

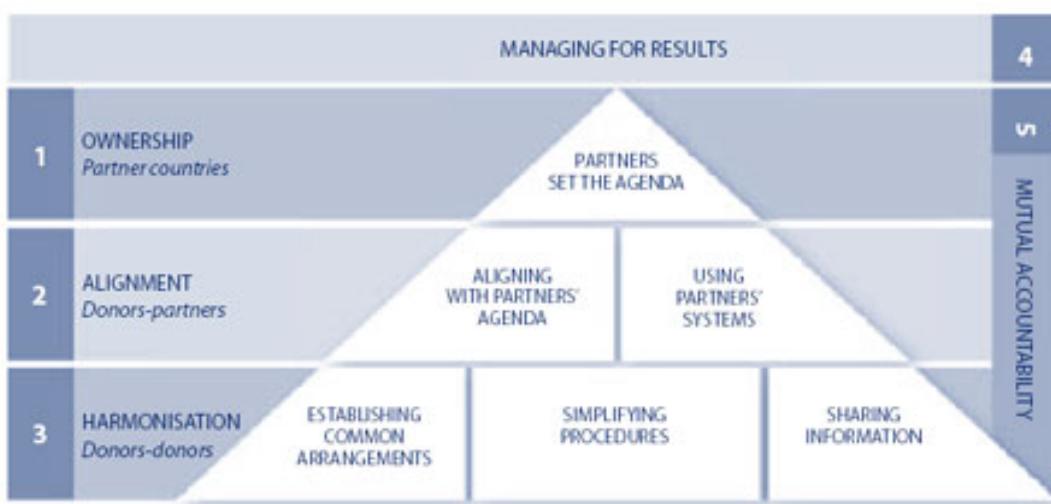
Annexes

Figure 1: Canadian multilateral aid as proportion of International Assistance (2023-24)



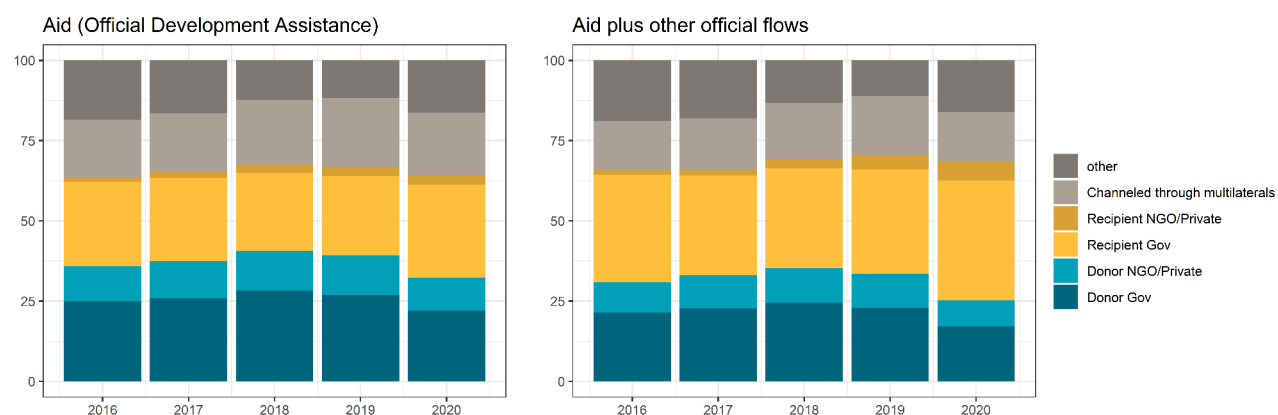
Global Affairs Canada, *DevData Dashboard*,
<https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/international-assistance-report-stat-rapport-aide-internationale/dashboard-tableau-bord.aspx?lang=eng>

Figure 2: Paris Declaration Commitments



OECD, *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, 2005.

Figure 3: Development finance through different channels by OECD members, 2016-2020.



OECD, Creditor Reporting System, 2021.

Figure 4: Canadian CSO aid

Table 1

Global Affairs Canada's international assistance (in \$ millions), excluding operations and management costs and services rendered abroad

Year	Canadian organizations (civil society, government, private sector)	Foreign organizations (civil society, government, private sector)	Multilateral organizations	Total Canadian official-development assistance
2019-2020	1,126.97	546.55	2,814.81	4,491.97
2020-2021	1,261.98	848.32	4,526.13	6,636.42
2021-2022	1,004.42	718.74	3,885.36	5,608.52

Source: [Statistical Report on International Assistance, Section C](#) and [Report to Parliament on International Assistance: Global Affairs Canada](#).

Global Affairs Canada, *Statistical Report on International Assistance 2022-2023*.

Case Study #3: Middle East & North Africa

By: Kathleena Henricus, Fatima Rahman, & Syed Wahib Mohammed Rizvi

Introduction

Since the end of the Second World War, the MENA region has faced persistent humanitarian crises and frequent armed interventions by Western powers. These powers seek geostrategic access to the region, control over resources endemic to MENA states, and the installation of regimes aligned with Western ideology and interests.¹⁸⁷ Canada's current approach to foreign policy in MENA states is focused on advancing the rights of women and girls; supporting refugees and internally displaced persons; building infrastructure; strengthening trade relations with countries like Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan; and combating religious extremism. For the last several decades, Canadian presence in the region has been in alignment with the U.S. and Europe, especially regarding counterterrorism interventions after 9/11. However, as Canada approaches a multipolar order, American interests should not dictate Canadian foreign policy aims as the U.S. disengages from the multilateral institutions that Canada values. This is where Lester B. Pearson's human rights-based approach in the mid to late 20th century defined Canada's place on the international stage, and that legacy has led to some notable points of Canadian leadership on MENA engagement, like the support and aid for Syrian refugees. As Canada heads towards an inflection point in the international order, Canada must further its bilateral relations with MENA states, strengthening economic and security collaboration with other global partners to ensure the long-term sustainability of Canada-MENA relations.

¹⁸⁷ George Kieh Jr., "Western Imperialism in the Middle East: The Case of the United States' Military Intervention in the Persian Gulf," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 14, 1 (1992): 1.

Historical Context

Canada is rarely mentioned in MENA region studies particularly because its efforts are overshadowed by its North American neighbour and Britain. However, the MENA region has been historically relevant in Canadian foreign policy as a region ripe with both security and humanitarian challenges that both directly and indirectly affect Canada's international standing. Although current instability in the region can be traced back centuries, Canada's involvement only began after the Second World War as it sought to establish an independent foreign policy for the first time under Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. Canada's involvement in the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states in 1947 started its independent diplomatic involvement in the Middle East and established its place in the newly created UN. When Britain announced it would be handing the Palestine issue over to the UN, then Canadian under-Secretary of State for External Affairs Lester B. Pearson recognized that Canada was in the best position to remain objective as opposed to the U.S., Britain, and the Soviet Union,¹⁸⁸ as expounded on in section four: Peacekeeping. As a result, the first international issue at the UN—the Palestine question—would determine the institution's success as well as Canada's place in the post-war international order.¹⁸⁹

Canada did not directly interact with MENA countries until the Suez Crisis of 1956, which established Canada's presence and birthed its so-called "Pearsonian" foreign policy under then External Affairs Minister Lester B. Pearson.¹⁹⁰ The Crisis, triggered by Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal and the subsequent invasion of Egypt by Israel, France, and the UK, provided the perfect opportunity for Canada to use its middle power

¹⁸⁸ Anne Trowell Hillmer, "'Here I Am in the Middle': Lester Pearson and the Origins of Canada's Diplomatic Involvement in the Middle East," in *Domestic Battleground: Canada and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, ed. David Taras and David H. Goldberg (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 125.

¹⁸⁹ Hillmer, "'Here I Am'," 126.

¹⁹⁰ Jeremy Wildeman and Emma Swan, "What Lies Ahead? Canada's Engagement with the Middle East Peace Process and the Palestinians: An Introduction," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 27, no. 1 (2021): 7.

position to push for a peaceful resolution.¹⁹¹ For Canada, the Crisis came at a time when it was attempting to distance itself from its role as a loyal colony to Britain and become closer to its North American neighbour.¹⁹² Lester B. Pearson rushed to develop and deploy the first peacekeeping operation for the canal known as the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), setting the precedent for all future peacekeeping operations (see section four.)¹⁹³

The 1956 intervention and subsequent UNEF mission in Egypt had several implications. As an advocate for multilateral diplomacy, the UN served as a key forum for Canadian foreign policy which Canada felt was undermined by the Anglo-French intervention.¹⁹⁴ Most importantly for Canada, as the intervention resulted in stringent relations between its two closest allies and founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—the U.S. and Britain—the Crisis distanced Canada from Britain, bringing it closer to its North American ally, economically and politically. Canada's refusal to endorse British aggression in 1956, was therefore rooted entirely in its concern for the Western alliance and the unity of the Commonwealth.¹⁹⁵ Located geographically beside the emerging Cold War great power, it was integral for Canada to establish itself as a "non-threatening, loyal, but independent-minded" member of the Western alliance by utilizing its diplomacy in multilateral forums such as the UN.¹⁹⁶ This was possible because Lester B. Pearson had acted as a bridge-builder between Britain and France and nations of the Third World.¹⁹⁷ Lester B. Pearson explained that the

¹⁹¹ Greg Donaghy, "The Politics of Accommodation: Canada, the Middle East, and the Suez Crisis, 1950–1956," *International Journal* (Toronto) 71, no. 2 (2016): 321.

¹⁹² Wildeman and Swan, "What lies ahead," 5.

¹⁹³ Wildeman and Swan, "What lies ahead," 6.

¹⁹⁴ Donaghy, "Politics of Accommodation," 323.

¹⁹⁵ Janice Cavell, "Suez and After: Canada and British Policy in the Middle East, 1956–1960," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 18, no. 1 (2007): 177.

¹⁹⁶ Geoffrey Hayes, "Canada as a Middle Power: The Case of Peacekeeping," in *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War*, ed. Andrew Fenton Cooper (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 76.

¹⁹⁷ Alan K. Henrikson, "Middle Powers as Managers: International Mediation within, across, and outside Institutions," in *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War*, ed. Andrew Fenton Cooper (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 61.

success of the first UN peacekeeping mission was because Canada detached itself from both sides, stating that Canada could not have opposed the U.S.' solution nor could they support it, so they had to pursue another avenue.¹⁹⁸ In this Golden Age of Canadian diplomacy, participation in multilateral bodies such as the UN and NATO allowed for Canada's voice to be heard and its interests projected to a global audience.¹⁹⁹

Although there have been diplomatic successes, Canada's history with bilateral relations in the region have generally been unproductive. A key case of Canada's strained relations with a MENA state can be found in 1979 Iran, when six Americans working at their embassy were taken hostage. At the time, Canada had a chancery in the capital, but diplomatic tensions were on the rise with the rising revolution and Operation BATON underway,²⁰⁰ which sought to extract Canadian nationals from the state. When the American embassy was taken, Canada's Ambassador to Iran, Ken Taylor, sheltered and extracted the American nationals with the help of the Canadian government and the CIA.²⁰¹ The Canadian embassy was closed in 1980 and the next several decades were marked by increasing tensions over human rights violations and what Canada deemed as extremism, and today Canada has no relationship with Iran beyond sanctions, counterterrorist and nuclear weapons surveillance, and export controls.²⁰² Another MENA state that Canada has had tense bilateral relations with is Saudi Arabia. Given Saudi Arabia's oil and gas resources, Canada has sought to maintain diplomatic relations with them since the 1960s.

¹⁹⁸ Henrikson, "Middle Powers as Managers," 62.

¹⁹⁹ Amelia C. Arsenault and Costanza Musu, "Canada, the United Nations, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 27, no. 1 (2012): 100.

²⁰⁰ National Defence and the Canadian Forces, "Operation BANNER," *Government of Canada*, last modified September 30, 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/military-history/history-heritage/past-operations/middle-east/baton.html>.

²⁰¹ Global Affairs Canada, "Ken Taylor: A Legacy of Diplomacy," *Government of Canada*, accessed March 20, 2025. <https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/history-histoire/ken-taylor.aspx?lang=eng>.

²⁰² Global Affairs Canada, "Canada-Iran Relations," *Government of Canada*, accessed March 20, 2025. https://www.international.gc.ca/country-pays/iran/relations.aspx?lang=eng#_Sanctions_1.

However, recent significant human rights violations, including the 2018 assassination of Jamal Khashoggi in Saudi Arabia's consulate in Turkey,²⁰³ have caused tension between the two nations. Unlike the Iranian case, Canada has maintained trade relations, including arms deals,²⁰⁴ and diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia, choosing only to condemn them through statements instead of sanctions.²⁰⁵

Regardless of bilateral or multilateral relations, the MENA region has served as a site where Canada has projected its own values on the international stage. States in the region, as well as other Global South countries, have historically looked to international instruments within the UN for assistance, many of which Canada has been an integral part of creating. Moreover, in the 1990s in particular, Canada's pursuit of a human security agenda under Lloyd Axworthy led to many successes in international initiatives such as the 1997 Ottawa landmines treaty, progress in combating spread of small arms and light weapons, and the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC).²⁰⁶ Canada, under Lloyd Axworthy, recognized that Cold War era international relations prioritized national security which might have been necessary but was insufficient to protect citizens,²⁰⁷ an attractive notion for MENA states with fragile humanitarian situations. By linking people to security policy, Lloyd Axworthy's vision and its outcomes were understood as a projection of Canadian values on the international stage.²⁰⁸ Bolstered by its successful background as a peacekeeping mediator, Canada further entrenched its multilateralist

²⁰³ Shannon Bosch, "Understanding Diplomatic and Consular Inviolability--Learning from the Jamal Khashoggi Tragedy," *Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 54, no. 1 (2021), Gale Academic OneFile. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A688559917/AONE?u=lond95336&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=b28443b9>.

²⁰⁴ Susan Khazaeli, "In Search of a Canadian Middle East Policy: A Look at Past Approaches," *International Journal* (Toronto) 78, no. 1 (2023): 109.

²⁰⁵ Global Affairs Canada, "Canada Condemns Killing of Journalist Jamal Khashoggi," *Government of Canada*, October 20, 2018.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2018/10/canada-condemns-killing-of-journalist-jamal-khashoggi.html>.

²⁰⁶ Marie-Joëlle Zahar, "Talking One Talk, Walking Another: Norm Entrepreneurship and Canada's Foreign Policy in the Middle East," in *Canada and the Middle East*, ed. Bessma Momani and Paul Heinbecker, (Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 46.

²⁰⁷ Zahar, "Talking One Talk," 46.

²⁰⁸ Zahar, "Talking One Talk," 47.

nature through norm entrepreneurship, instances where countries change basic assumptions and the functioning of the international system.²⁰⁹

The most notable outcome of this is Canada's involvement in creating the R2P doctrine, famously referenced in the 2011 intervention in Libya. The R2P doctrine is an elucidating example of Canada's place on the international stage in the post-Cold War era. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), an independent body commissioned by the Canadian government, was responsible for addressing how best to respond to the atrocities committed in Rwanda and Bosnia.²¹⁰ The ICISS published a report titled "Responsibility to Protect" in 2001 which argued that states forgo their sovereignty when they fail to, or are incapable of, protecting their citizens; thus, the international community assumes state responsibility and sovereignty.²¹¹ Reframing intervention as necessary for humanitarian protection meant rethinking a centuries old norm of non-intervention on another state's sovereignty. When the R2P report was endorsed at the UN Summit of 2005, it was evident that it stemmed from Canada's linkage of human security to national security, firmly placing Canadian values in the international arena.²¹² However, the R2P doctrine has been routinely criticized for being misused particularly after the NATO-led intervention in Libya. Brazil submitted a note, Responsibility While Protecting (RWP), to the UNSC days after NATO's mission in Libya ended, stating that the intervention had exceeded the UNSC's civilian protection mandate under R2P and instead focused on regime change—a concern shared by other emerging powers like India and South Africa.²¹³ Importantly, R2P's contested legacy showcases a gap between Canadian foreign policy discourse and actions.

²⁰⁹ Zahar, "Talking One Talk," 47.

²¹⁰ Zahar, "Talking One Talk," 47.

²¹¹ Zahar, "Talking One Talk," 48.

²¹² Zahar, "Talking One Talk," 48.

²¹³ Xenia Avezov, "'Responsibility while protecting': are we asking the wrong questions?," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)*, January 30, 2013, <https://www.sipri.org/node/409>.

Political and Security Relations

Canada's Security Role in the MENA Region

Canadian security relations with the MENA region began in earnest in the 1950s, with the West eyeing it for the burgeoning oil market and its prime strategic geography.²¹⁴ Canada's most important aim in the region was developing Canadian foreign policy to maintain relations with Europe and the U.S., who were concerned about burgeoning anti-colonialist and pro-communist sentiments across MENA states. While many of early Canadian interventions in the MENA region were staged with its allies in mind, Lester B. Pearson—the architect of Canada's early MENA engagement—still centred respect for international law and the UN at the foundation of the Canadian approach.²¹⁵ Still, in the 1990s and early 2000s, Canada followed the U.S. on the offensive in the Gulf War, the Global War on Terror (GWOT), and the Iraq War.²¹⁶ During the Harper Administration, which followed GWOT and Iraq, multilateral engagement was abandoned for more targeted relationships in the region, the development of an overtly pro-Israel stance, and further alignment with U.S. rhetoric that counterterrorism operations in the Middle East were synonymous with national defence.²¹⁷ Even after a change in government, this remains a large part of Canadian engagement strategy in the region with Canada joining the Global Coalition against Daesh/ISIS in 2014. Canadian counterterrorism efforts still make up a significant percentage of its MENA engagement with aid to the region and current engagement in six regional military operations.

²¹⁴ Dennis Horak, "Canada and the Gulf," *Defense and Security Foresight Group*, July 2020, https://uwaterloo.ca/defence-security-foresight-group/sites/default/files/uploads/files/dsfg_horak_workingpaper.pdf

²¹⁵ Susan Khazaeli, "In search of a Canadian Middle East policy: A look at past approaches," *International Journal*, 78, 1-2 (2023): 113.

²¹⁶ Khazaeli, "In search of a Canadian Middle East policy," 116.

²¹⁷ Khazaeli, "In search of a Canadian Middle East policy," 118.

Canada's Role in International Security Frameworks

Canada's involvement in international security is inherently multilateral, occurring through NATO, agencies like INTERPOL and EUROPOL, and interventions through Peacekeeping and Stabilizing Operations (PSOPs). Canadian intelligence gathering also occurs on a multilateral level through the Five Eyes; although, recent news reporting highlights that Trump's administration may be considering severing Canada's relationship with this intelligence-sharing alliance.²¹⁸ In the last decade, Canada has come under fire for under-contributing to some of these international frameworks—among them NATO—as Canada continues to miss the 2% GDP expenditure on defence and has only committed to reaching it by 2032.²¹⁹ Nonetheless, Canada has remained a member of these frameworks, participating in key interventions like Darfur from 2005-2007 in collaboration with the African Union (AU), and Libya against the al-Gaddafi regime in 2011. In 2005, NATO supported the AU by offering peacekeepers to distribute humanitarian aid to those suffering in Darfur, going beyond their typical sphere of operation.²²⁰ In 2011, NATO intervened in Libya, assisting with humanitarian aid distribution and establishing a no-fly zone; however, their intervention also included airstrikes which caused several civilian deaths.²²¹ While being a part of these frameworks has supported Canada's global reputation, it continually let other countries take charge, none more than the U.S. under Trump.

²¹⁸ Demetri Sevastopulo, "White House official pushes to axe Canada from Five Eyes intelligence group," *Financial Post*, February 26 2025.

<https://financialpost.com/financial-times/u-s-official-pushes-cut-canada-five-eyes-intelligence-group>.

²¹⁹ Government of Canada, "Defense Spending", Government of Canada, January 24 2025.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/proactive-disclosure/cds-man-date-priorities-26-sept-2024/defence-spending.html>.

²²⁰ Julien Pomarède & Théa Schjødt, "Security Identities and 'No More, No Less' Operations: On Making NATO's Involvement in Darfur Possible," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 9, 4 (2015): 496.

²²¹ Amnesty International, "Libya: The Forgotten Victims of NATO Airstrikes," *Amnesty International Publications*, (2012): 6. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/mde190032012en.pdf>

Humanitarian and Human Rights Engagement

Refugees and Immigration

In recent years, Canada has positioned itself as a leader in the refugee support and resettlement space, and in no case is that clearer than the Syrian refugee crisis. In 2015, the newly formed Trudeau government created the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative. A five-pronged plan that diverged from the rhetoric of the prior conservative government, but spoke to a larger, post-1945 modern Canadian history of mosaic multiculturalism and giving refuge to displaced peoples. This is seen through Canada's resettlement of Hungarian, Tibetan, and Vietnamese refugees between 1950-1980.²²² In regards to the Syrian refugee crisis, Canada stood apart from some of its European counterparts as well as partners in the region, such as Jordan and Lebanon, who were taking on the brunt of displaced populations from the humanitarian crisis but did not provide Syrian refugees with pathways to permanent residency.²²³ Moreover, Canada's unique approach marked a significant departure from American foreign policy strategy, key messaging, and response in the region. While the U.S. planned to resettle 10,000 refugees in 2016 and 25,000 in 2017,²²⁴ the Canadian government resettled over 40,000 refugees between November 2015 and February 2016.²²⁵ When the first Trump administration halted Syrian refugee intake and espoused Islamophobic and xenophobic sentiments, Canadian foreign policy held firm. As noted in *Middle Power in the Middle East*, "[d]espite the American response to the refugee situation, under Trudeau's leadership, Canada tailored its policy to the

²²² Joseph Zajda, Nitza Davidovitch, and Suzanne Majhanovich. *Discourses of Globalisation, Multiculturalism and Cultural Identity*, 2023, 105.

²²³ Marko Valenta, Jo Jakobsen, Drago Župarić-Iljić, and Hariz Halilovich, "Syrian Refugee Migration, Transitions in Migrant Statuses and Future Scenarios of Syrian Mobility," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (2020): 166.

²²⁴ Margaret Walton-Roberts, Luisa Veronis, and Leah K. Hamilton. *A National Project: Syrian Refugee Resettlement in Canada*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020, 5.

²²⁵ Bessma Momani and Thomas Juneau, *Middle Power in the Middle East: Canada's Foreign and Defence Policies in a Changing Region*, University of Toronto Press, 2022.

perceptions of the Canadian body politic, public sentiments, and Canadian values.”²²⁶ It is important to note that this foreign policy approach occurred when domestic sentiment supported this response, but continued as support wavered and then restabilized. Canada must recognize the symbiosis between domestic values and priorities, as well as its international responses and how they will always influence each other.

Human Rights and Foreign Policy Issues

For over five decades, human rights promotion has been a foreign policy objective for the government of Canada, but the execution of this aim in the MENA region leaves much to be desired. In *Middle Power in the Middle East*, David Petrasek discusses Canada’s competing foreign policy priorities that prevent consistent stances for policy interventions based on human rights including: desire to align with U.S. and European allies;²²⁷ diasporic lobbying and influences;²²⁸ citizen support for counterterrorism efforts against religious extremists;²²⁹ and the politics of the government of the day.²³⁰ The variety of stances in the region is unsurprising given the numerous interests at play when it comes to Canadian foreign policy in the Middle East.

While Canada has utilized humanitarianism as a pillar of its foreign policy, its track record has been inconsistent and confusing. Relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran stand out as strong examples. Since the end of the Cold War, Western countries have questioned the ethics of selling arms to countries with human rights violations.²³¹ Canada does have legal restrictions that prevent the sale of weapons to countries that violate the human rights of either Canadians or the purchasing state’s citizens, yet they have continued sales to Saudi Arabia, a known human rights

²²⁶ Bessma and Juneau, *Middle Power in the Middle East*, 96.

²²⁷ Bessma and Juneau, *Middle Power in the Middle East*, 159.

²²⁸ Bessma and Juneau, *Middle Power in the Middle East*, 160.

²²⁹ Bessma and Juneau, *Middle Power in the Middle East*, 161.

²³⁰ Bessma and Juneau, *Middle Power in the Middle East*, 162.

