

Explaining Canada's Unsurprising Response to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, 2022–2023

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ABSTRACT

This study argues that Canada's foreign policy behavior has remained predictably unchanged in the face of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Historically, Canada's foreign policy has been directed by external considerations, specifically a liberal international order, multilateralism, key allies, and the United States. These *orientations* have determined Canadian foreign policy for generations. They guide Canada's foreign policy decision-making but are sometimes contradictory. In the case of Ukraine in 2022, however, these orientations aligned perfectly, allowing the Justin Trudeau government to participate in international efforts to support Ukraine without controversy. This paper surveys four major external orientations and one domestic orientation before describing the country's contributions to international efforts to support Ukraine. It concludes with a discussion about the troubling implications of a foreign policy that is tightly linked to external consideration: the costs of exit and the fundamental purpose of Canada's foreign policy in the first place.

Keywords: Canada; Ukraine; United States; foreign policy.

Explicar la respuesta esperada de Canadá ante la invasión de Rusia en Ucrania, 2022-2023

RESUMEN

Este estudio argumenta que el comportamiento de la política exterior de Canadá ha permanecido predeciblemente inalterado frente a la invasión de Ucrania por parte de Rusia en 2022. Históricamente, la política exterior de Canadá ha sido dirigida por consideraciones externas, en específico por un orden internacional liberal, el multilateralismo, aliados clave y los Estados Unidos. Estas orientaciones han determinado la política exterior canadiense durante generaciones. Las decisiones en la política exterior de Canadá han sido dirigidas por estas, aunque a veces hayan sido contradictorias. Sin embargo, en el caso de Ucrania en 2022, estas orientaciones se alinearon de manera perfecta, lo que ha permitido al gobierno de Justin Trudeau participar sin controversia en los esfuerzos internacionales para apoyar a Ucrania. Este artículo examina cuatro orientaciones externas principales y una interna antes de describir las contribuciones del país a los esfuerzos internacionales para apoyar a Ucrania. El estudio concluye con una discusión sobre las preocupantes implicaciones de una política exterior estrechamente vinculada a consideraciones externas: los costos de la retirada y el propósito fundamental de la política exterior de Canadá en primer lugar.

Palabras clave: Canadá; Ucrania; Estados Unidos; política exterior.

Explicando a resposta esperada do Canadá à invasão da Ucrânia pela Rússia, 2022-2023

RESUMO

Este estudo argumenta que o comportamento da política externa do Canadá permaneceu previsivelmente inalterado diante da invasão da Ucrânia pela Rússia em 2022. Historicamente, a política externa do Canadá tem sido orientada por considerações externas, especificamente por uma ordem internacional liberal, o multilateralismo, aliados-chave e os Estados Unidos. Essas orientações têm determinado a política externa canadense ao longo de gerações. As decisões na política externa do Canadá têm sido guiadas por essas orientações, embora às vezes tenham sido contraditórias. No entanto, no caso da Ucrânia em 2022, essas orientações se alinharam de maneira perfeita, permitindo ao governo de Justin Trudeau participar sem controvérsias nos esforços internacionais para apoiar a Ucrânia. Este artigo examina quatro orientações externas principais e uma interna antes de descrever as contribuições do país para os esforços internacionais de apoio à Ucrânia. O texto conclui com uma discussão sobre as preocupantes implicações de uma política externa estreitamente ligada a considerações externas: os custos da retirada e o propósito fundamental da política externa do Canadá em primeiro lugar.

Palavras-chave: Ucrânia; Canadá; Estados Unidos; política externa.

The animating question of this special issue asks, “How have the foreign policies of some states been conditioned or altered because Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022?” In Canada’s case, the answer is straightforward: Canada’s foreign policy remains unaltered. Factors deeply embedded in Canada’s history after World War II have conditioned almost every behavior exhibited by the country in 2022 and 2023. Moreover, the responses tendered by Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government are logical extensions of policies established by his Conservative predecessor Stephen Harper after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014. Any differences are matters of degree, not kind. Close observers of Canadian foreign policy will note familiar themes: rhetorical support of liberal internationalism, participation in multilateral coordination among Western allies, and standing alongside the United States. Between weapons transfers to Ukraine and moral support, Canada has behaved almost exactly as one would expect. The reason: a near-perfect alignment of factors that enable Canadian involvement in world politics. Key external referents in Canadian foreign policy embraced support for Ukraine, while at home, public and elite interests did the same. These factors have jointly allowed the Justin Trudeau government to offer material and moral support to Ukraine with