²³¹ Jeremy Wildeman, “The Middle East in Canadian Foreign Policy and National Identity Formation,” *International Journal* (Toronto) 76, no. 3 (2021): 376, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00207020211049326>.

violator.²³² Rather than challenging Saudi Arabia's position, as the Canadian internationalist peacemaking foreign policy tradition would suggest, Canada has supported regional violence and extremism through continued weapons agreements.²³³ Canada explains this backtracking in ethical foreign policy in its initiative to prioritize security partnerships to combat terrorist organizations, often at the expense of Canada's liberal internationalist and humanitarian foreign policy tradition.²³⁴ Concerning Iran, the Stephen Harper administration attempted to promote Canadian values, human rights, and democracy and Trudeau's campaign also promised to restore diplomatic relations with Iran.²³⁵ However, by 2018, the Liberal Party renounced its plans and voted not to improve ties with Iran, further distancing itself from its standard liberal internationalist mold.²³⁶ Overall, the inconsistent MENA foreign policy damages the historical influence Canada once had in the region, negatively impacting Canada's standing on the international stage.

Canada's failed bid for a UNSC seat partly reflects its inconsistent foreign policy record, especially when compared to competitors such as Norway and Ireland with stronger commitments to international law and human rights.²³⁷ On Israel-Palestine, Canada's record stands out as particularly poor.²³⁸ An inconsistent voting behavior at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is significant as the majority of member states—primarily from the Global South—identify with the Palestinian cause and routinely support resolutions affirming Palestinian rights.²³⁹ Despite Trudeau's campaign promise that "Canada is back," attempting to

²³² Wildeman, "The Middle East," 377.

²³³ Wildeman, "The Middle East," 379.

²³⁴ Wildeman, "The Middle East," 379.

²³⁵ Wildeman, "The Middle East," 380.

²³⁶ Wildeman, "The Middle East," 381.

²³⁷ Wildeman and Swan, "What Lies Ahead?," 12.

²³⁸ Wildeman and Swan, "What Lies Ahead?," 12.

²³⁹ Wildeman and Swan, "What Lies Ahead?," 12.

diverge from the Harper government's aggressive stance toward the MENA region,²⁴⁰ little has changed regarding Palestine. Notably, Canada has failed to apply its FIAP when it comes to Palestinian human rights. For example, Canada was one of only four countries—alongside Guatemala, Israel, and the U.S.—to vote against a draft resolution addressing the situation of Palestinian women. This decision appears at odds with Canada's efforts to position itself as a global leader with its FIAP.²⁴¹ The Palestine example has long been central to shaping Canada's international identity and has, in recent years, intersected with broader social justice movements like Black Lives Matter and Indigenous rights activism within Canada.²⁴² Yet, Canada's voting patterns remain consistently aligned with Israel, even when human rights are at stake.

Ultimately, Canada's inconsistent approach to the MENA region reflects a tension between its liberal internationalist identity and the strategic interests driving its foreign policy. If Canada hopes to restore its global reputation as a principled actor and regain influence in the region, it must reconcile its foreign policy actions with its stated values. Upholding human rights and international law consistently—not selectively—will be essential to rebuilding that credibility.

Aid and Humanitarian Relief

Some of Canada's most well-known and well-advertised international work is in foreign aid and humanitarian relief, however, the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. shifted Canada's foreign policy objectives in the MENA region.²⁴³ After 9/11, Canada's regional humanitarian aid efforts were deprioritized until the Trudeau Liberals were elected in 2015. The Trudeau government pivoted back to investing in aid, developing FIAP, focusing on international

²⁴⁰ Wildeman, "The Middle East," 368.

²⁴¹ Emma Swan, "'The Personal Is Political!': Exploring the Limits of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy under Occupation and Blockade," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 27, no. 1 (2021): 126.

²⁴² Wildeman, "The Middle East," 372.

²⁴³ Constanza Muzu, "Canada and the MENA region: The foreign policy of a middle power", *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, 18, 1 (2012): 65.

development, and securing peace in destabilized regions by advancing women's rights. From 2022-2023, Canada deployed over \$16B in foreign aid, with Jordan, Syria, and Yemen represented in the top 20 recipients of Canadian assistance.²⁴⁴ A significant amount of Canadian aid in the MENA region is directed to organizations part of the Peace and Stabilizing Operations Program and the Counter-Terrorism Capacity Building Program in countries across the region, but Canada also supports groups like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Food Programme. In 2024, Canada paused its aid to UNRWA in response to allegations of the organization supporting Hamas in the Israel-Palestine conflict but resumed funding in March 2024.²⁴⁵ Moreover, earlier this year, Canada committed an additional \$17.25M in humanitarian aid to Syria, directed at Water, Sanitation, Hygiene initiatives (WASH) and anti-sexual and gender-based violence initiatives.²⁴⁶ Overarchingly, Canada's recent foreign policy on aid in the MENA region has been focused on supporting the countries that are experiencing the most significant population displacement, as well as the countries that take in the most refugees.²⁴⁷

Policy Recommendations

Challenges and Future Prospects: Canada as a Middle Power in MENA

²⁴⁴ Global Affairs Canada, "Statistical Report on International Assistance, Fiscal Year 2022-2023", (2024): 5. <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/assets/pdfs/international-assistance-report-stat-rapport-aid-e-internationale/2022-2023-en.pdf>

²⁴⁵ Global Affairs Canada, "Canada announces continued assistance for people in Gaza," Global Affairs Canada, 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2024/03/canada-announces-continued-assistance-for-people-in-gaza.html>

²⁴⁶ Global Affairs Canada, "Minister Hussen announces humanitarian assistance for Syria following visit to Middle East," Global Affairs Canada, 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2025/01/minister-hussen-announces-humanitarian-assistance-for-syria-following-visit-to-middle-east.html>

²⁴⁷ Global Affairs Canada, "Special Envoy for Syria to visit Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon", *Global Affairs Canada*, (2025). <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2025/02/special-envoy-for-syria-to-visit-egypt-jordan-and-lebanon.html>

The existence of more powerful actors in MENA limits Canada's influence. With significant military, economic, and diplomatic clout, the U.S. continues to be the most powerful Western force in the area. The EU also has significant influence especially when it comes to commerce, development assistance, and immigration laws.²⁴⁸ Through the BRI, China has increased its presence in MENA by making investments in vital infrastructure and strategic alliances.²⁴⁹ In contrast, Canada does not have the same level of economic power, military presence, or long-standing historical connections as these actors. This restricts its capacity to influence regional policies and successfully handle emergencies.

However, it would be unrealistic to suggest Canada can assume great power status. Any policy recommendations must work within the middle power framework as the best option for Canada's foreign policy in the MENA region. At this time, Canada has become a minor actor in a region that is ripe with humanitarian crises and of growing interest for emerging great powers. Thus, if Canada is to maintain influence in the multipolar world order, it should reassert its presence to align with its historical foreign policy values but also ensure Canada's relevance. It is in the MENA region that Canada was able to realize its identity as a mediating power and the need for collective security, recognizing that although it was geographically far, it had the means to intervene to ensure relations between greater powers remained steadfast and to avoid the breakdown of multilateral forums.²⁵⁰

Although great powers are often considered to be managers of the world system, middle powers like Canada can undertake managerial roles giving direction to international relations.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Thomas Juneau, "In Search of a Canadian Middle East Policy: A Look at Past Approaches," *International Journal* 78, no. 1 (2023): 5-24.

²⁴⁹ Jeremy Garlick and Radka Havlová, "China's 'Belt and Road' Economic Diplomacy in the Persian Gulf: Strategic Hedging amidst Saudi-Iranian Regional Rivalry," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 49, no. 1 (30 January 2020): 82-105.

²⁵⁰ Donaghy, "Politics of Accommodation," 326.

²⁵¹ Henrikson, "Middle Powers as Managers," 46.

This is achieved by three types of diplomatic mediation: good offices, bridge-building, and planetary management.²⁵² While Canada has historically excelled as a bridge-builder, its good offices abilities, associated with neutrality, have fallen short as Canada routinely takes strong positions and conveniently aligns itself with its neighbour. However, the planetary management aspect of mediation can grant Canada greater command on the international stage. Middle powers as a combined force are essential to managing specific domains of the world such as Canada and Sweden's combined role in environmental policies or Canada and Norway's role in UN laws of the sea.²⁵³ As threats emerge from the MENA region and greater powers become preoccupied with their rivals, cooperation among middle powers is essential for global stability. As Richard Higgott notes, middle powers are not constrained by hegemonic or great power "baggage" and have the space to think creatively and cooperatively about world problems.²⁵⁴ This paper will thus make the following recommendations with this framework in mind.

Aid Strategy

While Canada's aid policies tend to be reactionary to crises that emerge from MENA, it should aim for a stronger foothold through more sustainable and long-term efforts. This could include working with NGOs at home and abroad since NGO coalitions can promote activities in partner countries with the help of the Canadian government while also advocating within Canada.²⁵⁵ As Paul Kingston suggests, partnering with NGO coalitions previously had represented Canada's civil society promotion policy in the MENA region as well as allowing

²⁵² Henrikson, "Middle Powers as Managers," 58.

²⁵³ Henrikson, "Middle Powers as Managers," 59.

²⁵⁴ Richard Higgott, "Issues, Institutions and Middle-Power Diplomacy: Action and Agendas in the Post-Cold War Era," in *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War*, ed. Andrew Fenton Cooper (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 41.

²⁵⁵ Paul Kingston, "Promoting Civil Society Advocacy in the Middle East and at Home: Non-Governmental Organizations, the Canadian International Development Agency, and the Middle East Working Group, 1991–2001," in *Canada and the Middle East*, ed. Bessma Momani and Paul Heinbecker (Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 121.

Canada to “fly its flag.”²⁵⁶ Sustained collaboration with NGO coalitions enables Canada to stimulate lasting relationships in the MENA region, creating engagement beyond short-term crisis response.

Moreover, Canada has to coordinate better with regional groups like the Gulf Cooperation Council to increase the efficacy of its assistance. Ideally, this would enable better alignment with regional development goals and more locally focused solutions.²⁵⁷ To prevent money from being exploited by corrupt governments, Canada should also tie aid to quantifiable advancements in human rights and governance. Finally, to guarantee that Canada’s aid reaches the most vulnerable communities, it should increase its cooperation with international organizations like the UNHCR and the UN World Food Programme. Canada must also ensure that its funding commitments stay the same in light of the ongoing crises in Syria, Yemen, and Palestine.²⁵⁸ This includes preventing politically motivated disruptions like the temporary suspension of UNRWA financing.

Human Rights Recommendations

Critics contend that Canada's commitment to human rights is handled inconsistently, giving it priority in diplomatic discourse while conveniently ignoring abuses when there are financial gains to be made. To improve Canada-MENA relations, Canada must advocate for regional human rights in a more consistent manner, ensuring that human rights issues are prioritized even when they clash with security or economic objectives.²⁵⁹ For instance, Canada should not shy away from applying Magnitsky-style sanctions in the region to ensure individuals and organizations themselves are held accountable for grave human rights abuses. Canada’s

²⁵⁶ Kingston, “Promoting Civil Society Advocacy,” 135.

²⁵⁷ Evelyne Goulet and Reid Groeneveld, *Canada’s Foreign Aid Policy Review* (Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, January 2021).

²⁵⁸ Leah Hamilton, *A National Project*, 20 August 2020.

²⁵⁹ Global Affairs Canada, “Government of Canada,” *GAC*, September 5, 2024.

https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/mena-

position as a leader in multilateral fora also allows it to advocate for reform in UN bodies, such as the UN Human Rights Council, to hold violators accountable. Further, Canada should boost financing for civil society groups that advance human rights and democratic governance throughout MENA to encourage grassroots activism.²⁶⁰ Partnerships with global watchdog groups such as Human Rights Watch and direct contributions to regional NGOs can help achieve this. Overarchingly, a less politically biased, more proactive, and more cohesive approach is necessary for Canada to strengthen its regional and international reputation on human rights

Refugees and Immigration Policy Recommendations

In addition to its current focus on Syrian refugees, Canada should extend its refugee resettlement commitments to vulnerable populations in Yemen, Palestine, and Afghanistan.²⁶¹ Canada has to adopt a long-term resettlement structure instead of implementing ad hoc solutions to crises because of the protracted wars in these regions. To enable more community-led assistance, this entails raising the annual ceiling on the number of refugees admitted and expediting the private sponsorship procedure.²⁶²

Canada should collaborate with MENA governments and international organizations to improve refugee safeguards in host nations like Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey to address the underlying causes of displacement. To lessen the strain on host communities and guarantee a more sustainable strategy for displacement, Canada should offer these nations financial and technical assistance to enhance refugee access to healthcare, education, and legal safeguards.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ Global Affairs Canada, “Government of Canada,” *GAC*, 5 September 2024.

https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/mena-moan/israeli-palestinian_policy-politique_israelo-palestinien.aspx?lang=eng.

²⁶¹ Robert Vineberg, *Canada’s Refugee Strategy: How It Can Be Improved*, SPP Briefing Paper, Volume 11:14 (April 2018).

²⁶² Vineberg, *Canada’s Refugee Strategy: How It Can Be Improved*.

²⁶³ Global Affairs Canada, “Government of Canada,” Global Affairs Canada, 9 February 2024.

https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/mena-moan/strategy-strategie.aspx?lang=eng.

Additionally, Canada needs to make sure that its immigration laws uphold its humanitarian obligations. This includes providing refugees and asylum seekers with more flexible routes to permanent status, especially for those who have relatives in Canada.²⁶⁴ Canada should reaffirm its commitment to being a global leader in resettlement and integration as anti-refugee attitudes rise in some Western countries, demonstrating that it prioritizes humanitarian ideals over political expediency.

Ideal Security Framework

With Canada increasingly being isolated and becoming distant from the U.S.,²⁶⁵ Canada must seek to improve security ties by increasing direct engagement with other unions and states in the MENA region, like the AU and the Gulf Cooperation Council, where Canada holds a relatively strong image. Furthermore, Canada must bolster bilateral and multilateral relations with Commonwealth states—who are independent of American involvement, forge alliances based on respect of the rules-based international order, and revive the orthodox Pearsonian nature of Canadian foreign relations that has been missing since the pre-Harper era. Alongside improving its relations with other nations, Canada also needs to focus on conflict prevention and stabilization instead of reactive counterterrorism measures.²⁶⁶ Canada should refocus its security engagement in the Middle East and North Africa. Although Canada's involvement in the Global Coalition against Daesh/ISIS is still crucial, Canada should broaden its scope to encompass peacebuilding and diplomatic dispute settlement and go beyond the American sphere of

²⁶⁴ Vineberg, *Canada's Refugee Strategy: How It Can Be Improved*.

²⁶⁵ Andrew Latham, "The New Middle East: Toward a Restrained and Realistic Canadian Strategy," *The Institute For Peace and Diplomacy*, 2024.

²⁶⁶ National Defence, "Canada Supports Peace and Stability in Middle East, Africa and Central Asia," Canada.ca, 9 October 2024.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2024/09/canada-supports-peace-and-stability-in-middle-east-africa-and-central-asia.html>.

influence. This could entail boosting resourcing for UN peacekeeping missions and aiding post-conflict reconstruction initiatives in nations like Libya, Iraq, and Syria.

Canada also has to reconsider its dedication to regional NATO operations. It should move away from military interventions and toward diplomatic and capacity-building activities—even though NATO is still a vital security partner.²⁶⁷ Enhancing Canada's involvement in mediation would enable it to contribute positively without getting involved in protracted military operations. Moreover, Canada should involve regional partners in MENA in intelligence-sharing agreements, while still maintaining its membership in Five Eyes. This would strengthen diplomatic relations and enhance its capacity to keep an eye on security risks.²⁶⁸ Ultimately, Canada should strengthen its reputation as a peace-focused middle power in the area by adopting a balanced strategy that prioritizes stability over militarism.

Conclusion

To manage its foreign policy in MENA, Canada has historically depended on multilateral organizations. However, its long-term impact has been constrained by its inconsistent approach, especially when it comes to striking a balance between security interests and human rights advocacy. Economic interests have further complicated Canada's stance, creating tensions between trade priorities and human rights commitments, while balancing alliances with global powers with deeper economic and strategic stakes in MENA has made it difficult for Canada to assert an independent foreign policy.²⁶⁹

Canada cannot afford to overlook the importance of the MENA region in its foreign policy. While traditionally not a central focus, recent events and shifting global dynamics

²⁶⁷ Latham, "The New Middle East: Toward a Restrained and Realistic Canadian Strategy."

²⁶⁸ Latham, "The New Middle East: Toward a Restrained and Realistic Canadian Strategy."

²⁶⁹ Jeremy Wildeman and Emma Swan, "What Lies Ahead? Canada's Engagement with the Middle East Peace Process and the Palestinians: An Introduction," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 27, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 1–20.

necessitate a reassessment of Canada's role in the region. The decline of American influence provides Canada with an opportunity to assert itself as an independent actor. Its history of multilateral diplomacy and humanitarian leadership, exemplified by the Suez Crisis and its recent refugee resettlement efforts, positions Canada as a force for stability and conflict resolution.²⁷⁰ The MENA region's instability has global repercussions, including security threats, economic disruptions, and humanitarian crises, all of which can impact Canada directly or through its alliances.²⁷¹ If Canada is to maintain influence in the multipolar world order, it should leverage its diplomatic and humanitarian strengths in the MENA region.

²⁷⁰ Leah Hamilton, *A National Project*, August 20, 2020.

²⁷¹ Jeremy Wildeman and Emile Badarin, "What Lies Ahead? Canada's Engagement with the Middle East Peace Process and the Palestinians," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 27, no. 1 (2021): 47-63.

Case Study #4: Peacekeeping & Human Rights

By: Ranka Kyriakidou Vuckovic, Kenn Satake McDonald, Masha Romanova & Shanzae Zaeem

Introduction

As Canada returns to a multipolar world, the greater involvement of competing alliances in regional conflicts leads to a greater risk of global escalation. Many modern wars are launched or co-opted by countries which are—or aspire to be—poles for the sake of their own geopolitical gain. This escalation of great power involvement in conflicts around the world echoes the employment of proxy wars by the powers of the previous bipolar era which developed in the aftermath of the Second World War. Canada contributed to the stabilization of this previous multipolar environment through its commitment to multilateralism and humanitarianism, most clearly showcased by its leadership in peacekeeping.

As described in the previous section on MENA, Canada's pioneering involvement in peacekeeping came about in reaction to the Suez Crisis, a conflict with the involvement of four Great Powers: France, the UK, the U.S., and the Soviet Union. The foundation of the UN's peacekeeping tradition was a result of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson's leadership at the UNGA, which helped Canada carve out its place as a multilateral middle power and globally respected honest broker amid the brinkmanship of the Cold War.

With the decline in the U.S.'s hegemonic status and its reduced involvement in the rules-based global order, Canada must return to its previous stance as an honest broker by willing to break from American foreign policy when it damages the causes of global peace and human rights. Canada must also regain its position as a multilateral, humanitarian middle power by championing a new doctrine of peacekeeping which reflects the lessons learned from the past regarding colonialism and interventionism. Canada must shape global humanitarian and

peacekeeping discourse into one which emphasizes state and human autonomy while minimizing use of force. Two major ongoing conflicts, in Ukraine and the Middle East, are potential foreign policy turning points where Canada should leverage its current and historical involvement to encourage global peace and stability. In order to substantiate its policy of upholding human rights on the world stage, the final part of this section provides a strategy for Indigenous empowerment that allows Canada to align international actions with professed values.

A New Doctrine for Peacekeeping

Both of the world's current most prominent wars have regional or global powers explicitly backing both sides, a sign that the global order is shifting back toward a multipolar environment.²⁷² As the world divides into competing alliances, regional conflicts are at higher risk of escalating into broader wars. These conditions demand a return to one of Canada's historical strengths: peacekeeping. Canada's pioneering use of peacekeeping helped de-escalate an Arab–Israeli war over six decades ago.²⁷³ Today, the Government of Canada is signalling a willingness to station peacekeepers in a future postwar Ukraine.²⁷⁴ Current and future peace processes in Ukraine and the Middle East could both benefit from on-the-ground peacekeepers, just like past wars fought between organized governments during the Cold War.²⁷⁵

However, the evolution of peacekeeping into a form of military intervention controlled by the UNSC has made it less effective and more deadly.²⁷⁶ The modern rise of terrorist insurgencies

²⁷² Sven Biscop, "How the War in Ukraine Shapes the Multipolar World," *Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations* (2022). <https://www.egmontinstitute.be/how-the-war-in-ukraine-shapes-the-multipolar-world/>.

²⁷³ Maurice Jr. M. Labelle, "Not So Nobel: Arab Perceptions of Lester Pearson and Canada," *Mike's World: Lester B. Pearson and Canadian External Affairs* (UBC Press, 2017), 172.

²⁷⁴ The Canadian Press, "Sending Canadian troops to Ukraine 'on the table' under possible peace deal: Trudeau," *CTV News*, 24 February 2025. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/article/trudeau-in-kyiv-pledges-army-vehicles-seized-russian-cash-on-anniversary-of-invasion/>.

²⁷⁵ Dennis Jett, "Why Peacekeeping Does Not Promote Peace," *Middle East Policy* (2023).

²⁷⁶ Jett, "Why Peacekeeping Does Not Promote Peace" (2023).

like the Islamic State and Boko Haram led to the deployment of peacekeepers where there was no peace to keep.²⁷⁷ The Western world's colonial history and Canada's mistreatment of Indigenous people make use of force in defence of human rights a hard case to argue for, especially in the Global South where most peacekeepers are currently deployed.²⁷⁸ Instead, Canada should lead the creation of a new doctrine for peacekeeping which emphasizes humanitarianism. Peacekeeping should be reshaped into a practice that is effective, accountable, and better aligns with Canadian values so that Canada may contribute its utmost to global peace. Taking a leading role in the future of peacekeeping will also provide Canada with a measure of foreign policy independence from the emerging global poles by forging connections across multipolar divides.

The new humanitarian peacekeeping doctrine should recast peacekeeping as a form of on-the-ground aid akin to disaster response. Peacekeepers would monitor ceasefires, minimize bloodshed, and prevent ground-level border skirmishes from escalating into larger conflicts. Missions would be multilateral with limited, impartial mandates fulfilled by nations which are not powers in the area of conflict. Peacekeeping coalitions would preferably be created on an ad-hoc basis with UN funding and arms-length oversight, but the factions involved in a conflict should have the greatest power over its corresponding peacekeeping mission. These steps would ensure that peacekeepers are more accountable to local stakeholders than to the global powers which control the UNSC, and it would reduce the likelihood of a peacekeeping mission resorting to violence to maintain peace.²⁷⁹ A peacekeeping mission which explicitly rejects use of force could achieve greater autonomy from the UNSC if it is treated more like a disaster response than

²⁷⁷ Jett, "Why Peacekeeping Does Not Promote Peace" (2023).

²⁷⁸ "Where We Operate," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed 2025. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/where-we-operate>.

²⁷⁹ Patryk I. Labuda, "UN Peacekeeping as intervention by invitation: host state consent and the use of force in Security Council-mandated stabilisation operations," *Journal on the Use of Force and International Law* (2020).

a military intervention. Should conflict escalate to a political level where non-use of force peacekeeping is no longer effective, the mission should withdraw rather than attempt to impose peace on unwilling leaders. Further responses to a resumption of violence should be determined by the global community as a whole, not by a force designed to maintain peace where it no longer exists.

While it should operate in parallel, mediation at a political level would not be part of a humanitarian peacekeeping mandate. The common practice of combined mediation and peacekeeping creates problems around mission clarity and conflict of interest.²⁸⁰ Long-lasting peacekeeping missions can be used as a crutch by leaders who do not want to spend their political capital on the compromises needed for a permanent diplomatic solution.²⁸¹ The scope of immediate on-the-ground conflict prevention is also very different from securing permanent peace at a political level. While the two should be connected and peacekeepers can be part of a political solution, peacekeeping missions should operate independently and aim to leave before the end of a diplomatic peace process.

The countries involved in a peacekeeping mission should generally be smaller and less powerful to reduce the mission's perception as a threat to the combatants. Several states in Western Europe have already declared intent to join a "coalition of the willing" regarding a future peacekeeping mission in Ukraine, but the Russian government has so far rejected the idea of deploying peacekeepers from NATO countries.²⁸² Rather than cut out NATO countries from peacekeeping entirely, Canada should take a leading role in this coalition and encourage the creation of a multilateral force which includes countries loosely aligned with powers on both

²⁸⁰ "How Peacekeeping Operations Work: Lesson 1.6," Core Pre-deployment Training Materials, United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support (2017), 10.

²⁸¹ Dennis Jett, "Why Peacekeeping Does Not Promote Peace," *Middle East Policy* (2023).

²⁸² Briar Stewart, "The U.S. says the 'ball is now in Russia's court.' But what really happens if Putin agrees to a ceasefire?" *CBC News* (2025). <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/ukraine-russia-ceasefire-peacekeeping-1.7480914>.

sides of the conflict. Kazakhstan, for instance, could provide a counter-balance to smaller Western countries like Canada, Sweden, or Australia, who have already stated a willingness to be involved.²⁸³ Similar coalitions could be formed for a peacekeeping mission in Gaza, perhaps including smaller Arab states like Jordan or Iraq.

Over time these ad-hoc coalitions could evolve into a “peacekeeping community” that promotes peace at a global level by establishing strong relationships across the multipolar divide. Smaller countries could gain greater agency and influence through collective action, while also serving as intermediaries to encourage dialogue between the global powers. Canada’s central role in this dialogue could help it regain the soft power it previously had as a voice for peacekeeping and multilateralism during the Cold War.

From a domestic perspective, optimizing the military for peacekeeping could be a less controversial way to ensure that Canada meets its NATO-imposed military spending target of 2% of GDP.²⁸⁴ Peacekeeping is a major part of Canada’s national mythology, and it is a concept many Canadians are already familiar with. Additionally, the logistical investments required to optimize the Canadian military for peacekeeping would also optimize it for foreign and domestic disaster response. As Canada deals with the repercussions of climate change through natural disasters and climate refugees, a military that is better-equipped to conduct observation, communication and aid distribution is as useful in Canada as it is overseas.²⁸⁵

A return to leadership in peacekeeping would continue Canada’s positive contributions to global peace and security, while also helping to rehabilitate its international reputation and

²⁸³ Dmytro Basmat, “Australia considering joining ‘coalition of the willing’ for Ukraine amid talks with Starmer,” *The Kyiv Independent* (2025). <https://kyivindependent.com/australia-considering-joining-coalition-of-the-willing-for-ukraine-following-talks-with-starmer/>.

²⁸⁴ Nadine Yousif, “Canada faces pressure at Nato summit for riding on ‘coattails,’” *BBC News* (2024). <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cl4ygzl4mzo>.

²⁸⁵ “What is peacekeeping: Military,” *United Nations Peacekeeping*. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/military>.

diplomatic power. Reforming peacekeeping in a way that centres multilateralism and humanitarianism, rather than use of force, would make it a relevant and useful tool to de-escalate global conflict in the emerging multipolar world. It would also create a space for smaller countries to collectively counter the power of the poles. In the case of Canada it would provide a more politically palatable and domestically useful way to meet the country's NATO-imposed military spending targets. Canada's historical role as a middle power was largely built from the goodwill it gained as a champion of peacekeeping and multilateralism. As American foreign policy becomes less predictable in its retreat from hegemony, Canada should be one of the countries filling the void through a triumphant return to its former status as a peacekeeping middle power.

A Shift in Foreign Policy Toward Palestine and Israel

Canadian and U.S. foreign policies often align due to shared liberal democratic values and economic interests, but they also differ in key areas such as multilateralism, military intervention, and prioritisation of global issues. While Canada has traditionally aligned with the U.S. on matters related to Israel and Palestine, this approach is increasingly outdated and harmful to Canada's international standing. As the U.S. under President Donald Trump adopts positions that challenge international law and human rights, Canada faces a critical choice: whether to follow the U.S. stance uncritically or assert an independent, humanitarian, and multilateral approach that better reflects its democratic principles.

Throughout the mid-to-late 20th century, Canada maintained its support for Israel, often under the guise of peacekeeping and diplomacy. During the 1956 Suez Crisis, Canada, through Pearson, helped create the world's first peacekeeping force, which enhanced Canada's reputation

as a peacemaker.²⁸⁶ However, this narrative of peacekeeping often obscured Canada's consistent support for Israel's position, even when it contributed to Palestinian dispossession. Take as an example, Canada's important role in Palestine's 1947 partitioning.²⁸⁷ Canada also played a significant role in subsequent peace processes, including the Camp David Accords and the Oslo Peace Process.²⁸⁸ These initiatives, while promoting dialogue, often sidelined Palestinian voices and failed to address the root causes of the conflict, such as occupation and settlement expansion.

Under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, a dramatic shift in Canada's foreign policy occurred, aligning it even more closely with Israeli interests. Harper expanded military and economic ties, including strengthening intelligence cooperation and updating the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement to benefit Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.²⁸⁹ His unwavering support was framed as a moral stance but also served domestic political interests, appealing to Jewish and evangelical Christian voters while alienating many Arab and Muslim Canadians. Critics argued that his policies undermined Canada's traditional role as a neutral mediator, contributing to the country's failed 2010 UN Security Council bid. His successor, Justin Trudeau, maintained close ties with Israel but sought a more diplomatic, multilateral approach.

The recent escalation of violence between Israel and Hamas has highlighted these challenges. On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a large-scale attack on Israel, killing over 1,400 people and taking more than 200 hostages.²⁹⁰ In response, Israel declared war and launched a massive military campaign against Gaza, resulting in widespread destruction and thousands of

²⁸⁶ Jeremy Wildeman and M. Muhannad Ayyash, *Canada as a Settler Colony on the Question of Palestine* (Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 2024), xiv.

²⁸⁷ Wildeman and Ayyash, *Canada as a Settler Colony on the Question of Palestine*, xiv.

²⁸⁸ Wildeman and Ayyash, *Canada as a Settler Colony on the Question of Palestine*, xiv.

²⁸⁹ Peter McKenna, *Harper's World: The Politicization of Canadian Foreign Policy, 2006-2015* (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2022), 20.

²⁹⁰ "What Is Hamas and Why Is It Fighting with Israel in Gaza?," *BBC News*, 21 January 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67039975>.

Palestinian casualties.²⁹¹ The conflict, the deadliest in decades, sparked global debate over Israel's right to self-defense versus the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, drawing attention to the unresolved issues of occupation, blockade, and Palestinian self-determination.²⁹² The UN has found that Israel's actions in Gaza over the past 15 months are consistent with genocide.

On November 21, 2024, the ICC issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, accusing them of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.²⁹³ Prime Minister Justin Trudeau affirmed that Canada, as a signatory to the Rome Statute, would adhere to its international legal obligations.²⁹⁴ He stated, "We stand up for international law, and we will abide by the regulations and rulings of the international courts."²⁹⁵ This commitment to international justice, even when it involves a close ally like Israel, marked a notable shift in Canada's stance. The same month, Canada voted in favour of a UNGA resolution condemning Israeli settlements, breaking from its previous practice of siding with Israel on such motions since 2011.²⁹⁶ This vote underscored Canada's concerns over the unrestrained expansion of settlements and the impunity associated with extremist settler violence.

The U.S. has shown little willingness to take action against Israeli practices in Gaza or the West Bank. Despite widespread international criticism of Israel's military actions, the U.S.

²⁹¹ "What Is Hamas and Why Is It Fighting with Israel in Gaza?," *BBC News*, 21 January 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67039975>.

²⁹² UN Body, "UN Special Committee Finds Israel's Warfare Methods in Gaza Consistent with Genocide, Including Use of Starvation as Weapon of War | Ohchr," *OHCHR*, 2024. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/11/un-special-committee-finds-israels-warfare-methods-gaza-consistent-genocide>.

²⁹³ Global News, "Trudeau Says Canada Will 'abide' by International Law, after ICC Issues Arrest Warrant for Netanyahu: Watch News Videos Online," *Global News*, 2024. <https://globalnews.ca/video/10881618/trudeau-says-canada-will-abide-by-international-law-after-icc-issues-arrest-warrant-for-netanyahu/>.

²⁹⁴ Global News, "Trudeau Says Canada Will 'abide' by International Law."

²⁹⁵ Global News, "Trudeau Says Canada Will 'abide' by International Law."

²⁹⁶ Amelia C. Arsenault and Costanza Musu, "Canada, the United Nations, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 27, no. 1 (2 January 2021): 98–116.

maintained its support for Israel, focusing primarily on Israel's right to self-defense and avoiding discussions on potential violations of international humanitarian law.²⁹⁷ Canada, however, has the chance to adopt a more independent approach, as it did during the Iraq War, when it chose not to participate despite intense U.S. pressure.²⁹⁸ It is through prioritising multilateralism, international law, and human rights, that Canada could set a precedent for a balanced and principled response to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Additionally, the evolving stance of European countries, including Ireland, Spain, and Norway, moreover provides a valuable opportunity for Canada to assert a more independent foreign policy. These countries have increasingly criticised Israel for its military actions and settlement policies. Ireland and Spain, for example, have advocated reviewing the human rights clauses in the EU-Israel trade agreement,²⁹⁹ while France has pressured Israel on its control of the Golan Heights, urging compliance with international agreements.³⁰⁰ For Canada, aligning with such European initiatives could reinforce a stance independent from U.S. foreign policy. While Israel remains an important ally, Canada's foreign policy should prioritise human rights and international law. Canada could consider measures like limiting arms sales to Israel, especially if such military equipment could contribute to the ongoing conflict. Furthermore, by reviewing its trade agreements with Israel, particularly those involving military technology, Canada could demonstrate a consistent and principled approach to human rights.

²⁹⁷ Bureau of Political and Military Affairs, "U.S. Security Cooperation with Israel," U.S. Department of State, January 2025.
<https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-israel/#:~:text=Since%20FY%202009%2C%20the%20United,including%20the%20F%2D35%20Lightning>.

²⁹⁸ Donald E. Abelson and Stephen Brooks, *History Has Made Us Friends: Reassessing the Special Relationship between Canada and the United States* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2024), 13.

²⁹⁹ Lisa O'Carroll, "Ireland and Spain Demand EU Reviews Israel Trade Deal over Rights Obligations," *The Guardian*, 14 February 2024.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/14/ireland-and-spain-demand-eu-reviews-israel-trade-deal-over-rights-obligations>.

³⁰⁰ Tom Nicholson, "France Tells Israel to Halt Golan Heights Incursion," *Politico*, 12 December 2024.
<https://www.politico.eu/article/france-israel-middle-east-golan-heights-syria-un-war-defense-idf-buffer-zone/>.

Therefore, a policy shift is necessary for three main reasons. First, it would align Canada's foreign policy with humanitarian and moral principles, ensuring that Canada consistently upholds human rights and international law. Second, it would bolster Canada's role in the global diplomatic community, aligning it with European nations such as Spain, Norway, and Ireland that are advocating for international justice and balanced approaches to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Third, a new direction would reflect democratic accountability, as Canadian foreign policy should resonate with public opinion—particularly as support for Palestinian statehood grows among Canadians, mirroring similar trends in Europe. As global perspectives evolve, Canada must seize the opportunity to reinforce its image as a leader in peacekeeping and diplomacy rather than risk being perceived as complicit in policies that undermine international law.

While Canada has already openly declared its support for the creation of an independent Palestinian state, its policies have not fully reflected this recognition.³⁰¹ This is similar to how the Canadian government acknowledges its history of settler colonialism and erasure of indigenous peoples, yet neglects issues faced by indigenous communities - as outlined in the previous section - such as racism and access to water, food, housing. By taking concrete steps—such as supporting Palestinian self-determination through diplomatic initiatives and aligning their actions with the aforementioned European governments—Canada can ensure that its policies are consistent with its stated principles. Maintaining close alignment with U.S. foreign policy on Palestine and Israel could significantly harm Canada's international standing, particularly given Trump's recent controversial statements. On January 27, 2025, Trump suggested that Israel should "clean" Gaza of its Arab inhabitants, a remark widely condemned by international

³⁰¹ Global Affairs Canada, "Government of Canada," *GAC*, 5 September 2024. https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/mena-moan/israeli-palestinian_policy-politique_israelo-palestinien.aspx?lang=eng.

observers as endorsing ethnic cleansing.³⁰² The UN's special rapporteur for Palestine, Francesca Albanese, described the statement as "illegal, immoral, and irresponsible."³⁰³

In conclusion, as global attitudes toward the Israel-Palestine conflict shift, Canada has a clear opportunity to adopt a foreign policy that better aligns with its democratic values. By distancing itself from the U.S. approach and aligning with European democracies, Canada can strengthen its reputation as a principled and independent actor on the world stage. This would not only enhance Canada's credibility as a leader in advocating for peace and justice but also ensure that its policies genuinely reflect its recognition of Palestinian statehood and commitment to international law. Ultimately, Canada can play a crucial role in promoting a just and lasting peace in the region, setting an example of how middle powers can contribute meaningfully to international diplomacy and human rights.

The Russo-Ukrainian War

The Russo-Ukrainian War's geopolitical implications have proven more extensive than initially assessed by the international community. The war has generated substantial regional impacts across Europe, particularly in terms of refugee displacement, energy security concerns, and broader security implications. The international rules-based order faces considerable pressure from revisionist policies implemented by both the U.S. and Russia. The precedent set by Russia's disregard for international law has created an environment where nations such as China, Israel, and the U.S. have demonstrated increased willingness to pursue unilateral actions that often contravene established ethical and diplomatic norms. This development holds particular significance for Canada, given the evolving nature of U.S. foreign policy and alliance structures.

³⁰² Andrew Mitrovica, "Trump's Genocidal Plan to 'clean out' Gaza Was There All Along," *Al Jazeera*, 28 January 2025. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2025/1/28/trumps-genocidal-plan-to-clean-out-gaza-was-there-all-along>.

³⁰³ Martin Oliner, "Let Donald Trump Make Gaza Great Again - Opinion," *The Jerusalem Post*, 1 February 2025. <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-840021>.

Recent imposition of tariffs under the Trump administration and statements questioning Canadian sovereignty, suggest an evolution in longstanding alliance dynamics.³⁰⁴ These circumstances warrant a comprehensive evaluation of Canada's international engagement strategy. To maintain its economic vitality, territorial integrity, and commitment to democratic principles, Canada must strengthen and diversify its international diplomatic and trade partnerships, particularly by building stronger alliances with European nations. The Russo-Ukrainian War has emerged as a critical factor in determining Canada's position within an increasingly multipolar international system, as its progression has contributed to a marked decline in global institutional stability.

The interdependent relationship between Canada and the U.S. exhibits notable parallels to the Russian-Ukrainian dynamics of 2000-2013. Ukraine's significant reliance on Russian energy resources mirrored broader economic interdependencies among former Soviet republics, particularly in the natural resources sector. As Ukraine pursued democratic reforms, Russia responded by implementing measures to reassert its regional influence. During Putin's third term, Russia's imperial ambition led to an increased pressure on Ukraine, particularly as Ukraine pursued closer ties with the EU through initiatives like the EU Association Agreement.³⁰⁵ The 2013 Revolution of Dignity followed, where Ukrainian citizens clearly expressed their support for European integration and democratic values over alignment with Russia.³⁰⁶ In response, Russia implemented energy-related sanctions.³⁰⁷ When these measures failed to prevent

³⁰⁴ Matina Stevis-Gridneff, "How Trump's '51st State' Canada Talk Came to Be Seen as Deadly Serious." *The New York Times*, 7 March 2025.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/07/world/canada/trump-trudeau-canada-51st-state.html>.

³⁰⁵ Molly Krasnodębska, "Confrontation as Ontological Security: Russia's Reactions to the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement." In *European-Russian Power Relations in Turbulent Times*, edited by Mai'a K. Davis Cross and Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski, 135-59. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021.

³⁰⁶ Nadia Diuk, "EUROMAIDAN: Ukraine's Self-Organizing Revolution." *World Affairs* 176, no. 6 (2014): 9-16.

³⁰⁷ Frank Umbach, "Russian-Ukrainian-EU Gas Conflict: Who Stands to Lose Most?" *NATO Review*, 9 May 9 2014. <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2014/05/09/russian-ukrainian-eu-gas-conflict-who-stands-to-lose-most/index.html>.

Ukraine's Western orientation, Russia proceeded with the annexation of Crimea and invasion of Donbass.³⁰⁸ On February 24, 2022, Russia escalated the war by launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This invasion resulted in severe violations of international law, encompassing attacks against civilian populations, damage to essential infrastructure including energy and nuclear facilities, and the forcible deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia.

The U.S. under Trump has abandoned its European allies and allied itself with Russia. This re-alignment has significantly undermined America's international credibility and reputation. As Singapore's Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen noted, America's image abroad has “changed from liberator to great disruptor to a landlord seeking rent.”³⁰⁹ The Trump administration's decision to withhold critical assistance to Ukraine appears to have been influenced by efforts to improve diplomatic relations with Russia.³¹⁰ Subsequently, the official U.S. position has evolved from one of condemning Russian aggression to expressing criticism of Ukraine's continued military resistance. Trump has falsely claimed that the U.S. has given Ukraine \$300B in foreign aid, aiming to coerce President Zelensky into a bilateral minerals deal.³¹¹ The German Kiel Institute estimated that U.S. aid to Ukraine actually totals \$119B—far less than the \$500B that the mineral deal would cost Ukraine.³¹² As the U.S. dramatically changes its foreign policy, its closest allies, including Canada, find themselves in a precarious position.

As the second-largest country in Europe, Ukraine's security directly affects the stability of the entire continent. Russia's attempts to dismantle Ukraine's military capabilities and national

³⁰⁸ Peter Zwack, "Russia's Contradictory Relationship with the West," *PRISM* 6, no. 2 (2016): 142-63.

³⁰⁹ Erik Kross, "US Set to Abandon Partners Again as History Repeats in Ukraine," *The Kyiv Independent*, 5 March 2025. <https://kyivindependent.com/us-set-to-abandon-partners-again-as-history-repeats-in-ukraine/>.

³¹⁰ Erik Kross, "US Set to Abandon Partners Again as History Repeats in Ukraine."

³¹¹ Ian A. Gregory and James Gregory, "Ukraine Minerals Deal: What We Know So Far," *BBC News*, 5 March 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn527pz54neo>.

³¹² Gregory and Gregory, "Ukraine Minerals Deal: What We Know So Far."

identity would have devastating consequences for European allies. Facing American tariffs and pressure to withdraw support from Ukraine, the EU and Canada must reassess their foreign policy to establish greater independence from the U.S.. France and Germany have begun strengthening their armies and increasing their assistance to Ukraine. On February 24th, 2025, the UK's Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer imposed 100 new sanctions on Russia and Chinese companies aiding Russia's war effort. He stated that additional sanctions on Putin would push him "to a point where he is ready not just to talk, but to make concessions."³¹³ On March 2, 2025, Canada followed Britain in imposing new sanctions on Russia³¹⁴.

The Canadian Minister of Defense Bill Blair has formally expressed Canada's readiness to participate in European peacekeeping operations in Ukraine, contingent upon adequate security guarantees from the U.S.³¹⁵. Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly has articulated Canada's interest in participating in security guarantee discussions, stating that "[w]e want to be part of conversations linked to more Canadians being involved in protecting Ukraine."³¹⁶ So far Canada has:

Supported Ukraine extensively, committing over \$19.7 billion in total assistance, including \$4.5 billion in military aid... through Operation UNIFIER, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) have trained more than 44,000 members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, with over 350 CAF members currently deployed in training missions across Europe. Canada has also provided air transport throughout the conflict: the Royal Canadian Air Force delivered over 25 million pounds of military aid from Canada and other allies to Ukraine... Canada has worked with our partners to reach over 16 million people with life-saving assistance, such as food, water, shelter and basic health services through

³¹³ Nevett, Joshua. "Keir Starmer: Donald Trump Has Changed Ukraine Conversation." *BBC News*, 24 February 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cj0qr168pdeo>.

³¹⁴ Bandouil, Sophia. "Canada Imposes New Sanctions against Russia." *The Kyiv Independent*, 3 March 2025. <https://kyivindependent.com/canada-imposes-new-sanctions-against-russia-2/>.

³¹⁵ Ivanyshyn, Victoria. "Canada Ready to Join Ukraine Peacekeeping Mission with US Backing, Defense Minister Says." *The Kyiv Independent*, 6 March, 2025. <https://kyivindependent.com/canada-voices-willingness-to-partake-in-ukraine-peacekeeping-mission/>.

³¹⁶ Ivanyshyn, Victoria. "Canada Wants to Participate in Talks on Ukraine's Security Guarantees, Official Says." *The Kyiv Independent*, 19 February 2025. <https://kyivindependent.com/canada-is-interested-in-being-part-of-protecting-ukraine-official-says/>.

humanitarian aid... launched the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel, temporarily welcoming nearly 300,000 Ukrainians and their family members to safety during the war... {and} launched, in partnership with Ukraine, the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children.³¹⁷

Canada has been and remains one of Ukraine's closest allies. It has condemned Russian aggression and war crimes and implemented an array of humanitarian initiatives to support Ukraine. Given Canada's significant role, it would be prudent to ensure its central involvement in war resolution negotiations alongside the EU. The interconnected nature of European and global security necessitates multilateral negotiations rather than exclusive bilateral discussions between the U.S. and Russia.

Key policy recommendations

1. European and Canadian peacekeepers in Ukraine.
2. Securing concrete security guarantees for Ukraine.
3. Strengthening European and Canadian military capabilities.
4. Development of crucial trade relationships between Canada and EU, including LNG exports to the EU.³¹⁸
5. Creating frameworks for post-war reconstruction investment.

Rectifying Indigenous Mistreatment

All of Canada's international efforts would be rendered hollow if they are not also reflected in its domestic policies towards Indigenous communities. While Canada claims to be committed to humanitarianism, in actuality it espouses a performance of altruism and

³¹⁷ Canada, Global Affairs. "Statement Marking 3 Years since Russia's Full-scale Invasion of Ukraine." Canada.ca, 24 February, 2025.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2025/02/statement-marking-3-years-since-russias-full-scale-invasion-of-ukraine.html/>.

³¹⁸ McMillan, Trevor. "The World Should Get Natural Gas and Oil from Canada: Here's Why." Canadian Energy Centre, 20 December, 2022.
<https://www.canadianenergycentre.ca/the-world-should-get-natural-gas-and-oil-from-canada-heres-why/>.

philanthropy devoid of genuine intent. As mentioned in the introduction to the policy paper, the state-sanctioned violence that Canada has committed against its Indigenous communities represents an institutionalized perpetuation of harm that continues to this day. The legacy of systemic disempowerment—stemming from land theft and child apprehension—has resulted in ongoing inequity and inequality, with Indigenous communities facing higher rates of poverty and disparities in health and education.

Canada currently stands at a pivotal moment with its Indigenous communities, where addressing and rectifying past and present mistreatment could allow the nation to genuinely embody the ethos of human rights and multicultural respect it professes to value. Such pivoting enhances Canada's position on the global stage by authenticating the nation's credibility and identity as a champion of human rights. Central to this commitment is the imperative of enhancing Indigenous political participation. The appointment of an Indigenous Auditor General—an independent officer of Parliament—would ensure that Indigenous perspectives are woven into the legislative process. This role would provide impartial oversight and guidance regarding government performance on Indigenous matters, thereby enhancing accountability and responsiveness.³¹⁹ Moreover, implementing electoral reforms that reserve seats for Indigenous candidates would facilitate direct representation of Indigenous interests within Canada's political institutions. Such measures not only acknowledge the significance of Indigenous voices but also foster the development of autonomous Indigenous nations.³²⁰ Additionally, increasing financial and resource support for Indigenous political organizations, including established entities like the Native Women's Association of Canada, is essential. This support would empower these

³¹⁹ Michael D Morden, "Parliament and the Representation of Indigenous Issues: The Canadian Case," *Parliamentary Affairs* 71, no. 1 (20th June, 2017): 127.

³²⁰ Réal Carrière and Royce Koop, "Indigenous Political Representation in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 56, no. 2 (24th May, 2023): 272.

organizations to advocate more effectively for Indigenous empowerment, development, and representation.

Furthermore, promoting Indigenous economic development and self-sufficiency is crucial for the long-term well-being of Indigenous communities. Supporting Indigenous-led initiatives, such as the ITH, exemplifies how strategic investments can yield substantial benefits. The ITH, which secured \$299M for the first public highway to the Arctic Ocean, illustrates the alignment of development goals with national interests.³²¹ Infrastructure improvements not only enhance access to essential services but also stimulate local economic revitalization, enabling Indigenous leaders to advocate effectively for their communities' needs.

Addressing food insecurity represents another critical area where human rights can be prioritized. In Nunavut, the food insecurity rate reached a staggering 57.0% in 2017–2018, in stark contrast to the national average of 12.7%.³²² To combat this pressing issue, enhancing retail competition by attracting new market entrants to northern communities is essential. Supporting Indigenous-owned cooperatives can help ensure fair pricing and high-quality food, ultimately improving access for those in need. Furthermore, investing in traditional food systems through funding for harvesting equipment and training programs is vital for cultural and nutritional sustenance. Such initiatives will not only alleviate food insecurity but also promote the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous cultures.

Indigenous-led housing development is essential for empowering Indigenous communities to manage their own housing projects. This approach ensures that they have a say in decision-making regarding design, construction, and maintenance, supported by dedicated

³²¹ Mia M. Bennett, “From State-Initiated to Indigenous-Driven Infrastructure: The Inuvialuit and Canada’s First Highway to the Arctic Ocean,” *World Development* 109 (September 2018): 134.

³²² Angela Daley et al., “From the Food Mail Program to Nutrition North Canada: The Impact on Food Insecurity among Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Families with Children,” *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue Canadienne d’économie* 57, no. 1 (4th October, 2023): 28.

funding. A notable example is the Jericho Lands development in Vancouver, a large-scale mixed-use project planned by the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations in collaboration with Canada Lands Company. This project exemplifies the potential for fruitful partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous entities. Such initiatives not only transform the region but also foster a more inclusive economic framework that values Indigenous perspectives and promotes long-term environmental stewardship. By increasing the prevalence of Indigenous-led developments, Canada can demonstrate its commitment to empowering Indigenous populations rather than perpetuating disempowerment.³²³

In tandem with housing, expanding access to healthcare services is critical for addressing health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. The integration of telehealth has been a significant advancement, providing greater access to specialized care and reducing travel and wait times for patients in remote areas. Notable initiatives like the FN Telehealth Expansion Project in British Columbia have successfully delivered essential healthcare services to distant Indigenous communities. However, while telehealth has made strides in improving access, it cannot fully eliminate barriers and requires ongoing infrastructure maintenance.³²⁴ To further enhance healthcare access, Canada should provide incentives such as scholarships, loan repayment programs, and increased salaries to attract healthcare professionals to rural Indigenous areas. For instance, the “A GP for Me” initiative, established in 2013 by the Government of BC and the BC Medical Association, offered financial incentives to physicians who committed to three-year contracts in designated rural communities, including seven reserves. This program successfully engaged over 3,000 doctors, ensuring that more than

³²³ Samantha Manalac, “From Stewardship to Leadership: How Indigenous-Led Developments Are Changing the BC Real Estate Landscape,” MLA Canada, accessed 17 February, 2025.

³²⁴ Nam Hoang Nguyen et al., “Barriers and Mitigating Strategies to Healthcare Access in Indigenous Communities of Canada: A Narrative Review,” *Healthcare* 8, no. 2 (26 April, 2020): 4.

178,000 individuals gained access to a family doctor.³²⁵ Additionally, the Government of Canada proposed a five-year, \$2B investment in the 2018 budget for a new Indigenous skills and employment training program, emphasizing higher-paying job opportunities.³²⁶

Despite Canada having the world's third-largest per capita freshwater reserves, many Indigenous communities face significant challenges, including contaminated water, limited access, and risks associated with inadequate treatment systems.³²⁷ To address these issues, Canada must commit itself to innovative solutions such as the initiative of RES'EAU-WaterNet, which is Canada's first and only multi-disciplinary research network dedicated to developing affordable drinking water solutions for small and rural communities. RES'EAU-WaterNet successfully built a new water facility for the Lytton First Nation, a project that was previously rejected by an engineering firm due to high costs. To rectify the neglect of Indigenous communities regarding water access, Canada should promote and expand networks like RES'EAU-WaterNet. By increasing their operational scale and capacity, these initiatives can better serve more Indigenous communities, ensuring that all have access to clean, safe drinking water.³²⁸

Conclusion

In conclusion, enhancing the genuine nature of Canada's humanitarian intent necessitates a fundamental transformation in the nation's engagement with Indigenous communities. By prioritizing critical issues such as Indigenous political representation, self-governance, food

³²⁵ Nam Hoang Nguyen et al., "Barriers and Mitigating Strategies to Healthcare Access in Indigenous Communities of Canada: A Narrative Review," 6.

³²⁶ Nam Hoang Nguyen et al., "Barriers and Mitigating Strategies to Healthcare Access in Indigenous Communities of Canada: A Narrative Review," 6.

³²⁷ "Finding a Solution to Canada's Indigenous Water Crisis," *BBC News*, 26 August, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-44961490>.

³²⁸ "Res'Eau-WaterNET," Van Anda Improvement District, 1st September, 2017, <https://vananda-id.ca/reseau-waternet/>.

insecurity, healthcare access, and clean water provision, Canada can take meaningful actions that truly reflect its humanitarian values. This departure from performative altruism can enable Canada to establish more substantial and authentic relationships on the global stage. For Canada to embody the ethos of humanitarianism it claims to uphold, it must ensure the intersection of international policy and domestic action. The reinvigoration of peacekeeping operations should prioritize peaceful resolutions over the propagation of violence, reflecting Canada's commitment to upholding international law—especially in regards to the mistreatment of Palestinians and eliciting support for Ukrainian security. Alongside these efforts, fostering genuine connections with Indigenous communities will not only reaffirm Canada's dedication to human rights but also enrich its social fabric, paving the way for a more inclusive future for all.

Case Study #5: Canada & Climate Governance

By: Sara Adus, Bronwyn Kirby, Trinity-Rose Madia & Ginger Yu

Introduction

In its 2024 Annual Report, Canada's Environmental Commissioner warned that "time is of the essence, and Canada is moving much too slowly" in addressing climate change.³²⁹ This stark assessment underscores a critical juncture for the country. In a multipolar world where resources and trade relations define global influence, Canada, warming at twice the global average, must navigate the tension between expanding its extractive industries, pursuing economic diversification, and upholding its environmental commitments.³³⁰ While Canada contributes to sustainability initiatives both domestically and internationally, it remains one of the world's leading Greenhouse Gas Emitters (GHGe).³³¹ This is largely due to the environmental impact of its oil, mining, and lumber sectors, which results in significant environmental degradation and undermines Canada's international credibility, influence, and commitment to environmental laws.³³²

Although Canada has the capacity to lead on climate action, it ranks 62nd out of 67 countries in the 2025 Climate Change Performance Index, reflecting its continued poor performance in this area.³³³ While the country has committed to the 2030 Paris Agreement emissions reduction target of reducing emissions by 40 to 45 percent below 2005 levels by 2030

³²⁹ "2024 Reports 6 to 10 of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the Parliament of Canada-Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development's Opening Statement to the News Conference," Government of Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada., accessed 12 March, 2025, https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/osm_20241107_e_44585.html.

³³⁰ Elizabeth Bush and Donald S. Lemmen, eds., *Canada's Changing Climate Report* (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, 2019), 444, 34.

³³¹ Guillaume Laganière, "Local polluters, foreign land and climate change: the myth of the local action rule in Canada," *Journal of Private International Law* 16, no. 3 (2020): 391.

³³² Laganière, "Local polluters, foreign land and climate change," 390.

³³³ "Canada," Climate Change Performance Index, 20 November, 2024, <https://ccpi.org/country/can/>.

and achieving net zero by 2050, it has still not made sufficient progress to reduce GHGe's to meet its targets.³³⁴ With less than five years remaining to meet emission reduction targets, Canada's current policies are insufficient to address domestic environmental issues and the global consequences of its practices. Among these consequences is the growing challenge of climate-induced migration, one of today's most pressing humanitarian and geopolitical issues. It arises as individuals are forced to flee their homes due to extreme environmental events and conditions. While Canada promotes itself as a leader in human rights and ecological preservation, its lack of meaningful action weakens its international influence on global climate governance and overall credibility.

In an increasingly multipolar world, renewed climate leadership offers Canada a critical opportunity to solidify its international influence and reinforce its commitment to sustainability. Canada must follow through on its previous climate commitments by implementing stricter regulations on domestic and international mining, oil refineries, and the lumber sector while addressing the growing challenge of climate-induced migration in the twenty-first century. This section on climate change will examine critical obstacles to climate change mitigation through the mining, oil, and lumber industries. By reviewing these industries and Canada's current policy, this paper will suggest regulatory and diplomatic measures Canada should adopt that will promote climate commitments, stimulate the economy and, most importantly, highlight where Canada fits in global environmental governance.

³³⁴ "2024 Reports 6 to 10 of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the Parliament of Canada," Office of the Auditor General of Canada, accessed 12 March, 2025, https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_cesd_202411_07_e_44576.html.

Historical Context

Canada has long portrayed itself as an environmental protection advocate while balancing its resource-driven economy. Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring* (1962), sparked global dialogue about climate change, shaping Canada's policies on pesticide regulation and ecological conservation.³³⁵ In 1987, Canada played a pivotal role in the Montreal Protocol, an international agreement to phase-out ozone depleting substances.³³⁶ Despite Canada's participation in this landmark agreement, commitment to environmental preservation has not always been consistent. Notably, Canada initially signed the Kyoto Protocol (1997), aimed at reducing emissions, but withdrew in 2011 because of economic concerns.³³⁷ Contrastingly, Canada has remained in more recent pacts, such as the Paris Agreement (2015), in which it committed to reducing emissions and climate mitigation to meet the goal of maintaining the global temperature below 2 degrees.³³⁸ Successive governments have struggled to remain consistent and effectively tackle the growing threat of climate change. This can largely be attributed to the country's difficulty in balancing economic interests with environmental preservation. Despite these difficulties, Canada continues to support global climate cooperation and create domestic initiatives for environmental preservation.

Natural Resource Extraction: Oil Refinery

Oil sand extraction results in large-scale deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions, and water pollution from toxic tailings ponds.³³⁹ The industry remains a focal point in discussions

³³⁵ Katrin MacPhee, "Canadian Working-Class Environmentalism, 1965-1985," *Labour / Le Travail* 74 (2014): 128.

³³⁶ Government of Canada, "Montreal Protocol," last modified 13 September 2023, <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange/canada-international-action/montreal-protocol.html>.

³³⁷ CBC News, "Canada Pulls Out of Kyoto Protocol," *CBC News*, December 12, 2011, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-pulls-out-of-kyoto-protocol-1.999072>.

³³⁸ Government of Canada, "Paris Agreement," last modified September 13, 2023, <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/climate-change/paris-agreement.html>.

³³⁹ Busato, Francesco, and Norma Maccari. "Canadian Oil Sand Extraction: The Nexus Between Economic

about balancing economic development and environmental sustainability, especially since Canada's withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol due to projected emissions increases linked to intensified oil sands production.³⁴⁰ The oil sands industry's ecological footprint includes widespread land, water, and air contamination.³⁴¹ Pollutants such as heavy metals and carcinogens have entered ecosystems, negatively impacting biodiversity and the health of surrounding environments.³⁴² The process is highly energy-intensive, producing significantly higher carbon emissions than conventional oil sources, contributing to climate change and accelerating the depletion of the planet's carbon budget.³⁴³ Additionally, the expansion of extractive infrastructure, pipelines, refineries, and transport corridors further entrenches Canada's dependence on fossil fuels, making transitioning to sustainable energy sources increasingly difficult.³⁴⁴ The oil industry has also influenced state policies, weakening environmental regulations and prioritizing economic growth over ecological sustainability.³⁴⁵

Existing Initiatives and Policy

Canada's oil industry has long been central to its national economy and identity, yet it exists within a policy framework shaped by government intervention and private sector interests. The government of Canada should examine how government and corporate policies shape the oil industry and environmental commitments. Extreme oil is a defining feature of Canada's contemporary extractive economy, representing both a physical resource and a broader

Development and Environmental Sustainability." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2014, 141-144.

³⁴⁰ Busato, Francesco, and Norma Maccari, "Canadian Oil Sand Extraction: The Nexus Between Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability," 141.

³⁴¹ Westman, C.N., Joly, T.L., "Oil Sands Extraction in Alberta, Canada: a Review of Impacts and Processes Concerning Indigenous Peoples," *Hum Ecol* 47, 233–243 (2019), 235-236.

³⁴² Westman, C.N., Joly, T.L., "Oil Sands Extraction in Alberta, Canada: a Review of Impacts and Processes Concerning Indigenous Peoples," 235.

³⁴³ Pineault, Éric. 2018. "The Capitalist Pressure to Extract: The Ecological and Political Economy of Extreme Oil in Canada." *Studies in Political Economy / Recherches En Économie Politique* 99, 4.

³⁴⁴ Pineault, Éric, "The Capitalist Pressure to Extract: The Ecological and Political Economy of Extreme Oil in Canada," 3.

³⁴⁵ Pineault, Éric, "The Capitalist Pressure to Extract: The Ecological and Political Economy of Extreme Oil in Canada," 3.

socio-political and economic phenomenon. It refers to unconventional fossil fuel reserves, such as tar sands, shale gas, and deep-sea oil, which require intensive extraction processes that are more environmentally damaging and capital-intensive than conventional oil.³⁴⁶ In Canada, extreme oil is central to economic growth, with major corporations like Suncor, Imperial Oil, and Cenovus driving its expansion.³⁴⁷ The industry is deeply embedded in financial markets as banks and institutional investors rely on extractive capital for profitability, further entrenching oil dependency. Government policies have supported the sector through subsidies, regulatory rollbacks, and employment policies encouraging labour mobility towards oil-producing regions.

The Canadian government shapes the oil industry through regulatory frameworks, subsidies, and infrastructure policies that facilitate market access. The carbon tax applies a price per tonne of CO₂ emissions to incentivize an industry shift toward lower-carbon alternatives.³⁴⁸ Alberta has challenged federal carbon pricing, arguing it undermines provincial jurisdiction over natural resources and is detrimental to its resource-dependent economy.³⁴⁹ Canada's oil sector continues to be subsidized, despite international commitments to reduce fossil fuel subsidies. The government promotes Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) to decarbonize while maintaining the growth of the oil industry in international markets.³⁵⁰ The ACCA subsidizes oil companies by allowing them to quickly write off capital expenditures to reduce taxable income.³⁵¹ The direct

³⁴⁶ Pineault, Éric, "The Capitalist Pressure to Extract: The Ecological and Political Economy of Extreme Oil in Canada," 131.

³⁴⁷ Stephenson, Amanda. "Canadian Oil Majors to Boost Production in 2025 | CBC News." CBCnews, December 12, 2024. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/suncor-increase-oil-and-gas-output-1.7408809>.

³⁴⁸ Canada, Environment and Climate Change. "Government of Canada How Carbon Pricing Works." Canada.ca, January 24, 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/climate-change/pricing-pollution-how-it-will-work/putting-price-on-carbon-pollution.html>.

³⁴⁹ Bruce Pardy Professor of Law. "Alberta Court of Appeal Rejects Carbon Tax, Protects Provincial Jurisdiction." Fraser Institute, February 25, 2020. <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/commentary/alberta-court-appeal-rejects-carbon-tax-protects-provincial-jurisdiction>.

³⁵⁰ "What Is Carbon Capture and Storage?" CCS explained | National Grid Group. Accessed February 25, 2025. <https://www.nationalgrid.com/stories/energy-explained/what-is-ccs-how-does-it-work>.

³⁵¹ "Accelerated Capital Cost Allowance." Electricity Canada. Accessed February 13, 2025. <https://www.electricity.ca/knowledge-centre/the-grid/regulatory/accelerated-capital-cost-allowance/>.

funding for pipeline infrastructure and the federal government's purchase of the Trans Mountain pipeline in 2018 exemplifies direct state intervention in ensuring market access for Canadian oil.³⁵² The Keystone XL Pipeline (revoked), a project that faced U.S. regulatory hurdles, illustrates the risks of market dependence on a single trading partner.³⁵³

Secondly, corporate climate strategies in Canada have adopted various strategies to align with environmental commitments while simultaneously advocating for lesser environmental restrictions, including net-zero commitments, and companies such as Suncor and Cenovus have pledged net-zero emissions by 2050.³⁵⁴ These initiatives include technological innovations, such as companies investing in Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS) and energy efficiency technologies to reduce emissions.³⁵⁵ Additionally, the oil industry's influence on policy development significantly influences government policy through lobbying and partnerships. For example, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) advocates for industry-friendly policies, often opposing stringent environmental regulations.³⁵⁶ Industry-funded research and public relations campaigns, such as the “ethical oil” narrative, reinforce the role of oil as central to Canada's prosperity while downplaying environmental concerns.³⁵⁷ However, oil sands operations remain the country's fastest-growing source of emissions, undermining progress

³⁵² Government of Canada, Canada Energy Regulator. “Canada Energy Regulator / Régie de l'énergie Du Canada.” CER, March 20, 2024. <https://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/en/applications-hearings/view-applications-projects/trans-mountain-expansion/trans-mountain-pipeline-system-purchase-agreement-faqs.html>.

³⁵³ Daniel Lincoln, Philippe Rheault. January 24, 2025.

³⁵⁴ Jaremkó, Deborah. “Inside the Pathways Alliance, Canada's Oil Sands Pledge to Reach Net Zero by 2050.” Canadian Energy Centre, November 18, 2022.

³⁵⁵ “Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage – How It Works and Benefits.” Alberta.ca. Accessed February 25, 2025.

³⁵⁶ Alvarez, Pierre. “Registration - In-House Organization.” Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP). Lobbyists Registration System, Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada. December 5, 2024. <https://lobbycanada.gc.ca/app/secure/oc/lrs/do/vwRg?cno=4®Id=481290>.

³⁵⁷ Grant, Jennifer. “‘Ethical Oil’ Argument Attempts to Camouflage Serious Problems in the Oilsands.” Pembina Institute, January 7, 2011.

toward these targets.³⁵⁸ Provincial variations in climate policies lead to provincial governments adopting divergent approaches to balancing oil development with environmental commitments.

Natural Resource Extraction: Mineral Mining

Canada's mining sector contributes significantly to its economy, with the minerals and metal sector contributing \$109B (6%) of the gross domestic product (GDP).³⁵⁹ It plays a vital role in employment and economic activity, with more than 200 operational mines in 2022.³⁶⁰ Canada is the world's top producer of potash, second for uranium, and leading producer in palladium, gold, nickel and copper.³⁶¹ Yearly mineral exports are valued at \$153.2B, and domestic mineral exports account for 26% of Canada's total merchandise exports in 2022. 67% of the exports go to the U.S. (52%), the UK (8%), and China (7%).³⁶²

Canada is also a major player in global mining, home to 75% of the world's mining corporations, operating in 96 countries.³⁶³ Many of these companies are active in Latin America, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region. Notably, Latin America and the Caribbean account for the largest share of Canadian mining assets abroad, representing 45.4% of the total, valued at \$85.4B as of 2020.³⁶⁴ This provides a strategic advantage and underscores the urgent need to address the

³⁵⁸ Jonathan Arnold, Dale Beugin, Sara Hastings-Simon, Rick Smith, Peter Nicholson (Chair). "Canada's Oil and Gas Sector, the Road to Net Zero and Regional Fairness." Canadian Climate Institute, March 5, 2024.

³⁵⁹ Natural Resources Canada, "Minerals and the Economy," *Government of Canada*, accessed March 4, 2025, <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/minerals-mining/mining-data-statistics-analysis/minerals-economy>.

³⁶⁰ Natural Resources Canada, "Atlas of Canada - Minerals," *Government of Canada*, accessed March 4, 2025, <https://atlas.gc.ca/mins/en/index.html>.

³⁶¹ Natural Resources Canada, "Minerals and the Economy," *Government of Canada*.

³⁶² Natural Resources Canada, "Minerals and the Economy," *Government of Canada*.

³⁶³ Angela M. Asuncion, Nicolas D. Brunet, and Dominique Caouette, *Digging for Accountability in Canada: Structural Power Inequalities in the Global South Mining Industry* (Routledge, 2023), 73, accessed March 4, 2025, <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/63049/1/9781000872903.pdf#page=73>.

³⁶⁴ MiningWatch Canada, *Brief Submitted to the Standing Committee on International Trade*, House of Commons Canada, accessed March 4, 2025, 2, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/CIIT/Brief/BR12253733/br-external/MiningWatchCanada-e.pdf>.

international activities and investments of Canadian mining companies, which contribute to socio-economic and environmental degradation abroad.³⁶⁵

Domestically, the provincial governments oversee the mining life cycle in their jurisdiction. The federal government's role includes regulatory oversight, policy coordination, science, Indigenous affairs, and international engagement. The federal government currently oversees mining in the Territories but is actively devolving these powers to territorial governments.³⁶⁶

As the largest Potash producer, Canada contributes to 32.4% of the global supply.³⁶⁷ Potash is a key resource for agricultural fertilizers, and it is extracted from underground deposits through conventional ore mining or from injecting water into the underground ore body to dissolve the ore and extract the mining solution. There are eleven active mines in Saskatchewan, and they accounted for over 41% of global exports in 2023.³⁶⁸

Saskatchewan is also home to significant uranium mining operations, primarily in northern Saskatchewan and current mines produce about 20% of the world's uranium supply.³⁶⁹ The energy sector's overall need for critical minerals is expected to increase six times by 2040, presenting a strategic advantage.³⁷⁰ The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) regulates

³⁶⁵The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Mining," *Historica Canada*, accessed March 4, 2025. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/mining>.

³⁶⁶ Natural Resources Canada, "The Minerals and Metals Policy of the Government of Canada," Natural Resources Canada, February 5, 2025.

<https://natural-resources.canada.ca/minerals-mining/mining-policy-taxation-industry/minerals-metals-policy>

³⁶⁷ Natural Resources Canada, "Potash Facts," *Government of Canada*, accessed March 4, 2025.

<https://natural-resources.canada.ca/minerals-mining/mining-data-statistics-analysis/minerals-metals-facts/potash-facts>.

³⁶⁸ Natural Resources Canada, "Potash Facts."

³⁶⁹ CBC News, "Explainer: Why Nova Scotia Has a Ban on Uranium Mining," *CBC News*, December 3, 2019, accessed March 4, 2025. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/uranium-ban-explainer-1.7455001>.

³⁷⁰ Natural Resources Canada, "The Minerals and Metals Policy of the Government of Canada."

all aspects of uranium mining and milling to ensure domestic compliance with the Nuclear Safety and Control Act (NSCA) and international safety standards.³⁷¹

Impacts on the Environment

Canadian mineral products have among the lowest carbon intensity in the world, with 82% of power from renewable or non-emitting sources.³⁷² With this said, poor early waste management and broad consultation regulations resulted in negative impacts on the environment and several communities, including Indigenous peoples.³⁷³ The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development's 2024 report found that Natural Resources Canada did not adequately assess the environmental and Indigenous impacts of expanding Canada's critical mineral supply. Mining in Canada has produced more than 30 times the volume of solid waste that all municipalities and industries produce every year. This issue is expected to worsen as mining companies increasingly extract lower-grade metal ores, producing greater waste.

Mining operations have devastated surrounding biodiversity and communities relying on local water sources. Mining waste management and water pollution remain a critical issue as wastewater treatment is required for 200 to 400 years after extraction.³⁷⁴ Official governmental costs for cleaning up mine waste sites are estimated to cost over \$10B. Climate change has further increased the risk of acid leakage as tailings dams become more strained.³⁷⁵ Closed mines

³⁷¹ Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, "Uranium Mines and Mills," *Government of Canada*, accessed March 4, 2025. <https://www.cnscc-ccsn.gc.ca/eng/uranium/mines-and-mills/>.

³⁷² Mining Association of Canada, *Facts and Figures 2023*, June 2024, accessed March 4, 2025. https://mining.ca/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2024/06/Facts-and-Figures-2023-FINAL-DIGITAL.pdf.

³⁷³ Natural Resources Canada, "Canada's Policy for Radioactive Waste Management and Decommissioning," *Government of Canada*, accessed March 4, 2025. <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/energy-sources/nuclear-energy-uranium/canada-s-policy-radioactive-waste-management-decommissioning>.

³⁷⁴ MiningWatch Canada, "Mine Waste in Canada: A Growing Liability," *MiningWatch Canada*, October 5, 2020, accessed March 4, 2025, <https://miningwatch.ca/blog/2020/10/5/mine-waste-canada-growing-liability>.

³⁷⁵ CBC News, "Climate Change Poses Risks for Mining Industry, Study Finds," *CBC News*, October 19, 2022, accessed March 4, 2025. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/climate-risks-mining-industry-1.6623184>.

present long-term financial risks as companies often go bankrupt without sufficient financial assurance for clean up, causing liability for taxpayers and future generations.³⁷⁶

Canada's current Minerals and Metals Policy adopts a lifecycle-based approach to mineral management, emphasizing governmental roles in mine site reclamation and cleaning orphaned sites within federal jurisdiction.³⁷⁷ Similarly, the 2023 Integrated Strategy for Radioactive Waste outlines long-term management plans, requiring waste owners to fund and implement disposal with federal oversight.³⁷⁸ However, uncertainty over site ownership remains a challenge, as the policy relies on identifiable owners to cover cleanup costs.³⁷⁹

International Impact

Little governmental oversight is exercised over the practices of Canadian mining companies abroad and current policies do not mandate compliance but depend on voluntary compliance.³⁸⁰ Instead of enforcing binding requirements, the federal government issues non-mandatory guidelines, placing trust in corporations to respect human rights, follow local laws, and adhere to international standards.³⁸¹

Canada is a member of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the international transparency standard in the mining, oil, and gas sectors, which requires countries to disclose the process of awarding extraction rights, revenues management, and benefits to the public. Canada currently participates as a supporting country and has implemented the Extractive

³⁷⁶CBC News, "Climate Change Poses Risks for Mining Industry."

³⁷⁷ Natural Resources Canada, "The Minerals and Metals Policy of the Government of Canada."

³⁷⁸ Natural Resources Canada, *Statement from the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources on the Integrated Strategy for Radioactive Waste*, accessed March 17, 2025.

<https://natural-resources.canada.ca/energy-sources/nuclear-energy-uranium/statement-integrated-strategy>.

³⁷⁹ Natural Resources Canada, "The Minerals and Metals Policy of the Government of Canada."

³⁸⁰ Giada Ferrucci, Amanda Grzyb, Bernard Hammond, Rupert Knox, and Ainhua Montoya, *The Cerro Blanco Open Pit Mine in Guatemala: Experts and Citizen Groups Challenge Safety of Canadian-Owned Mining Project*, accessed March 4, 2025, 5.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/651b1f0e4acb0f16f1eecec/t/67129fb591a02a27e6512588/1729273801325/Cerro+Blanco+Mine+Report+English+v10.pdf>.

³⁸¹ Natural Resources Canada, "Responsible Mining," *Government of Canada*, accessed March 4, 2025.

<https://natural-resources.canada.ca/minerals-mining/responsible-mining#a3>.

Sector Transparency Measures Act (ESTMA), which requires companies operating in Canada or listed on Canadian stock exchanges to disclose payments made to governments domestically and internationally.³⁸² Despite this, Canada has not implemented EITI standards domestically, raising concerns about the consistency of its transparency practices.³⁸³

Natural Resource Extraction: Deforestation & The Lumber Industry

Canada has an abundance of forestry, containing 367 million hectares of forest. Today, only 1% of forests since 1990 have been deforested.³⁸⁴ Most forests in Canada are publicly owned and only 7% of forests are privately owned.³⁸⁵ However, public ownership does not guarantee protection for forestry. Only 10% of forests in Canada are legally protected.³⁸⁶ However, their biodiversity and contributions to clean water, soil, and air make Canada's forestry highly valued. There are eight regional classifications of forestry across Canada: Acadian, Boreal, Carolinian, Coastal, Columbia, Great Lakes-St., Montane, and Subalpine.³⁸⁷ Forests are then further classified into four categories: ecozone, forest region, forest composition, and plant hardiness zone.³⁸⁸

Currently, Canada has one of the lowest deforestation rates in the world.³⁸⁹ Common misconceptions associate deforestation with harvesting, forest fires, and insect infestations. However, these instances do not constitute forest fires.³⁹⁰ Namely, wildfires are at the forefront of

³⁸² Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, "Canada," EITI, accessed March 17, 2025. <https://eiti.org/supporters/canada>.

³⁸³ Natural Resources Canada, "Responsible Mining."

³⁸⁴ Natural Resources Canada, "How Much Forest Does Canada Have?" *Natural Resources Canada*, last modified January 16, 2025. <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/forest-forestry/much-forest-does-canada-have>.

³⁸⁵ Natural Resources Canada, "How Much Forest Does Canada Have?"

³⁸⁶ Natural Resources Canada, "How Much Forest Does Canada Have?"

³⁸⁷ Natural Resources Canada, "Forest Classification," *Natural Resources Canada*, last modified January 13, 2025. <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/forest-forestry/sustainable-forest-management/forest-classification>.

³⁸⁸ Natural Resources Canada, "Forest Classification."

³⁸⁹ Natural Resources Canada, "Deforestation in Canada: Key Myths and Facts," *Natural Resources Canada*, last modified January 15, 2025.

<https://natural-resources.canada.ca/forest-forestry/insects-disturbances/deforestation-canada-key-myths-facts>.

³⁹⁰ Natural Resources Canada, "Deforestation in Canada: Key Myths and Facts."

Canada's deforestation discussions. Wildfires in 2023 destroyed four times more land than previous years of wildfires.³⁹¹ However, wildfires often promote regeneration because they release nutrients stored in the soil, lodge seeds from trees, and create an opportunity for more sunlight in the forest.³⁹² Additionally, insects minimize aging in trees by reducing the nutrients stored in trees and destroying trees that are already dying.³⁹³ While natural disturbances such as wildfires and insects often cause public panic about health implications, they are a natural part of the forestry cycle. Therefore, these instances do not qualify as deforestation.³⁹⁴

Existing Initiatives and Policy

Several government initiatives protect forestry in Canada to combat deforestation and effectively eliminate it. First, the Model Forest Program has contributed to reducing deforestation in favour of better forest management at the local level. The program started in 1992 as an experiment to promote local empowerment in forestry management and bringing together groups with stakes in the forest such as community members, companies, Indigenous groups, or environmental groups.³⁹⁵ The forestry sector is thereafter managed by this collective that seeks to find innovative and sustainable means to manage the forest, considering aspects such as biodiversity, public education, cultural implications, and agriculture. What began with ten forestry sites has grown into an international program. Today, there are over 60 Model Forests in 35 countries around the world, protecting more than 70 million hectares of forest ecosystems.³⁹⁶

³⁹¹ CBC Radio, "Regenerating Canadian Forests Through Indigenous Leadership," *CBC Radio*, last modified August 8, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/regenerating-canadian-forests-Indigenous-leadership-1.6931509>.

³⁹² Natural Resources Canada, "Why Forests Need Fires, Insects and Diseases," *Natural Resources Canada*, last modified January 12, 2025, <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/forest-forestry/insects-disturbances/forests-need-fires-insects-diseases>.

³⁹³ Natural Resources Canada, "Why Forests Need Fires, Insects and Diseases."

³⁹⁴ Natural Resources Canada, "Why Forests Need Fires, Insects and Diseases."

³⁹⁵ Natural Resources Canada, "Why Forests Need Fires, Insects and Diseases."

³⁹⁶ "Canada and the International Model Forest Network," *Natural Resources Canada*, last modified January 15, 2025,

Similarly, Canada's 2 Billion Trees (2BT) program has been pivotal for Canada's forestry. The program was created by the Federal Government in 2021 in response to growing concerns over biodiversity loss and natural disasters.³⁹⁷ The program supports tree planting across Canada through partnerships with various groups and communities. In 2024, the program had amassed agreements with nearly every province, 40 Indigenous partners, 32 municipalities, and 86 NGOs in hopes of planting two billion trees by 2031.³⁹⁸ As of 2024, 157 million trees have been planted as part of this initiative.³⁹⁹ Completing this program would result in reductions in Greenhouse gasses from the atmosphere and environmental restoration, slowing down the implications of climate change that would have otherwise been exacerbated by deforestation.

Impact on Indigenous Peoples

The rapid expansion of Canada's oil sands industry since the late 1990s and the past exclusion of Indigenous peoples from decision-making processes about mining proposals has had profound and multifaceted impacts on Indigenous communities.⁴⁰⁰ Historic and ongoing tensions persist as projects continually encroach on Indigenous land, displacing and affecting communities.⁴⁰¹ There is a growing crisis of confidence among affected Indigenous communities, who report feeling marginalized, under-informed, and powerless in the face of environmental and cultural changes.⁴⁰² Environmental degradation has resulted in the loss of plant and animal

<https://natural-resources.canada.ca/forest-forestry/sustainable-forest-management/canada-international-model-forest-network>.

³⁹⁷ "2 Billion Trees Program Announces 160 Million New Trees and Nearly Triples Trees Committed," *Natural Resources Canada*, last modified November 6, 2024.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/natural-resources-canada/news/2024/11/2-billion-trees-program-announces-160-million-new-trees-and-nearly-triples-trees-committed.html>.

³⁹⁸ "2 Billion Trees Program Announces 160 Million New Trees and Nearly Triples Trees Committed."

³⁹⁹ "2 Billion Trees Program Announces 160 Million New Trees and Nearly Triples Trees Committed."

⁴⁰⁰ Westman, C.N., Joly, T.L. Oil Sands Extraction in Alberta, Canada: a Review of Impacts and Processes Concerning Indigenous Peoples. *Hum Ecol* 47, (2019), 233

⁴⁰¹ Ken Coates, Carin Holroyd, and Britt Baumann, *Indigenous Peoples and the Uranium Mining Sector in Northern Saskatchewan* (Routledge, 2023), 142, accessed March 4, 2025.

<https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/63049/1/9781000872903.pdf>.

⁴⁰² Westman, C.N., Joly, T.L. "Oil Sands Extraction in Alberta, Canada," 233.

biodiversity disrupts traditional practices, spiritual relationships with the land, and the intergenerational transfer of cultural knowledge.⁴⁰³ For some communities, this has been described as a form of “resource colonialism” and “racial extractivism,” reflecting the profound colonial legacies embedded in Canada’s resource economy.⁴⁰⁴

Nevertheless, significant criticisms remain about the inadequate consultation and participation of Indigenous communities in decision-making processes. In the oil sand industry, although development Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are required for major projects, they often fail to address socio-cultural impacts or reflect Indigenous knowledge systems.⁴⁰⁵ Similarly, while there has been increased government attention to Indigenous consultation and environmental assessments in mining projects, Natural Resources Canada only encourages voluntary collaboration between mining corporations and Indigenous communities. This approach has proven insufficient in addressing Indigenous concerns and long-term environmental challenges. In mining projects where no form of agreement has been reached with the local community, Indigenous workers face greater racism and workplace inequities.⁴⁰⁶ Mining employs a large number of Indigenous workers, as many projects serve as primary economic drivers for communities seeking participation in the wage-based and commercial economy.⁴⁰⁷ However, the lack of formal agreements and meaningful consultation further exacerbates existing barriers, limiting opportunities for Indigenous mine workers to advance beyond entry-level and trade positions into management and highly skilled roles.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰³ Westman, C.N., Joly, T.L. “Oil Sands Extraction in Alberta, Canada,” 236.

⁴⁰⁴ Westman, C.N., Joly, T.L. “Oil Sands Extraction in Alberta, Canada,” 235.

⁴⁰⁵ Westman, C.N., Joly, T.L. “Oil Sands Extraction in Alberta, Canada,” 236.

⁴⁰⁶ Coates et al, *Indigenous Peoples and the Uranium Mining Sector in Northern Saskatchewan*, 148.

⁴⁰⁷ Quentin Durand-Moreau, Jesse Lafontaine, and Jennifer Ward, "Work and Health Challenges of Indigenous People in Canada," *The Lancet Global Health* 10, no. 8 (August 2022).
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(22\)00203-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(22)00203-0/fulltext).

⁴⁰⁸ Coates et al, *Indigenous Peoples and the Uranium Mining Sector in Northern Saskatchewan*, 148.

Canadian mining companies and their subsidiaries have been documented as contributing to severe environmental degradation, human rights abuses, and economic disruptions, both locally and internationally.⁴⁰⁹ Investigations into 22 projects involving 20 Canadian multinational mining companies in nine Latin America countries found 27 cases of human rights and environmental violations.⁴¹⁰ These practices tarnish Canada's credibility and reputation abroad and there have been growing demands for greater corporate accountability and community engagement.⁴¹¹

Not only is the logging industry polluting the atmosphere, but it is also having severe domestic implications. Famously, the lumber industry devastated Grassy Narrows in an Anishinaabe First Nations community in northwestern Ontario. Lumber and paper companies operating in the areas surrounding the community first began polluting their waters in the 1970s.⁴¹² Members of the community discovered mercury poisoning in their food and water caused by Dryden Chemicals, a paper company that dumped pulp and paper into the English-Wabigoon river system that the community relied upon.⁴¹³ Communities such as Grassy Narrows have been suffering from the implications of Canada's logging industry which highlights the need for changes to Canada's logging industry to prevent pollution.

⁴⁰⁹ MiningWatch Canada, *Brief Submitted to the Standing Committee on International Trade*, House of Commons Canada, accessed March 4, 2025, 2. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/CIIT/Brief/BR12253733/br-external/MiningWatchCanada-e.pdf>.

⁴¹⁰ MiningWatch Canada, *Brief Submitted to the Standing Committee on International Trade*.

⁴¹¹ Angela M. Asuncion, Nicolas D. Brunet, and Dominique Caouette, *Digging for Accountability in Canada: Structural Power Inequalities in the Global South Mining Industry* (Routledge, 2023), 73, accessed March 4, 2025. <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/63049/1/9781000872903.pdf#page=73>.

⁴¹² Natalia Ilyniak, "Mercury Poisoning in Grassy Narrows: Environmental Injustice, Colonialism, and Capitalist Expansion in Canada," *McGill Sociological Review* 4 (February 2014): 45. <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/mercury-poisoning-grassy-narrows-environmental/docview/1963078041/se-2>.

⁴¹³ Natalia Ilyniak, "Mercury Poisoning in Grassy Narrows: Environmental Injustice, Colonialism, and Capitalist Expansion in Canada," *McGill Sociological Review* 4 (February 2014): 45. <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/mercury-poisoning-grassy-narrows-environmental/docview/1963078041/se-2>.

Climate Migration

Climate-induced migration is the displacement of people due to natural disasters caused by climate change. These environmental disasters can be a singular destructive action, such as a hurricane or flash flood, or an ongoing climate crisis, such as water pollution or smog. These events mainly affect those in the area by forcing them to relocate. Relocation may be domestic, internal migration, or external, international migration. As a result, the displacement of people affects not only those who are displaced but also the people living in the region the displaced people enter. The implications of climate-induced migration are broad, as it affects borders, state sovereignty, human well-being, environmental policies, and more. Canada must decide if they will participate in domestic and foreign aid to help those displaced. This could be through humanitarian assistance such as peacekeepers, accepting and funding immigration for international climate migrants, and participating in environmental conferences and agreements that support and enforce ecological regulations.

Canada's position on the migrant-climate nexus is important to state decisions in climate change agreements and initiatives. It is an increasingly urgent issue in the twenty-first century, with implications for both Canadian domestic policy and international relations. As climate change intensifies, natural disasters such as hurricanes, droughts, and flash floods displace millions worldwide, forcing them to seek refuge in more stable environments. Climate-induced migration presents challenges that impact borders, state sovereignty, human well-being, and environmental policies, making it a multifaceted issue that Canada must confront with urgency and responsibility.

The communities most affected by climate-induced migration include Indigenous populations, Pacific Islanders, residents of coastal cities, and those in already vulnerable regions

with limited access to food, water, and shelter.⁴¹⁴ Countries experiencing severe environmental degradation, such as those with prolonged droughts or extreme storms, often lack the infrastructure to support displaced populations, leading to large-scale migration.⁴¹⁵ While some climate migrants relocate internally within their own countries, many are forced to seek refuge internationally. This influx of displaced individuals affects not only the migrants but also the regions receiving them, placing pressure on infrastructure, social services, and economies.⁴¹⁶

Internal migration caused by climate change disproportionately negatively affects Indigenous communities in Canada. Indigenous communities in Canada have experienced internal migration resulting from anthropogenic climate change.⁴¹⁷ Chemical Valley in Sarnia, Ontario, consists of petrochemical plants that have polluted the air and water in Sarnia and surrounding areas.⁴¹⁸ Indigenous reservations located near Sarnia are the most affected by the chemical pollutants emitted or spilling out of these plants.⁴¹⁹ Indigenous communities that access the waterways for drinking and fishing can no longer safely use those resources. Excessive environmental degradation for Indigenous communities devastates cultural and social practices and ties to the land. Climate change caused by environmental degradation forces Indigenous communities to choose between abandoning land that was already difficult to obtain or facing negative health effects due to the environment. This is just one example of the decisions and impacts that Indigenous communities in Canada face with internal migration. Arctic Indigenous

⁴¹⁴ Arjun Makhijani, "Never-Ending Story," *Science and Global Security* 17, no. 1 (2010): 197–204.

⁴¹⁵ Andrea C. Simonelli, *Governing Climate Induced Migration and Displacement: IGO Expansion and Global Policy Implications*, London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015.

⁴¹⁶ Andrea C. Simonelli, *Governing Climate Induced Migration and Displacement*.

⁴¹⁷ Canada. Natural Resources Canada, issuing body, and issuing body Canadian Forest Service. 2022. *Cumulative Effects of Natural and Anthropogenic Disturbances under Climate Change in Western Canada : Assessing the Trade-Offs among Long-Term Conservation of Priority Species and Places, Carbon Sequestration and Land Management*. Ottawa: Natural Resources Canada = Ressources naturelles Canada,.

⁴¹⁸ Dominic Odwa and Andrea Atari, "Community Health Study in Sarnia, Chemical Valley," No. NR73424, The University of Western Ontario (Canada), 2010.

⁴¹⁹ Odwa and Atari, "Community Health Study in Sarnia, Chemical Valley."

communities, such as the Inuit, suffer from climate change due to sea ice loss and more severe storms, which impact hunting, fishing, and the ability to get resources to more remote communities.⁴²⁰ Inuit in the Arctic suffer from the same decisions as those in Chemical Valley in Sarnia. They must decide whether to face the negative impacts of climate change, which affects their health and access to natural resources, or migrate off of their land and lose their cultural and social ties to the land and what it stands for.⁴²¹

Policy Recommendations

Oil Recommendations

Canada's continued reliance on oil sands development presents a significant challenge in balancing economic priorities with environmental sustainability and Indigenous rights. To move beyond symbolic commitments, the country must adopt practical, science-driven solutions that reduce emissions while maintaining financial stability. Integrating clean energy sources such as renewables, hydrogen, and small modular reactors Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) into oil sands operations is critical, as it would significantly cut carbon intensity while reducing reliance on fossil fuels for extraction and processing.⁴²² Likewise, the widespread adoption of CCUS must be expanded beyond voluntary industry pledges, ensuring that captured carbon is stored and repurposed in sustainable applications like industrial materials and synthetic fuels.⁴²³ Water and land remediation strategies must also go beyond conventional reclamation projects as investing in advanced water filtration, bioremediation, and wetland restoration can mitigate the long-term

⁴²⁰ IsumaTV, “*Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change*,” Film, 54:07, February 2010, <https://www.isuma.tv/inuit-knowledge-and-climate-change/movie>.

⁴²¹ IsumaTV, “*Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change*.”

⁴²² Finan, Ashley. “Integration of Nuclear Power with Oil Sands Extraction Projects in Canada.” *MIT Libraries*, 2007, 4.

⁴²³ Nnaziri, Ihejirika, Muslemani Hasan, and Fattouh Bassam. “Scaling CCUS in Canada: An Assessment of Fiscal and Regulatory Frameworks.” *The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies*, Oxford, 2023, 9.

ecological damage caused by tailings ponds and deforestation.⁴²⁴ Additionally, shifting economic incentives is crucial; performance-based subsidies and dynamic carbon pricing would ensure that companies are financially rewarded for investing in cleaner technologies rather than being propped up by fossil fuel-friendly policies.⁴²⁵ Regulatory accountability, enforced through an independent climate compliance board and legally binding emissions targets, would prevent corporate greenwashing and ensure transparent progress toward national climate goals. Canada must take a leadership role internationally by advocating for a G20 Extreme Oil Reduction Pact and energy transition partnerships with the Global South, reinforcing its commitment to climate action while diversifying its economy. These measures are both environmentally necessary and economically strategic, positioning Canada as a leader in sustainable resource management while securing long-term economic resilience in a world transitioning from fossil fuels. Without adopting these evidence-based solutions, Canada risks deepening its dependence on a declining industry while falling short of its climate commitments, reinforcing patterns of environmental degradation and Indigenous marginalization.

Mining Recommendations

The method of ISR is recommended to balance economic growth and environmental sustainability. This method uses a leaching solution to dissolve ore deposits underground, offering a low-impact alternative that is significantly more sustainable, extracting minerals without excavation. Kazakhstan, the world's leader in uranium production, has demonstrated

⁴²⁴ Moghimi Dehkordi, Mohsen, Zahra Pournuroz Nodeh, Kamran Soleimani Dehkordi, Hossein salmanvandi, Reza Rasouli Khorjestan, and Mohammad Ghaffarzadeh. "Soil, Air, and Water Pollution from Mining and Industrial Activities: Sources of Pollution, Environmental Impacts, and Prevention and Control Methods." *Results in Engineering* 23 (September 2024): 102729. 9-11

⁴²⁵ Gugler, Klaus, Adhurim Haxhimusa, and Mario Liebensteiner. "Effectiveness of Climate Policies: Carbon Pricing vs. Subsidizing Renewables." *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* 106 (March 2021): 17-18

ISR's ability to cut costs by 25–50% while eliminating the need for large processing plants and extensive ore transport.⁴²⁶

To ensure mining projects contribute to long-term socio-economic development, the federal government should mandate Impact and Benefit Agreements (IBAs), establish minimum standards for Indigenous consultation, require clear thresholds of Indigenous and community support for project approval, and provide assistance in securing fair agreements. These agreements should prioritize skills development and career advancement opportunities, enabling Indigenous and local workers to transition from low-skilled positions into management and specialized roles. The Canadian federal government's complicated history with Indigenous peoples may make Indigenous communities less likely to become involved with federally-instituted organizations. Therefore, strong relationships with Indigenous communities from the inception of projects is necessary.

Corporations should be required to gather a certain amount of community support prior to extractive projects and designate responsible parties before project approval to ensure proper waste dam maintenance and mine closure. This would also ensure that companies remain accountable in bankruptcy and cannot evade their responsibilities. To promote sustainable resource management, these assessments must also account for current and projected land and water demand and availability under future climate scenarios. Beyond domestic reforms, Canada must take stronger accountability measures for its mining operations abroad. This includes implementing binding regulations to replace the voluntary guidelines recommended for mining companies operating abroad.

⁴²⁶ Maxim Seredkin, Alexander Zabolotsky, and Graham Jeffress, "In Situ Recovery, an Alternative to Conventional Methods of Mining: Exploration, Resource Estimation, Environmental Issues, Project Evaluation and Economics," *Ore Geology Reviews* 79 (2016): 504.

Canada must move beyond a supportive role in the EITI and enforce this initiative domestically. Canadian companies operating internationally must be held to the same environmental and ethical standards as domestic ones, ensuring consistency in corporate and ethical practices regardless of location.

Deforestation Recommendations

To align with Canada's COP 26 pledge to end and reverse deforestation by 2030, the federal government should implement stricter regulatory laws surrounding clear-cutting. The pledge only encompasses forests lost to resource extraction, housing, and agriculture and does not address the negative implications of clear-cutting. Moreover, there is a gap in forestry protections against clear-cutting that needs to be addressed. More regenerative and selective alternatives to clear-cutting, such as selective logging or small patch cutting, should be encouraged instead. This could be done through government incentives for logging companies to avoid clear-cutting, requiring impact assessments and establishing severe fines for contamination. Grassy Narrows is only one of many communities severely affected by the negligence of logging companies. There needs to be more consistency in domestic policy if the country truly is taking steps to engage with Indigenous peoples in the forestry sector.

Environmental security can be achieved through increasing Indigenous autonomy and decision-making in the forestry sector. This is in accordance with the idea of Free, Prior and Informed consent outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), signed off on by the Canadian government that supports consistent Indigenous consultation on domestic issues.⁴²⁷ The Canadian government passed the UNDRIP Act 2021, making it legally binding. Therefore, the country's failure to resolve the contamination

⁴²⁷ Canada, Department of Justice, "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," last modified December 10, 2021. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/declaration/about-apropos.html>.

and degradation caused by the logging industry that often affects Indigenous groups is very alarming.

Overall, given Canada's low deforestation rate, the country is on track to eliminate deforestation. However, this does not mean that Canada's logging industry is not actively harming the environment and nearby communities. Action is pertinent and this is an opportunity for Canada to solidify its capacity to lead the global preservation of forestry and improve conditions domestically.

Climate Migration Recommendations

Canada has maintained a strong immigration system, accepting refugees from war and persecution. However, climate migration does not yet have a formal classification within Canadian immigration policies, creating a gap in legal frameworks. Canada should expand the definition of refugees to include those displaced by environmental disasters to allow Canada to accept climate migrants on humanitarian grounds. This reinforces Canada's reputation for upholding international human rights.

In the international sphere, Canada has an opportunity to influence climate policy through active participation in global environmental agreements and humanitarian initiatives. This includes providing foreign aid to nations most affected by climate change, supporting climate resilience programs, deploying peacekeepers and disaster relief teams to areas facing climate crises, and advocating for stricter environmental regulations to prevent further displacement.

Canada must prepare for increased migration due to environmental crises by establishing policies that anticipate these movements, rather than reacting to them as emergencies. The ongoing debate on climate change within Canadian politics has already shown resistance to accepting the full scope of human-induced environmental damage. Regardless of political

divisions, the reality remains that climate change has tangible effects on air quality, water sources, and natural disasters, all of which contribute to displacement.

Historically, Canada has taken steps to promote environmental awareness, but often through symbolic actions instead of system change. Policies such as banning plastic bags or increasing recycling efforts do little to address the large-scale destruction that forces migration. More effective solutions include implementing stricter regulations on mining, oil refineries, and deforestation, which would mitigate some of the environmental damage contributing to displacement. Climate migration is not an isolated issue, rather it is interconnected with economic stability, international relations, and humanitarian responsibilities.

Accepting climate migrants and actively participating in environmental initiatives would solidify Canada's position as a leader in addressing climate change and humanitarian crises and set the precedent that Canada is taking action in favour of climate and migrant justice. In contrast, inaction or restrictive policies would align Canada with nations that are unwilling to acknowledge the pressing reality of climate displacement. Given the increasing frequency of climate-related disasters, preparation and proactive policy making is essential to ensuring Canada upholds its environmental sustainability and human rights commitments. Discussing at the provincial and federal level how Indigenous communities in Canada are experiencing the adverse effects of climate change will assist in bringing Indigenous reconciliation to a more assertive domestic environmental policy.

Case Study #6: Disinformation & Cyber Sovereignty

By: Tristan Langohr & Wade Masse

Introduction

In Canada's representative democracy, the public determines the composition of the government. Public opinion—the issues, priorities, and information available to voters—has a direct effect on electoral outcomes. How public opinion is shaped has long been a concern of the Canadian government. Historically, Canada has regulated its media market to ensure Canadian produced media could compete with media produced in the U.S.. Canada's media regulation was a measure not only to preserve the commercial viability of its domestic entertainment industry, but also ensured Canadian public opinion was not monopolized by foreign media. This occurred in a time when mass media was consumed through broadcasting (primarily cable and radio), where decisions were made on what would be widely available to Canadians. As the internet developed into a major medium of media consumption, the Canadian government took a liberal approach to its governance, one featuring little government regulation. In theory, individuals self-select what media they consume and interact with online, removing the need and ability for traditional regulatory mechanisms employed by the Canadian government. However, Canada's hands-off approach to internet governance presents a vulnerability for foreign interference. This issue is confounded by the Canadian government's inconsistent policy on cyber-sovereignty, which claims every state has a sovereign cyberspace yet fails to enforce this principle. Canada must modernize its approach to internet governance and cyber-sovereignty to adapt to the threats of foreign interference and disinformation.

Canada's History of Media Regulation

Canada's position in the orbit of a much larger state has traditionally permitted the nation a high degree of safety and comfort, however, its proximity to the U.S. has historically been understood by Canadian statespeople as a quiet and consistent threat to Canadian sovereignty. One method the U.S.' role as a larger nation endangers Canada is through media dominance. In 1951, the Canadian statesman Vincent Massey presented the findings of his Royal Commission on the National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences to Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, urging investment into Canadian cultural institutions.⁴²⁸ Vincent Massey believed the increasing influence of American mass culture and the comparative weakness of Canadian cultural institutions was a threat to Canada's ability to distinguish itself from the U.S..⁴²⁹ This event was the progenitor to decades of domestic policy in Canada, purposed with maintaining a distinct cultural identity on a continent dominated by American media.

Quotas on the minimum amount of Canadian content required to be played on cable television and radio networks had been strictly controlled for decades. However, with the rise in online/internet media consumption in the 21st century, the Canadian government's ability to monitor and regulate foreign media has unraveled.⁴³⁰ In response to these pressures, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) determined it was unable to regulate the amount of Canadian-produced media online.⁴³¹ Individuals can self-select what they engage with based on a plethora of available options, a distinct landscape to previous forms of media distribution, and one the CRTC did not feel equipped or obliged to regulate. In 2023 the House of Commons amended the CRTC's mandate to regulate online streaming services to

⁴²⁸ Jeffrey Cormier, *The Canadianization Movement: Emergence, Survival, and Success* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 5.

⁴²⁹ Cormier, *The Canadianization Movement*, 5.

⁴³⁰ L Etling, "O Canada, We Stand on Guard for Thee: Protecting the Canadian Music Industry," *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures* 25, no. 1 (2002): 136.

⁴³¹ Etling, "O Canada, We Stand on Guard for Thee," 137.

financially support Canadian-produced media.⁴³² This endeavour misdiagnoses the issue of a declining Canadian market share in its domestic market as a financial issue rather than an issue of competition. In an internet system where Canadian consumers can be immediately connected with media produced across national borders, and consumers have more power to exercise their preference, the old approach to regulating Canada's media landscape does not work.

In response to American domination in Canada's media market, Canada regulated its market to support domestically produced media. The success of the American-produced media in Canada, however, was not an intentional strategy by the American government. In the early 2000s, Heritage Minister Sheila Copps decried the dominance of American-produced media in Canadian markets, constituting more than 80% of magazines, music, and television consumed.⁴³³ This is the by-product of most Canadians sharing a language, culture, and border with the U.S. and self-selecting to engage with American-produced media. Still, Canadian statespeople felt this warranted government action to regulate Canada's media market. With the rise of the internet, changing the methods Canadians consume media, new challenges emerged. Currently, foreign states are intentionally manipulating Canada's media market to influence electoral and policy outcomes.⁴³⁴ The Canadian government took action to regulate the largely benign and unintentional influence of American media in Canada through the promotion of Canadian media, providing precedent for the government to regulate the media market. As the threat of foreign

⁴³² Government of Canada, *Bill C-11: An Act to Amend the Broadcasting Act and to Make Related and Consequential Amendments to Other Acts* (Government of Canada, tabled in the House of Commons, 1 April, 2022), https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/pl/charte-charte/c11_2.html.

⁴³³ L. Etling, "O Canada, We Stand on Guard for Thee: Protecting the Canadian Music Industry," *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures* 25, no. 1 (2002): 134–38. <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/o-canada-we-stand-on-guard-thee-protecting/docview/1722992813/se-2>, 134.

⁴³⁴ Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *Foreign Interference Threats to Canada's Democratic Process* (Ottawa: Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2021). https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/weekly_acquisitions_list-ef/2021/21-52/publications.gc.ca/collections/collecti-on_2021/scrs-csis/PS74-17-2021-eng.pdf, 4.

interference through the manipulation of the Canadian media market rises, new approaches and regulations are necessary.

Liberal versus Sovereigntist Internet Models

Internet governance exists with two main competing approaches: liberal and sovereigntist. First, the liberal approach emphasizes minimal state intervention, prioritizing the freedom of speech, and treats the internet as a global commons.⁴³⁵ Second, the sovereigntist approach prioritizes state control, resisting the influence of Western norms, and monitoring private actors.⁴³⁶ The liberal approach features decentralized governance with private self-regulation from internet forums and the voluntary participation of individuals online.⁴³⁷ A liberal approach to internet governance sees the internet as an opportunity for transnational communication where the state is responsible for providing individuals as much freedom as possible, only intervening to enforce rules when absolutely necessary.⁴³⁸ In contrast, a sovereigntist approach views the internet as a threat to domestic sovereignty, requiring it to be governed by state institutions to prevent external encroachments.⁴³⁹ Chenou argues that the internet developed in a hegemonic discourse centred around cyber-libertarianism, neoliberalism, and considerations of the global public good, leading to an open, market-regulated cyber space.⁴⁴⁰ Western actors—especially the U.S.—influenced the development of the liberal internet

⁴³⁵ Danielle Flonk, Markus Jachtenfuchs, and Anke S. Obendiek, “Authority Conflicts in Internet Governance: Liberals vs. Sovereigntists?” *Global Constitutionalism* 9, no. 2 (2020):364.

⁴³⁶ Flonk, Jachtenfuchs, and Obendiek, “Authority Conflicts in Internet Governance,” 364.

⁴³⁷ Flonk, Jachtenfuchs, and Obendiek, “Authority Conflicts in Internet Governance,” 366.

⁴³⁸ Flonk, Jachtenfuchs, and Obendiek, “Authority Conflicts in Internet Governance,” 366.

⁴³⁹ Flonk, Jachtenfuchs, and Obendiek, “Authority Conflicts in Internet Governance,” 366.

⁴⁴⁰ Jean-Marie Chenou, “From Cyber-Libertarianism to Neoliberalism: Internet Exceptionalism, Multi-Stakeholderism, and the Institutionalisation of Internet Governance in the 1990s,” *Globalizations* 11, no. 2 (2014): 205–23.

hegemony, propagating an internationalized media market that precluded the international norm of sovereignty from extending to cyberspace.⁴⁴¹

Canada takes a liberal approach to internet governance, one with little government regulation, instead relying on the self-policing of internet forums and participant individuals. The CRTC embraced the liberal approach, recognizing that only a sovereigntist approach—which would require largely sealing Canada’s digital space off to the outside world—could preserve its ability to enforce quotas on Canadian-produced media. In a Western liberal democracy subscribing to a rules-based international order—whether perceived or real—a liberal approach was virtually guaranteed. Canada’s liberal approach to internet governance presents weaknesses for exploitation from foreign actors who seek to influence public opinion, electoral outcomes, and policy making.

Disinformation

Currently, foreign states are intentionally manipulating Canada’s media market to influence electoral and policy outcomes.⁴⁴² In 2023, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics published *Foreign Interference and the Threats to the Integrity of Democratic Institutions, Intellectual Property, and the Canadian State*, detailing how foreign states—primarily China and Russia—have threatened Canadian institutions.⁴⁴³ The House of Commons accuses China and Russia of conducting sophisticated disinformation campaigns, spreading false or misleading narratives through digital media, amplifying divisive issues to generate social tensions and distrust in Canadian institutions, and using social media

⁴⁴¹ Chenou, “From Cyber-Libertarianism to Neoliberalism,” 214.

⁴⁴² Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *Foreign Interference Threats to Canada’s Democratic Process* (Ottawa: Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2021). https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/weekly_acquisitions_list-ef/2021/21-52/publications.gc.ca/collections/collecti on_2021/scrs-csis/PS74-17-2021-eng.pdf, 4.

⁴⁴³ Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *Foreign Interference Threats to Canada’s Democratic Process*.

platforms to manipulate political discourse through bots and fake accounts.⁴⁴⁴ These campaigns frequently target minority and diasporic communities in Canada to achieve these goals, isolating groups linguistically and politically.⁴⁴⁵ China and Russia fund and control online media outlets to achieve their goals that masquerade as legitimate press organizations.⁴⁴⁶ Canada's liberal approach to internet governance is exploited by foreign actors who can access the Canadian media market immediately, globally, and with anonymity.

Canada has taken measures to address foreign interference in its digital media market, yet these efforts remain inadequate. The Privy Council report, *Countering an Evolving Threat: Update on Recommendations to Counter Foreign Interference in Canada's Democratic Institutions*, outlines efforts such as public awareness campaigns, intelligence-sharing with allies, and a voluntary pledge from social media companies to "increase the transparency, authenticity and integrity of their systems."⁴⁴⁷ These steps continue a liberal approach to internet governance by relying on the self-policing of internet forums, specifically social media websites, and the voluntary participation of individuals to engage with online media content. Canada's current approach to internet governance prioritizes cyber-libertarianism and digital neoliberalism over national security, failing to address the vulnerabilities of a liberal internet—despite its claimed commitment to a sovereigntist model.

Unlike traditional media regulations, which focus on domestic content promotion, current policies fail to meaningfully curb the real-time, anonymous, and state-backed digital

⁴⁴⁴ John Brassard, *Foreign Interference and the Threats to the Integrity of Democratic Institutions, Intellectual Property and the Canadian State: Report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics* (Ottawa: House of Commons, Canada, 2023).

https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2023/parl/x73-1/XC73-1-1-441-10-eng.pdf, 27.

⁴⁴⁵ Brassard, *Foreign Interference*, 33.

⁴⁴⁶ Brassard, *Foreign Interference*, 27.

⁴⁴⁷ Privy Council Office, *Countering an Evolving Threat: Update on Recommendations to Counter Foreign Interference in Canada's Democratic Institutions* (Ottawa: Privy Council Office, 2023).

https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2023/bcp-pco/CP22-204-2023-eng.pdf, 6-12.

disinformation campaigns that undermine Canada's democratic institutions. Artificial intelligence-operated deepfakes and bot networks rapidly generate and spread false information, exploiting the algorithm used by social media platforms for promoting pieces of media.⁴⁴⁸ The self-policing of social media platforms and the ability for the public to discern malicious content have not been effective at curbing foreign interference, nor are they likely to become so as influence operations and artificial intelligence become more advanced.

Alongside artificial intelligence, the production of malicious digital media by foreign adversaries outpaces the ability for private and citizen actors to police them. Disinformation can fit into two categories: content-related and user-related.⁴⁴⁹ Shu argues that both types of disinformation are difficult to limit because of the "low cost of creating disinformation sources and the ease of using software-controlled social media bots to help spread disinformation."⁴⁵⁰ In Shu's article, they propose an early detection method of removing disinformation and policing the internet that is consistent with the liberal approach, primarily centred around improving detection software and public education.⁴⁵¹ While both are important steps, they are focused on removing disinformation and mitigating its harmful effects rather than preventing it. A liberal approach to internet governance cannot effectively combat disinformation as private actors cannot reliably self-police cyber-spaces nor can they outpace its rapid production. With an issue as serious as foreign interference through influence operations on social media forums, Canada must embrace a new approach to internet governance that does not rely on private actors to regulate media content.

⁴⁴⁸ Brassard, *Foreign Interference*, 20.

⁴⁴⁹ Kai Shu, Amrita Bhattacharjee, Faisal Alatawi, Tahora H Nazer, Kaize Ding, Mansoor Karami, and Huan Liu, "Combating Disinformation in a Social Media Age," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery* 10, no. 6 (2020): e1385, 3.

⁴⁵⁰ Shu et al., "Combating Disinformation," 3.

⁴⁵¹ Shu et al., "Combating Disinformation," 11-15.

Furthermore, the CRTC's 2023 mandate amendment, requiring online streaming services to support Canadian content financially, does not address the core issue: an open and largely unregulated digital space where hostile actors can operate freely. Canada's commitment to a liberal approach to internet governance, while rooted in democratic principles, has inadvertently created a vulnerable media environment that foreign states exploit to manipulate public discourse and erode public trust in Canadian institutions. If the Canadian government wants to prevent foreign interference in Canada's media market, it will need to move away from a liberal approach and incorporate sovereigntist forms of internet governance. Canada is not alone in this dilemma. The U.S., the UK, Taiwan, and states in the EU have all faced foreign interference in their media markets through the internet.⁴⁵² These countries share Canada's liberal approach to internet governance and are an opportunity for policy coordination on internet governance.

In addition to the manipulation of Canada's media landscape by foreign actors through disinformation, the algorithms used by internet forums for presenting media to Canadians can distort public opinion. Social media platforms have surpassed traditional media outlets as the primary gatekeepers of information in the 21st century.⁴⁵³ Complex algorithms are used to place media and information in front of consumers, but the evaluating systems of algorithms are opaque and rarely a matter of public knowledge.⁴⁵⁴ The purchase of the prominent social media website Twitter, renamed to X, by Elon Musk raises questions of how social media websites and their owners can manipulate public opinion through algorithms that could promote media supporting their interests to users.⁴⁵⁵ The Canadian government passed a bill to ensure the transparent use of personal information by social media websites, but has not taken steps to

⁴⁵² Brassard, *Foreign Interference*, 10-28.

⁴⁵³ Rui Wang et al., "Empowered or Constrained in Platform Governance? An Analysis of Twitter Users' Responses to Elon Musk's Takeover," *Social Media + Society* 10, no. 3 (2024).

⁴⁵⁴ Wang et al., "Empowered or Constrained," 5.

⁴⁵⁵ Wang et al., "Empowered or Constrained," 6.

ensure social media algorithms are not promoting undisclosed interests—be they of their owners or foreign states—when determining what media is presented to consumers.⁴⁵⁶ Public Safety Canada has expressed concerns that the online forum Tiktok could permit the Chinese government to control the app’s recommendation algorithm to “manipulate content” and “use it for influence operations.”⁴⁵⁷ This concern should be extended to all social media apps, like those of Musk’s X, who are owned by politically active individuals or large corporations who have a vested interest in the opinions held by Canadians and activities and composition of their government. The internet presents vulnerabilities for not only the creation and proliferation of disinformation, but the malicious manipulation of the media presented to Canadians.

Cyber Sovereignty

Traditionally, a country’s sovereignty is its right and authority to administer its internationally recognized territory in order to safeguard its citizens and property.⁴⁵⁸ However, cyberspace blurs the lines due to a lack of clarity regarding territory. Historically, sovereignty could be clearly understood by states through the relative ease of geographic borders. With the advent of the internet, methods of understanding territory and the separate jurisdictions of states have struggled to find an international standard—if cyber-sovereignty exists at all. Some scholars, like Robert Sack, argue that “territories are socially constructed forms of spatial relations, and their effects depend on who is controlling whom and for what purpose” and “territoriality in humans is best understood as a spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control

⁴⁵⁶ Canadian Parliament. House of Commons. *Bill C-292: An Act Respecting Transparency for Online Algorithms*. 44th Parl., 1st sess. Introduced by Peter Julian, November 2022. <https://www.parl.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/bill/C-292/first-reading>.

⁴⁵⁷ Public Safety Canada, 2023, *Parliamentary Committee Notes: Security Concerns with TikTok Social Media Application*, PROC – Foreign Interference: NCSB/NCSD. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/trnsprnc/brfng-mtrls/prlmntry-bndrs/20230929/20-en.aspx>.

⁴⁵⁸ Ji-Jen Hwang, “Reframing China’s Territory and Sovereignty in Cyberspace: Exploring Conceptual Territorialization and Claims of Cyber Sovereignty,” *Issues & Studies* 59, no. 04 (December 2023): 1–21.

resources and people by controlling area, and territoriality can be turned on and off as a strategy.”⁴⁵⁹ Sack’s conceptualization of territory led scholar Ji-jen Hwang to conclude: “Hence, a territory is not just a physical region but also a conceptual space like cyberspace.”⁴⁶⁰

While the interpretation that physical and digital “territory” can be reduced to conceptually the same thing may be compelling, many scholars disagree. Milton Mueller writes: “Despite the huge disconnect between a globalized cyberspace and the territorial fragmentation of state sovereignty, we see repeated efforts by intellectuals and practitioners to reconcile sovereignty with the internet.”⁴⁶¹ Mueller instead offers that cyberspace is a matter of global commons, concluding “[w] can have a globally compatible internet, or we can strive to align digital technology with political borders. We cannot do both.”⁴⁶² Hence, we have a scholarly dichotomy where some think that cyberspace is just another Westphalian domain where traditional state sovereignty applies, and where others believe the very foundations of what makes the internet useful are antithetical to any form of sovereignty. Unsurprisingly, the perspective of nation-states on the matter is quite similar to that of scholars, and the debate remains the same for international relations.

In a multi-polar world, where does Canada fall in this debate? Is Canada a proponent of state sovereignty in cyberspace, or a believer in the approach of global commons? The Government of Canada has a clearly stated belief that cyberspace is sovereign, and in order for international law to work, cyberspace must fit in the existing framework. The policy reads: “Sovereignty is a fundamental element of international law and international relations. It is

⁴⁵⁹ Robert David Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 216.

⁴⁶⁰ Ji-Jen Hwang, “Reframing China’s Territory and Sovereignty in Cyberspace: Exploring Conceptual Territorialization and Claims of Cyber Sovereignty,” *Issues & Studies* 59, no. 04 (December 2023): 1–21.

⁴⁶¹ Milton L Mueller, “Against Sovereignty in Cyberspace,” *International Studies Review* 22, no. 4 (September 20, 2019): 779–801.

⁴⁶² Milton L Mueller, “Against Sovereignty in Cyberspace,” *International Studies Review* 22, no. 4 (September 20, 2019): 779–801.

axiomatic that the principle of sovereignty applies in cyberspace, just as it does elsewhere. It animates a number of obligations for all States.”⁴⁶³ It may seem that this unambiguous policy leads to a clear *modus operandi* for Canada in the front of cyber-sovereignty, with a belief that closely aligns with that of scholars Sack and Hwang. However, Canada does little to promote the supposed sovereignty of its own cyberspace. China has long been a proponent of state sovereignty in the digital world, famously enacting the digital “Great Firewall of China,” a system they believe is integral to its sovereignty.⁴⁶⁴ No such system, or anything remotely similar, exists in Canada. The Communications Security Establishment works to protect Canada against cyberattacks, with an attempt to protect Canadian sovereignty.⁴⁶⁵

Yet in January 2024, Global Affairs Canada discovered it had experienced a month-long data security breach.⁴⁶⁶ A source told CBC News that the hard-drives that were affected may have held drafts of sensitive correspondence and intelligence.⁴⁶⁷ This compromised information, stored on a computer in Ottawa, is undoubtedly sovereign in the physical sense. However, given the attack was carried out through the internet, sovereignty is less assured. The stated policy of GAC—the very organization that was compromised—is that cyberspace is subject to sovereignty.⁴⁶⁸ However, when faced with a breach, there is no indication that the organization viewed the attack as a violation of sovereignty. Instead, public statements from the organization

⁴⁶³ “International Law Applicable in Cyberspace,” *Global Affairs Canada*, April 22, 2022.

https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/peace_security-paix_securite/cyberspace_law-cyberespace_droit.aspx?lang=eng.

⁴⁶⁴ Ji-Jen Hwang, “Reframing China’s Territory and Sovereignty in Cyberspace: Exploring Conceptual Territorialization and Claims of Cyber Sovereignty,” *Issues & Studies* 59, no. 04 (December 2023): 1–21.

⁴⁶⁵ “Mandate,” *Communications Security Establishment Canada*, April 7, 2021.

<https://www.cse-cst.gc.ca/en/corporate-information/mandate>.

⁴⁶⁶ “Global Affairs Canada Investigating Security Breach Affecting 20 Employees,” *CBC News*, March 22, 2025, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/global-affairs-security-breach-1.7099290>.

⁴⁶⁷ “Global Affairs Canada Investigating Security Breach Affecting 20 Employees,” *CBC News*, March 22, 2025, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/global-affairs-security-breach-1.7099290>.

⁴⁶⁸ “International Law Applicable in Cyberspace,” *Global Affairs Canada*, April 22, 2022.

https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/peace_security-paix_securite/cyberspace_law-cyberespace_droit.aspx?lang=eng.

merely deem the attack “malicious cyber activity.”⁴⁶⁹ The statement does not mention cyber sovereignty, or even national security, which is at odds with the stated policy of the organization. We see through this attack, and the response of GAC, that the policy of the Canadian government and its eventual actions are out of line with each other. It believes that international law is applicable in cyberspace, and that Canada has digital sovereignty, yet when such sovereignty is undoubtedly violated, there is no discourse or response.

Furthermore, Canada is heavily reliant on the U.S. for internet infrastructure. Many Canadian networks use “boomerang routing” where traffic comes to Canada from the U.S., and returns back to the U.S. before reaching its destination.⁴⁷⁰ Even worse, cyber-sovereignty is already an unlevel playing field, due to U.S. control over the allocation and maintenance of domain names under the DNS and IP addresses.⁴⁷¹ Therefore, Canada must decide whether cyberspace is truly sovereign and, if it is, efforts to separate from American reliance must be made. In light of an increasingly threatening neighbor to the south, Canada’s cyber actions must align with its stated cyber policy, and if not, it should rethink its orientation on the debate.

Therefore, it is unclear how the tangible approach of the Government of Canada differs from the belief of a “global-commons” cyberspace. It believes that behaviour in cyberspace needs to be regulated, and that seriousness of cyberattacks should be grounded in their physical effects in any given state.⁴⁷² However, those who believe in a global-commons approach to cyberspace also believe in these concepts. For Canada, its actions in cyberspace do not clearly

⁴⁶⁹ “Global Affairs Canada Investigating Security Breach Affecting 20 Employees,” *CBC News*, March 22, 2025. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/global-affairs-security-breach-1.7099290>.

⁴⁷⁰ Andrew Clement, “Canadian Network Sovereignty: A Strategy for Twenty-First-Century National Infrastructure Building,” Centre for International Governance Innovation, March 26, 2018. <https://www.cigionline.org/articles/canadian-network-sovereignty>.

⁴⁷¹ Ji-Jen Hwang, “Reframing China’s Territory and Sovereignty in Cyberspace: Exploring Conceptual Territorialization and Claims of Cyber Sovereignty,” *Issues & Studies* 59, no. 04 (December 2023): 1–21.

⁴⁷² Ji-Jen Hwang, “Reframing China’s Territory and Sovereignty in Cyberspace: Exploring Conceptual Territorialization and Claims of Cyber Sovereignty.”

delineate a stance, despite the clearly stated opinion. China, despite its widespread use of censorship, has a consistent approach to cyber-sovereignty, and clearly promotes a Westphalian internet. In an increasingly multi-polar world, Canada must rethink which side of the cyber-sovereignty debate it finds itself on, and act accordingly.

Recommendations

Canada must reconcile its stated policy that cyberspace falls under its sovereign jurisdiction with its treatment of cyberspace as a matter of global commons.⁴⁷³ Canada should keep its commitment to a free and open internet, one with the values of the liberal approach, however, it must recognize that not every country shares these values. To prevent disinformation, Canada should take a nuanced approach to internet governance that balances the global public good and sovereigntist concerns. The global public good discourse on internet governance emphasizes international cooperation to manage trans-boundary flows and threats,⁴⁷⁴ and blended with sovereigntist concerns for national security, a new approach can involve the state in the securitization of a deregulated internet economy through surveillance and monitoring programs.⁴⁷⁵ Canada, which focuses on media regulation and the empowerment of private actors to regulate the internet, should move to align its approach with the EU, which boasts comprehensive regulations enforcing the data privacy of internet users and the requirement for the physical infrastructure facilitating the, data storage and domestic transmission, to be located within the EU's borders.⁴⁷⁶ Further regulations are also necessary to ensure social media algorithms are not used to clandestinely promote the interests of their owners or foreign states.

⁴⁷³ "International Law Applicable in Cyberspace," Global Affairs Canada, 22 April 2022. https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/peace_security-paix_secu_rite/cyberspace_law-cyberespace_droit.aspx?lang=eng.

⁴⁷⁴ Chenou, "From Cyber-Libertarianism to Neoliberalism," 214.

⁴⁷⁵ Chenou, "From Cyber-Libertarianism to Neoliberalism," 220.

⁴⁷⁶ Amie Taal, *The GDPR Challenge: Privacy, Technology, and Compliance in an Age of Accelerating Change*, ed. Amie Taal, 1st ed. (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2021), 2.

Laws requiring transparency for the evaluative processes of social media algorithms may alert consumers and the government when they are being altered and potentially used to influence public opinion. Canada should pursue the harmonization of its cyberspace regulation with the EU and work towards establishing joint internet governance frameworks with other liberal-internet states. In a multipolar world where powerful states with sovereigntist internets attempt to exploit the vulnerabilities of liberal internet states, these liberal internet states should form a joint regulation bloc to monitor the activities and behaviours of states who do not subscribe to the values of a global internet commons.

Case Study #7: National Security

By: Ria Bal & Ivan Bélanger

Introduction

Undoubtedly, Canada is dealing with a range of national security threats, each differing in level of urgency. Understanding that electoral foreign interference and the spread of misinformation and disinformation are critical national security concerns, these issues have dedicated sections and will thus not be covered here. The same applies to economic diversification in the age of unreliable trading partners. These key issues aside, Canada's national security strategy must be proactive, adaptive, and grounded in a realistic understanding of its geopolitical position. By reinforcing its commitments to defence, nuclear non-proliferation, and Arctic sovereignty, while still maintaining its diplomatic and multilateral engagement, Canada can strengthen its national security in an increasingly uncertain world.

NATO and Military Spending

Despite recent commentary from Trump questioning NATO's usefulness, the Canadian Government has reaffirmed its commitment to the organization.⁴⁷⁷ Even with these affirmations, this section takes Canada's previous failure to meet NATO's 2% defence spending to GDP threshold as a deliberate, informed choice made on prioritization of civilian interests and refusal to be subjugated by the security dilemma. With the 2% threshold being the arbitrary numeric

⁴⁷⁷ Emmet Lyons, "Trump questions NATO allies' will for collective defense while casting doubt on U.S.' own treaty commitment," *CBS News*, 7 March 2025. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-nato-article-5-collective-defense-europe-doubt-us-treaty-commitment/>: National Defence, "Canada reaffirms commitment to NATO's collective defence and security and welcomes Sweden to the Canadian-led NATO Multinational Brigade Latvia," *Government of Canada*, 7 February 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2025/02/canada-reaffirms-commitment-to-natos-collective-defence-and-security-and-welcomes-sweden-to-the-canadian-led-nato-multinational-brigade-latvia.html>: Office of the Prime Minister, "Prime Minister Carney strengthens Canada's security and sovereignty," *Government of Canada*, 18 March 2025. <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2025/03/18/prime-minister-carney-strengthens-canada-security-and-sovereignty>.

marker that other countries use to judge whether a member is adequately contributing, Canada is incentivized to meet this criteria without necessarily accelerating global militarization. On January 24th, 2025, Minister of National Defense Bill Blair stated that Canada could easily meet the 2% threshold by 2027, five years earlier than Trudeau's projections.⁴⁷⁸ For the fiscal year of 2024-25, Canada is expected to spend 1.37% of its GDP on defence, with 18.6% devoted to major equipment.⁴⁷⁹ Christopher Penney, of the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, gives projections of \$41B in defence spending for 2024-25 at 1.39% of the GDP, which he places at \$2.958T.⁴⁸⁰ Using Penney's projected for 2026-27, \$3124.6T, a 2% military budget would be \$62.49B.

Defence spending is broadly defined by NATO, with the following criteria being particularly relevant:

1. Expenditures for stockpiling of war reserves of finished military equipment or supplies for use directly by the armed forces are included.
2. Expenditure for the military component of mixed civilian-military activities is included, but only when the military component can be specifically accounted for or estimated.
3. Expenditure for peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, paid by the Ministry of Defence or other ministries.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁸ Ashley Burke, "Defence minister accelerates 2% NATO spending timeline to 2027 amid pressure from Trump," *CBC*, 24 January 2025.

⁴⁷⁹ Government of Canada, "Defence Spending," accessed 25 February 2025.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/proactive-disclosure/cds-man-date-priorities-26-sept-2024/defence-spending.html>.

⁴⁸⁰ Christopher Penney, "The Fiscal Implications of Meeting the NATO Military Spending Target," *Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer*, 30 October 2024.
https://www.pbo-dpb.ca/en/publications/RP-2425-020-S--fiscal-implications-meeting-nato-military-spending-target-repercussions-financieres-atteinte-cible-depenses-militaires-fixee-otan#antn_1.

⁴⁸¹ NATO, "Defence expenditures and NATO's 2% guideline," accessed 24 February 2025.
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49198.htm#:~:text=Defence%20expenditure%20is%20defined%20by,Allies%20or%20of%20the%20Alliance.

These three criteria can allow for superficial defence budget increases while simultaneously promoting civilian interests and downplaying the negative impacts of the security dilemma.

NATO and Military Spending - Policy Recommendations

1. Recently, Conservative candidate Pierre Poilievre proposed a new multibillion dollar military base near Iqaluit, an idea that would immediately impose significant infrastructural problems and comes without input from the local inhabitants.⁴⁸² One major base might be more cost-effective overall, but this would not artificially inflate defence spending in the same way that the construction of several smaller facilities would.
2. The Canadian Government should immediately open consultations with isolated northern communities to gauge community interest in hosting military stockpiling facilities. Ideal isolated community examples include Churchill MB, Arviat NU, Inukjuak QC, and Nain NL. It should be emphasized to road-disconnected towns that facility installations could include connection to Canada's road network.
3. Construction of connecting roads should be carefully analyzed from a cost perspective so that their military component may count towards the NATO spending benchmark.
4. Peacekeeping initiatives should increase to bring Canada closer to NATO's 2% threshold.

The North

It should be noted here that traditionally Russia has been considered the greatest threat to national security in the North, and the general lack of attention to Russia in this section will not necessarily reflect this. As of March 2024, Russia is stuck in a costly, slow-moving invasion of

⁴⁸² Samuel Wat, "Northerners, experts question Conservatives' pledge to build military base in Iqaluit," *CBC*, 10 February 2025.
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/northerners-questions-conservatives-military-base-iqaluit-1.7455548>.

Ukraine, which seems to be occupying the country's full concentration. This means that the level of imminent threat from Russia in the Arctic is minor, and likely to remain so as long as the war in Ukraine carries on. Ultimately, Canada should take advantage of both Russian distraction and significant international anti-Russian sentiment to aggressively pursue international legal decisions regarding items like Arctic Ocean border delimitation. It should also seek closer diplomatic cooperation with other regional players, particularly Denmark and Norway.

There will be several subsections that fall under this broad heading: the Alaskan border dispute, relations with Greenland, The Northwest Passage, and general Arctic sovereignty. The Alaska-Yukon border dispute concerns the maritime boundary as it extends into the Beaufort Sea beyond the land border. The dispute itself arises from the wording of the 1825 treaty that set the border between what was at the time Russian and British territory.⁴⁸³ Today, Canada claims the border continues to run along the 141st Meridian into the Beaufort Sea, whereas the U.S. argues the boundary should be along a line that is equidistant from the nearest Canadian and American land.⁴⁸⁴ Baker and Byers' (2012) show that by continuing the claimant lines beyond the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) Exclusive Economic Zone at 200 nautical miles, each country benefits more from the others' claim (Figure 1).⁴⁸⁵ Notably, Canada has ratified UNCLOS, while the U.S. has not.⁴⁸⁶ In practice, this means that the U.S. will operate unilaterally for resource extraction in the region, while Canada will abide by international law.

⁴⁸³ Great Britain/Russia: Limits of Their Respective Possessions on the North-West Coast of America and the Navigation of the Pacific Ocean, Great Britain-Russia, February 16, 1825, 75 Consolidated Treaty Series 95.

⁴⁸⁴ James S. Baker and Michael Byers, "Crossed Lines: The Curious Case of the Beaufort Sea Maritime Boundary Dispute," *Ocean Development & International Law* 43, 2012: 70-95.

⁴⁸⁵ James S. Baker and Michael Byers, "Crossed Lines: The Curious Case of the Beaufort Sea Maritime Boundary Dispute."

⁴⁸⁶ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Law of the Sea*, -, 10 December 1982.

https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXI-6&chapter=21&Temp=mtdsg3&clang=_en.

Recall that it is theoretically advantageous for Canada to accept the American demarcation line for territorial delimitation beyond the 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In establishing sovereignty beyond the EEZ, UNCLOS uses the term ‘Extended Continental Shelf’ (ECS) to define maritime territory that countries may claim if it is a natural prolongation of its territory.⁴⁸⁷ In 2019, Canada submitted a claim to the UN for its Arctic territory to contain an ECS beyond the EEZ.⁴⁸⁸ In 2023, the U.S. Department of State put out a document on their own ECS claim, which would also extend well beyond the UNCLOS EEZ.⁴⁸⁹ Crucially, this document shows an ECS boundary that does not follow an extension of their own border claim in the Beaufort Sea (Figure 2). Instead, it follows the American claim until the EEZ line, and then follows Canada’s EEZ boundary. This contradiction could give Canada two powerful arguments: either the American claim is fabricated as its application is inconsistent, or the American claim is valid and Canada will accept it as a demarcation line even as it continues beyond the EEZ. However, the 2019 Canadian ECS submission to UNCLOS undermines Canada’s ability to make such an argument as the submission claims an ECS well beyond the border claim (Figure 3).⁴⁹⁰ If Canada’s ECS claim is reduced to at least the continuation of the two border claims, Canada can choose whether it wants access to the territory near the shoreline or a greater claim further from the shoreline. Regardless, a settlement with the Americans should

⁴⁸⁷ Fisheries and Oceans Canada, “Sovereignty and UNCLOS,” *Government of Canada*, accessed 24 February 2025. <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/hydrography-hydrographie/unclos/index-eng.html>.

⁴⁸⁸ Global Affairs Canada, “Canada marks major milestone in defining its continental shelf in Arctic Ocean,” *Government of Canada*, accessed 24 February 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2019/05/canada-marks-major-milestone-in-defining-its-continental-shelf-in-arctic-ocean.html>.

⁴⁸⁹ U.S. Department of State, *The Outer Limits of the Extended Continental Shelf of the United States of America: Executive Summary*, Washington, 2023.

https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/ECS_Executive_Summary.pdf.

⁴⁹⁰ “Canada’s evolving Central Arctic Ocean submission,” *IBRU: Centre for Borders Research*, March 2023. [https://www.durham.ac.uk/media/durham-university/research-/research-centres/ibru-centre-for-borders-research/map-s-and-databases/arctic-maps-2024-january/Map-5-IBRU-Arctic-map-04-01-24-\(Canadas-evolving-submission-in-the-CAO\).pdf](https://www.durham.ac.uk/media/durham-university/research-/research-centres/ibru-centre-for-borders-research/map-s-and-databases/arctic-maps-2024-january/Map-5-IBRU-Arctic-map-04-01-24-(Canadas-evolving-submission-in-the-CAO).pdf).

be negotiated at the earliest convenience, meaning when a sufficiently democratic and reasonable negotiation can occur.

Greenland, unlike the Beaufort Sea, has been in the news cycle recently. Like Canada itself, the American administration has expressed desire for sovereignty over the autonomous region of Denmark.⁴⁹¹ Geographically, Americanization of the island beyond the current military base at Thule could be catastrophic for national security in the hands of aggressive American politicians. Effectively, with the contiguous states to the south and Alaska to the west, an American Greenland would complete American encirclement of Canada, making further threats to sovereignty much more pressing. One way to avoid such a scenario is to make Canada a more compelling option should Greenland pursue independence or other changes in political status.

Recent developments have opened good opportunities for rapprochement with Greenland. First, the territory is currently pushing for new tourism through the opening of a new airport in the capital, Nuuk, with an additional international airport set to open in Ilulissat in 2026.⁴⁹² Coordinating tourism marketing campaigns with greater air connectivity, both from southern hubs like Toronto and Montreal, and northern cities like Iqaluit, could easily enhance national desire to explore the region. Furthermore, there is recent diplomatic cooperation to build on, with the resolution of the Hans Island border dispute in 2022.⁴⁹³ Finally, the Canadian government should pursue trilateral negotiations with Greenland and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK). Including the Canadian Inuit directly, through the ITK, in connectivity discussions is imperative to ensure Canada's actions align with Inuit interests. Potentially eased by new air routes, the

⁴⁹¹ Laura Gozzi, "Danish PM in whirlwind EU trip as Greenland unease grows," *BBC News*, 28 January 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm218mle9pzo>.

⁴⁹² Adrienne Murray Nielsen, "Holiday in Greenland? New airports aim to entice tourists," *BBC News*, 20 October 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy4dz7l181wo>.

⁴⁹³ Global Affairs Canada, "Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark, together with Greenland, reach historic agreement on long-standing boundary disputes," *Government of Canada*, accessed 27 February 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2022/06/canada-and-the-kingdom-of-denmark-together-with-greenland-reach-historic-agreement-on-long-standing-boundary-disputes.html>.

Government should promote cultural exchange and interaction between Canada's Inuit and Inuvialuit, and the Kalaallit and Inughuit of Greenland.⁴⁹⁴ One concrete policy that could aid this endeavour would be subsidizing flights for Canada's Inuit specifically to Greenland. Noting that Greenland, although a part of the Kingdom of Denmark, is not in the Schengen Area, pursuing visa-free travel with the region would also promote Canada-Greenland relations.

A key note about the Hans Island border resolution is that the legal ramifications do not extend Inuit territorial integrity to marine areas in the region.⁴⁹⁵ Currently, many of the waterways in the region are a part of the Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area (TINMCA).⁴⁹⁶ The Canadian Government, cooperating with Inuit groups such as the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, should simultaneously extend TINMCA and the Hans Island Inuit territorial integrity to the marine areas. The current Canadian approach to the Arctic, explicitly making the Northwest Passage a question of sovereignty, shows signs of grating on the international community, with some referring to current practice as "sovereignty fetishism."⁴⁹⁷ In future diplomatic and unilateral endeavours regarding the Northwest Passage, care should be taken to frame the Arctic waterways as an issue of both environmentalism and Inuit rights, rather than plain sovereignty.

Arctic sovereignty has one more key issue: connectivity. Greenland is remedying this issue through airport construction, but much of Canada's north is accessible over land. Drawing

⁴⁹⁴ Lydia Schoeppner, "The Inuit Circumpolar Council – Agent of Peacemaking for Inuit in Nunavut and Greenland," *University of Manitoba*, March 2020.

⁴⁹⁵ Apostolos Tsiouvalas and Endalew Lijalem Enyew, "The Legal Implications of the 2022 Canada-Denmark/Greenland Agreement on Hans Island (Tartupaluk) for the Inuit Peoples of Greenland and Nunavut," *The Arctic Institute*, 24 January 2023.
<https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/legal-implications-2022-canada-denmark-greenland-agreement-hans-island-tartupaluk-inuit-peoples-greenland-nunavut/>.

⁴⁹⁶ "Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area," *Government of Canada*, accessed 18 March 2025.
<https://parks.canada.ca/amnc-nmca/cnamnc-cnnmca/tallurutiup-imanga>.

⁴⁹⁷ Valur Ingimundarson, *Iceland's Arctic Policies and Shifting Geopolitics* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan 2024), p. 38.

on the successful 2017 opening of a highway between Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik in the Northwest Territories, which has led to a significant increase in both visitors and investment, several similar geographic possibilities should be explored.⁴⁹⁸ Principally, Nunavik has been explored as a place to build roads connecting isolated Cree and Inuit settlements to Quebec's road network.⁴⁹⁹ Understanding that permafrost and climate change could pose logistical challenges, the cost of road construction should couple with at least one minor military installation in the region to allow some of the cost to count towards defence spending. Other unconnected regions that should be engaged with consultations for road access include Churchill, Manitoba, and Nunavut's Hudson's Bay coast, as well as mining areas in the Northwest Territories and northern Labrador.

The North - Policy Recommendations

1. Canada should aggressively pursue UNCLOS decisions on its ECS while the international community harbours anti-Russia sentiments from the invasion of Ukraine.
2. The Canadian Government should wait to resolve the Beaufort Sea border until the U.S. is less afflicted by volatility and thus more receptive to democratic reasoning. In the meantime, Canada should scale back its ECS claim off the coast of Alaska to at minimum the American Beaufort Sea border claim, which is ironically more beneficial than Canada's concerning the ECS.

⁴⁹⁸ Industry, Tourism, and Investment NWT, "Photo Essay: One Year Of Visitors Up The Inuvik-Tuk Highway And Investments In Support," *Government of Northwest Territories*, accessed 27 February 2025.

<https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/en/newsroom/photo-essay-one-year-visitors-inuvik-tuk-highway-and-investments-support>.

⁴⁹⁹ Ministère des Transports, "Transportation Plan of Nord-du-Québec," *Gouvernement de Québec*, February 2005.

<http://www.bv.transports.gouv.qc.ca/mono/0807428.pdf>; See also, 2002 version

<http://www.bv.transports.gouv.qc.ca/mono/0936810.pdf>.

3. Canada should encourage positive relations with an increasingly geopoliticized Greenland. This would mean increasing flights and tourism to Greenland's new airports, subsidizing Inuit travel, and easing or eliminating visa restrictions with the island.

The Southern Border

Donald Trump's focus on the U.S.-Canadian border has made Canada's southern border of national concern.⁵⁰⁰ Primary among the American president's concerns are so-called 'illegal immigrants', hereafter referred to as irregular migrants to better reflect international legal status, and the flow of fentanyl from Canada into the U.S.. In early negotiations that delayed tariffs by a month, Justin Trudeau and his Minister of Public Safety David McGuinty promised improved border security through guaranteeing several commitments, such as increased investment in border forces, that had already been promised months earlier.⁵⁰¹ Here, it is worth noting that American allegations are not necessarily grounded in reality; even dubiously inflated American numbers show fentanyl flowing minimally in both directions across the border, while other drug classes like opioids have dominant northerly flows.⁵⁰² This is on top of a similarly unidirectional flow of illegal firearms.⁵⁰³ Additionally, irregular migration flowing almost entirely from the U.S. into Canada during the previous Trump presidency.⁵⁰⁴ Furthermore, it should be noted that a

⁵⁰⁰ Holly Honderich, "Canada announces new border rules following Trump tariff threat," *BBC*, 17 December 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/czx5p41696po>.

⁵⁰¹ Public Safety Canada, "Government of Canada expands plan to strengthen border security," *Government of Canada*, 4 February 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2025/02/government-of-canada-expands-plan-to-strengthen-border-security.html>; Public Safety Canada, "Government of Canada announces its plan to strengthen border security and our immigration system," *Government of Canada*, 17 December 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2024/12/government-of-canada-announces-its-plan-to-strengthen-en-border-security-and-our-immigration-system.html>.

⁵⁰² Marcus Gee, "The U.S. is the real source of the fentanyl crisis, not Canada," *The Globe and Mail*, 8 March 2025. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/toronto/article-fentanyl-crisis-canada-us-border/>.

⁵⁰³ John Paul Tasker, "Trump complains about Canada — but new data shows spike in U.S. drugs and guns coming north," *CBC*, 13 February 2025. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trump-complaints-drugs-guns-border-1.7457605>.

⁵⁰⁴ Kayleen Devlin and Yi Ma, "How does fentanyl get into the US?," *BBC Verify*, 4 March 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvg93nn1e6go>; Canada Border Services Agency, "Canada Border Services Agency enforcement action statistics," *Government of Canada*, accessed 17 March 2025. <https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/security-securite/seizure-saisie-eng.html>; Monica Boyd and Nathan T.B. Ly,

2023 Supreme Court of Canada decision threatens the existing Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) that governs irregular migration at the southern border, due to the court finding it unacceptable to classify the U.S. as a ‘safe’ country for all irregular migrants.⁵⁰⁵

The exaggerated American allegations are meant to be bargaining chips to gain favour from Canada, leaving three courses of action. The first option is maintaining a status quo where Canada makes no new promises but listens to American concerns, presenting statistics as if their low numbers were the result of new policy. Alternatively, Canada could ignore misinformation-fueled threats, as conceding anything to the U.S. allows them to reuse the same threat later. If threats like the tariffs are inevitable, granting concessions is effectively useless. Finally, Canada could start setting the record straight on American border security. Instead of entertaining American allegations, the government could point to real statistics such as the lopsided irregular migrant flow or over-emphasize minor issues in the American manner, such as the flow of stolen Canadian vehicles into the U.S.. This would ideally have the effect of blame spreading in order to underline the frivolity of the entire situation.

The Southern Border - Policy Recommendations

1. The current strategy of presenting pre-existing agreements as new should continue as it appropriately thwarts frivolous, reusable threats from the U.S..
2. In the case of American escalation, Canada should meet overblown American concerns with its own. Namely, gun smuggling into Canada, smuggling of stolen Canadian

“Unwanted and Uninvited: Canadian Exceptionalism in Migration and the 2017-2020 Irregular Border Crossings,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 1, no. 51. 2021.

⁵⁰⁵ “Safe Third Country,” *Canadian Council for Refugees*, accessed 17 March 2025.

[https://ccrweb.ca/en/safe-third-country](https://ccrweb.ca/en/safe-third-country;); “Case in Brief: Canadian Council for Refugees v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration),” *Supreme Court of Canada*, 12 June 2023.

<https://www.scc-csc.ca/judgments-jugements/cb/2023/39749/>.

vehicles on American freight rail, and failure to keep irregular migrants safe all present opportunities to mirror American sensationalism.

Arms Control & Nuclear Non-Proliferation

As Canada navigates national security concerns such as border security and military commitments, its role in nuclear deterrence and arms control becomes increasingly relevant. Canada has long positioned itself as a leader in nuclear non-proliferation and arms control, advocating for a world free of nuclear weapons while maintaining close security ties with its NATO allies. As even a limited nuclear exchange could disrupt the global climate and cause mass starvation, nuclear weapons pose one of the most serious threats to humanity.⁵⁰⁶ Recognizing the catastrophic consequences of nuclear conflict, Canada became the first country with substantial nuclear capability to voluntarily renounce nuclear weapons.⁵⁰⁷ As a middle power, Canada has historically played a diplomatic role in disarmament efforts, actively supporting the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and promoting arms control through institutions such as the UN and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).⁵⁰⁸ However, nuclear tensions continue to rise, and the Doomsday Clock now stands at 89 seconds to midnight, reflecting the growing risk of nuclear conflict due to the war in Ukraine, escalating tensions in the Middle East, and the modernization of nuclear arsenals by major powers.⁵⁰⁹ Moreover, the modernization of nuclear arsenals by the U.S., China, and Russia has destabilized previous arms control agreements. Notably, Russia is developing hypersonic nuclear-capable missiles, such as the Avangard system, which undermine existing deterrence

⁵⁰⁶ *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, “2025 Doomsday Clock Statement,” accessed February 3, 2025. <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/2025-statement/>.

⁵⁰⁷ “International Cooperation and Non-Proliferation,” *Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission*, accessed February 3, 2025. <https://www.cnsccsn.gc.ca/eng/resources/international-cooperation/#non-proliferation>.

⁵⁰⁸ Paul Meyer, “Nuclear Threats and Canada’s Disarmament Diplomacy,” *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 6, no. 1 (2023): 176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25751654.2023.2219488>.

⁵⁰⁹ *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, “2025 Doomsday Clock Statement.”

models. The U.S., under President Donald Trump's 'Iron Dome' initiative, is pursuing a missile defence system that experts fear could provoke an arms race rather than deter escalation. Iran has also accelerated uranium enrichment, surpassing the limits set by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) by sevenfold. The JCPOA, a 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers, aimed to limit Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. However, this deal was significantly weakened after Trump unilaterally withdrew in 2018, reinstating sanctions and prompting Iran to progressively breach its enrichment restrictions.⁵¹⁰ Meanwhile, North Korea continues to expand its nuclear arsenal and long-range missile capabilities. Thus, the prospect of proliferation has only continued to increase as states reassess their security needs in an uncertain geopolitical landscape.⁵¹¹ At the same time, Canada is losing credibility in its non-proliferation stance as it continues to support NATO's nuclear posture while opposing nuclear weapons diplomatically. Canadian civil society groups as well as political parties such as the New Democratic Party (NDP) have called on the government to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), arguing that Canada's refusal undermines its legacy as a former leader in global disarmament.⁵¹²

Historically, Canada has played a leading role in global security initiatives. The Landmine Ban Treaty (Ottawa Treaty) of 1997 demonstrated Canada's diplomatic influence in advocating for arms control, while its leadership in promoting the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Doctrine cemented its commitment to humanitarian intervention.⁵¹³ Along with supporting

⁵¹⁰ Summar Iqbal Babar and Sarosh Fatima, "JCPOA and Challenges for Non-Proliferation Regime," *Journal of Security and Strategic Analysis* 8, no. 2 (2023): 164. <https://doi.org/10.57169/jssa.008.02.0200>.

⁵¹¹ *New York Times*, "Trump Announces Increased Iron Dome Funding," 28 January, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/28/us/politics/trump-iron-dome.html>.

⁵¹² Government of Canada, "Canada's Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Radiological Security Policy," *Global Affairs Canada*, accessed February 3, 2025. https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/peace_security-paix_seculte/nuclear_radiological-nucleaire_radiologique.aspx?lang=eng.

⁵¹³ Catherine Lu. "Humanitarian Intervention: Moral Ambition and Political Constraints." *International Journal* 62, no. 4 (2007): 945. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40204344>.

Canada's position in reclaiming its position as a peacekeeper, the nation should reclaim its position as a proactive advocate for disarmament and conflict prevention to maintain its diplomatic credibility and enhance its soft power. Moreover, it is imperative to acknowledge how Canada has built a reputation as a middle power committed to multilateralism. If it does not take a stronger stance on nuclear disarmament, it risks losing credibility in global arms control discussions. Likewise, Canada's legacy of championing peace and human security aligns with its broader foreign policy commitments to humanitarian efforts, including addressing the catastrophic consequences of nuclear conflict. With 13,400 nuclear weapons in the world, the detonation of even a fraction could trigger global climate disruption, food shortages, and mass starvation, leading to irreversible consequences for global security.⁵¹⁴ Therefore, advocating for nuclear disarmament is both a reflection of Canada's humanitarian values and strategic interests and a crucial aspect of its prior commitments to sustainable development.⁵¹⁵

While advocating for nuclear disarmament, Canada has an opportunity to lead the global shift toward peaceful nuclear energy and strengthen non-proliferation frameworks. Canada recently entered into an agreement with Poland to support the development of nuclear energy infrastructure by providing reactor technology. This partnership reinforces (IAEA) safeguards, ensuring that Poland's nuclear development remains strictly for civilian use.⁵¹⁶ As a major uranium exporter and home to one of the world's safest nuclear regulatory frameworks, Canada has both the technical expertise and diplomatic credibility to lead responsible nuclear energy initiatives.⁵¹⁷ To further promote civilian nuclear energy cooperation, Canada can expand

⁵¹⁴ *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, "2025 Doomsday Clock Statement."

⁵¹⁵ Lu, "Humanitarian Intervention." 949.

⁵¹⁶ *The Canada-Poland Nuclear Energy Cooperation Agreement*, *Canada NewsWire*, 28 January, 2025. <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/wire-feeds/canada-poland-nuclear-energy-cooperation/docview/3160441852/se-2>.

⁵¹⁷ Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, "Canada's Contribution to Nuclear Weapons Development," accessed February 3, 2025. <https://www.cnsccsn.gc.ca/eng/resources/fact-sheets/canadas-contribution-to-nuclear-weapons-development/>.

bilateral partnerships, particularly with Global South nations transitioning to clean energy. Specifically, Indonesia is actively pursuing a transition to clean energy, with the Indonesia Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), a \$20B agreement launched in 2022, aiming to decarbonize Indonesia's coal-dependent economy. The initiative involves G7 countries, including Canada, and focuses on achieving net-zero emissions from electricity production by 2050.⁵¹⁸ Through strengthening partnerships with JETP countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and South Africa, Canada can counter narratives that associate nuclear technology solely with weapons development, offering a non-proliferation alternative for energy security in regions otherwise at risk of pursuing nuclear weapons.

Moreover, one must acknowledge how Canada's nuclear policy reflects an inherent tension: it opposes nuclear weapons proliferation and supports global disarmament efforts, yet remains under NATO's nuclear umbrella. While critics contend that this stance weakens Canada's credibility, it also provides a unique opportunity for Canada to take on a greater leadership role in disarmament by advocating for de-escalation and risk-reduction policies within the alliance. Furthermore, Canada should encourage NATO to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in its strategic doctrine while engaging with non-nuclear NATO members such as Norway and the Netherlands, which have expressed concerns about the alliance's nuclear stance.⁵¹⁹ Engaging with Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) and the Global South presents another avenue for Canada to reaffirm its leadership in nuclear non-proliferation. Brazil and South Africa, as BRICS members, have signed the NPT and actively advocate for

⁵¹⁸ Government of Canada, *Summary of Outcomes at COP27*, accessed March 14, 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange/canada-international-action/un-climate-change-conference/cop27-summit/summary-outcomes.html#toc3>.

⁵¹⁹ Nuti, Leopoldo. "NATO's Role in Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control: A (Critical) History." Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), (2021): 27. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep28795>.

nuclear disarmament.⁵²⁰ By collaborating with these nations, Canada can help reform the NPT framework while using this engagement as an opportunity to open dialogue with India and China, both of which have growing nuclear capabilities and border security tensions. Canada can also promote the establishment of nuclear-free zones, particularly in the Arctic and South Pacific, where it has direct geopolitical interests. Moreover, supporting confidence-building measures between nuclear-armed states in high-risk conflict zones such as India-Pakistan, U.S.-China, and Israel-Iran would further reinforce Canada's role as a diplomatic mediator.

To reclaim its leadership in nuclear non-proliferation, Canada must adopt a comprehensive strategy that strengthens diplomacy, balances security commitments, and fosters global cooperation. A key priority is bridging the divide between nuclear-armed states and supporters of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) to create a more inclusive non-proliferation dialogue. This effort should be reinforced by a parliamentary review of Canada's nuclear stance, expanded public education on nuclear risks, and stronger partnerships with NGOs and research institutions to sustain long-term engagement in disarmament. By leveraging its position within NATO, deepening engagement with the Global South, promoting the peaceful use of nuclear technology, and advocating for multilateral dialogue, Canada can restore its soft power, reaffirm its peacebuilding legacy, and advance nuclear disarmament at a time of unprecedented global risk.

Arms Control & Nuclear Non-Proliferation: Policy Recommendations

To strengthen its leadership in nuclear non-proliferation and arms control, the Government of Canada must adopt a multifaceted approach that balances its security commitments with its disarmament advocacy.

⁵²⁰ Olusola Ogunnubi, "South Africa's Soft Power and the Diplomacy of Nuclear Geopolitics," *GeoJournal* 87, no. 1 (2022): 250.

1. Global Affairs Canada should work within NATO to reduce the alliance's reliance on nuclear weapons by promoting de-escalation policies and conventional deterrence strategies. Engaging with non-nuclear NATO members, such as Norway and the Netherlands, can help build momentum for a shift away from nuclear deterrence.
2. Global Affairs Canada should deepen its collaboration with the Global South, particularly BRICS nations like Brazil and South Africa, to reform the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and promote nuclear-free zones in regions such as the Arctic and the South Pacific. Strengthening partnerships with countries transitioning to clean energy, including Indonesia, Vietnam, and South Africa, can further reinforce non-proliferation efforts by demonstrating that nuclear technology can serve peaceful energy needs rather than military ambitions.
3. Public Safety Canada should diversify its counter-proliferation efforts by increasing public education on nuclear risks, conducting a parliamentary review of its nuclear stance, and expanding partnerships with NGOs and research institutions to sustain long-term engagement in disarmament.

National Harmony and Energy Security: The Role of East-West Pipelines in Canada

Energy security and national unity have long been intertwined in Canada's political and economic landscape. The proposed East-West pipeline projects, aimed at transporting Alberta's oil to eastern Canadian markets, represent a crucial yet contentious component of the country's energy strategy. While Alberta has consistently advocated for expanded pipeline infrastructure to enhance market access, provinces like Quebec have historically resisted such projects due to environmental concerns and political sensitivities. Historically, such projects have faced resistance due to environmental concerns and political sensitivities. The *Environmental Security*

section of this paper examines the critical role of pipelines in Canada's extractive infrastructure, reinforced by government investment and regulatory support. Likewise, the Economic Diversification section in this paper explores the financial and logistical dimensions of pipeline development. However, this discussion is framed within broader regional tensions, as exemplified by the debate over projects like Energy East, which underscores the complexities of national unity and security. Specifically, Canada's reliance on the U.S. as its primary energy export market has raised concerns about economic and geopolitical vulnerabilities. According to scholars, pipelines are not merely a means of transporting oil and gas; they are integral to national security and economic resilience.⁵²¹ Currently, almost all of Canada's crude oil exports (approximately four million barrels per day) are directed to the U.S., leaving the country exposed to policy shifts and trade restrictions.⁵²² The U.S.' increasing protectionist stance, including tariff threats, has reignited discussions about reducing this dependence by expanding domestic pipeline infrastructure to serve eastern Canada. Importantly, Federal Energy Minister Jonathan Wilkinson recently underscored the necessity of revisiting the East-West pipeline debate. He noted that Canada must reconsider its reliance on the U.S. and explore energy security measures that include strengthening interprovincial energy infrastructure.⁵²³ Although controversial, The Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) project has demonstrated the importance of federal investment in energy transport capacity, a precedent that could apply to a revived East-West corridor.

⁵²¹ Dwight Duncan, John Manley, and Duncan Munn, *Canada Must Accelerate Pipeline Development for National Security, Economic Growth, and National Unity* (C.D. Howe Institute, February 12, 2025), <https://cdhowe.org/publication/canada-must-accelerate-pipeline-development-for-national-security-economic-growth-and-national-unity/>.

⁵²² Maura Forrest, "Ottawa, Provinces Should Discuss Possibility of West-East Oil Pipeline: Wilkinson," *The Canadian Press*, February 6, 2025. <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/wire-feeds/ottawa-provinces-should-discuss-possibility-west/docview/3164686096/se-2>.

⁵²³ "Canada Oil Pipelines and Trump's Tariffs," *CBC News*, accessed March 14, 2025. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-oil-pipelines-trump-tariffs-1.7438889>.

Moreover, Quebec has historically opposed pipeline expansion, citing environmental and social acceptability concerns. However, recent geopolitical shifts and economic pressures have prompted reconsideration. Premier François Legault, while maintaining that no social acceptability exists for oil pipelines in Quebec, acknowledged that external pressures such as potential U.S. tariffs may influence future discussions.⁵²⁴ Despite this, environmental organizations and certain provincial leaders argue that reintroducing fossil fuel infrastructure contradicts Canada's climate commitments. The 2014 report on pipeline safety and security highlights the necessity of robust regulatory frameworks to address environmental concerns. The report details Canada's stringent safety standards, emphasizing that federally regulated pipelines have transported over \$100B worth of oil and gas annually with a high safety record.⁵²⁵ While regulatory improvements have been made, the challenge remains in balancing economic imperatives with environmental and Indigenous rights considerations.

Furthermore, Alberta has long viewed the lack of pipeline access to eastern markets as a fundamental economic injustice. The province's energy sector is a key driver of the national economy, yet constraints on infrastructure development have exacerbated regional alienation. The cancellation of the Energy East project in 2017, following regulatory hurdles and opposition from Quebec, intensified Alberta's frustrations with federal and provincial energy policies.⁵²⁶ Hence, the East-West pipeline could serve as a unifying national project, reinforcing economic ties between provinces while reducing Canada's dependence on foreign markets.

⁵²⁴ "Energy Security," *Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers*, accessed March 17, 2025.
<https://www.capp.ca/en/our-priorities/energy-security/>.

⁵²⁵ Natural Resources Canada, *Safety and Security of Energy Pipelines in Canada: A Report to Ministers* (2014).
https://books-scholarsportal-info.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/uri/ebooks/ebooks0/gibson_cppe/2015-01-25/1/10957226.

⁵²⁶ Jack Mintz and Ron Wallace, *Energy and National Security*, in *The Global Energy Transition Confronts East vs West Realpolitik: Why Energy Security Matters* (Macdonald-Laurier Institute, 2022), 15–32.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep51211.5>.

In summary, resolving Canada's pipeline disputes requires a balanced approach that considers regional economic interests, environmental stewardship, and national security concerns. Given Quebec's evolving stance and Alberta's ongoing demands for market access, renewed discussions on East-West pipelines could provide a framework for national energy security. While significant political and regulatory challenges remain, the potential benefits of an integrated national pipeline system, such as economic growth, reduced foreign dependence, and strengthened national unity, warrant serious reconsideration. Future policies must navigate the intersection of energy security, climate commitments, and regional cooperation to foster a more cohesive national energy strategy.

National Harmony & Energy Security: Policy Recommendations

Moreover, Canada's national energy strategy must balance economic resilience, energy security, and environmental commitments. Given the country's heavy reliance on U.S. markets for oil exports, reconsidering East-West pipeline development could enhance national energy security while addressing regional economic disparities.

1. Natural Resources Canada must develop regulatory reforms to streamline approval processes and attract private investment, with mechanisms such as first-loss capital helping to de-risk projects. However, any expansion must carefully navigate environmental concerns by strengthening safety standards and aligning with Canada's climate commitments.
2. Engaging with Quebec, where opposition has historically been strong, is crucial, especially as geopolitical pressures such as potential U.S. tariffs create new incentives for cooperation.

3. Federal investment in energy infrastructure, as demonstrated in the Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) project, could play a role in ensuring long-term security and economic growth. Additionally, meaningful consultation with Indigenous communities is essential to address legal and social concerns, ensuring infrastructure projects are both sustainable and politically viable.

Conclusion

Canada's national security strategy must evolve to meet the demands of a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape. As global power dynamics shift and emerging threats reshape the security environment, Canada must balance its historical commitments to diplomacy and multilateralism with the realities of military modernization, technological advancements, and economic resilience. This paper has examined several key national security concerns, including NATO defence spending, Arctic sovereignty, nuclear non-proliferation, and energy security.

- Canada faces mounting pressure to reinforce its commitment to NATO's 2% defence spending target.
- Bolstering military capabilities and securing Arctic sovereignty are imperative not just for alliance credibility but also for safeguarding national interests and maintaining global influence. At the same time, Canada must ensure that its security policies align with its broader foreign policy objectives, including human rights, environmental protection, and global governance.
- In the Arctic, securing territorial integrity and strengthening northern infrastructure will be critical as climate change accelerates foreign interest in the region.
- On nuclear policy, Canada must reconcile its support for NATO's nuclear deterrence strategy with its diplomatic commitments to disarmament.

- In energy security, the government must address interprovincial tensions over pipeline development while reducing reliance on external markets.

Ultimately, Canada's national security depends on its ability to adapt to modern threats while upholding its values of diplomacy and cooperation. By modernizing defence policies, investing in strategic infrastructure, and reinforcing multilateral partnerships, Canada can secure its sovereignty and contribute to global stability. The decisions made today will define Canada's role in the international order for years to come.

Figures



Figure 1 - James S. Baker and Michael Byers, "Crossed Lines: The Curious Case of the Beaufort Sea Maritime Boundary Dispute," *Ocean Development & International Law* 43, 2012: 70-95.

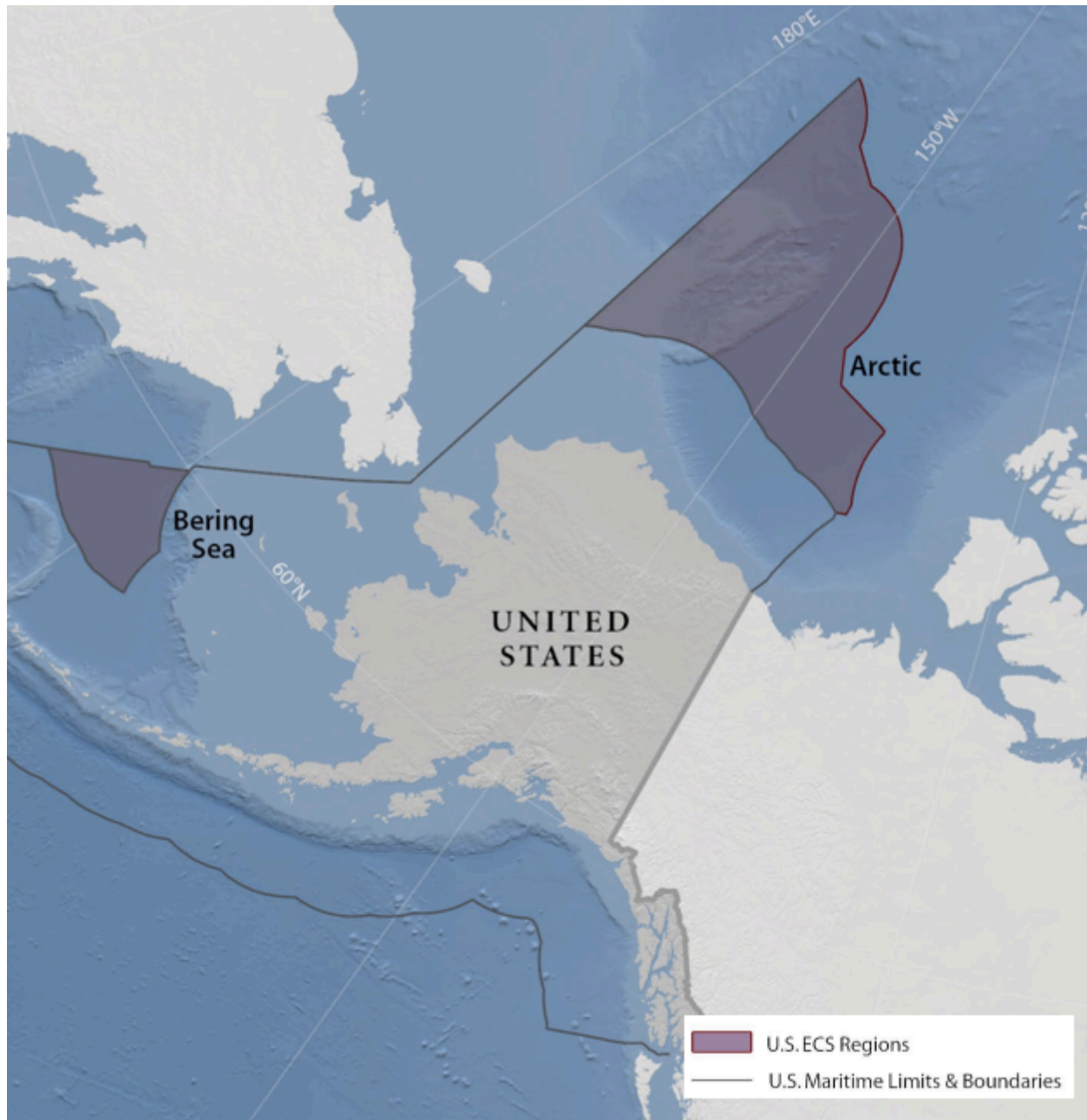


Figure 2 - U.S. Department of State, The Outer Limits of the Extended Continental Shelf of the United States of America: Executive Summary, Washington, 2023. Image edited by Ivan Bélanger.



Figure 3 - “Canada’s evolving Central Arctic Ocean submission,” *IBRU: Centre for Borders Research*, March 2023. Image edited by Ivan Bélanger.

Conclusion

By: Wade Masse & Shanzae Zaeem

The global order is transforming and Canada's place within it must change too. The country's identity as a middle power once afforded it an advantageous position as a middle power, prominent in international relations while falling between small, disempowered states and global hegemony. The age of unipolar American dominance led to Canada closely tying its foreign policy with its neighbour, but this approach no longer appears sustainable. Canada has been subjected to the unpredictability of the U.S. and its leader, Trump, who oscillates between threats of annexing the country and punishing it economically, supposedly justified by invented claims of fentanyl trafficking. At the same time, new opportunities and challenges emerge from states across the world. The EU increasingly coordinates the foreign policy objectives of its constituent states and appears to be a more reliable ally. China is challenging the U.S.' economic and military predominance, portraying itself as its equal while rejecting the values of liberalism. India too continues to grow economically, while Russia aggressively challenges the norms of sovereignty with its invasion of Ukraine. Across the world, more states are reorienting their foreign policy to reflect an emerging multipolar international order. Canada must do so too.

Re-orienting Canadian foreign policy requires it to take decisive action across many sectors of international relations. Promoting Canadian global leadership, countering the influence of the U.S. and China, and addressing the world's most pressing crises is not easily achieved, but the seven case studies of this paper identified opportunities for improvement in Canadian foreign policy. Addressing Canada's economic portfolio, foreign aid, relations with MENA, peacekeeping, climate change agenda, internet sovereignty, and national security are just some of the avenues through which Canada can promote its interests on the world stage.

First, Canada's over-reliance on the U.S. as a trading partner has become a security liability as Trump levies punishing tariffs, threatening key industries and the integrated supply chains that define the Canadian economy. Canada should adapt by using its natural resource wealth to establish targeted trade agreements both with existing partners and emerging economies overseas, presenting itself as a productive trading partner and alternative to larger states which may seek to exert their influence over smaller states. At the same time, Canada should take a prominent position in the emerging multipolar order by improving its foreign aid programs, filling the void left by the U.S. and catalyzing global development. Canada should also deviate from the U.S.' isolationist foreign policy by prioritizing its own strategic interests through peacekeeping missions. Through these missions, Canada can take a larger role as an honest broker and productive member of the international community, standing up for human rights in conflict zones in the Middle East and Ukraine.

Moreover, Canada must deal with some of the world's most pressing crises. It should position itself as a climate leader by ensuring the responsible use of its natural resource wealth, centering sustainability in its foreign aid programs, and making climate action an international priority. Canada should also address the changing nature of sovereignty by recognizing that existing approaches to cross-border issues continue to fail in the digital world, where Canada's liberal internet governance has created a vulnerability for foreign interference and current state mechanisms have struggled to enforce its sovereignty over cyberspace. Finally, Canada's national security must not be neglected, and it should prepare for contested domains in cyberspace, the Arctic, and even along its southern border through strengthened commitments to existing multilateral security agreements by meeting NATO's targeted expenditure goals.

Overall, the shifting global order presents both challenges and opportunities for Canada. No longer able to rely on a stable, unipolar system dominated by the U.S., Canada must redefine its foreign policy to remain relevant and secure its interests. The risks of economic overdependence on the U.S. are evident, as shifting political leadership and protectionist policies have exposed Canada's vulnerability to sudden trade disruptions. Diversification—both in trade and diplomacy—must be a priority. Strengthening ties with emerging economies, deepening partnerships with the EU, and engaging in multilateral institutions will allow Canada to carve out a more autonomous position on the world stage. Canada also has an opportunity to reinforce its identity as a constructive global actor. By investing in long-term development aid, contributing to peacekeeping efforts, and championing human rights in conflict zones, it can strengthen its international credibility and build a reputation as a global humanitarian leader. Ultimately, adapting to a multipolar world means embracing flexibility, resilience, and strategic independence. By broadening its alliances, committing to sustainable policies, and reinforcing national security, Canada can navigate the uncertainties of the global order while asserting itself as a responsible and influential middle power.

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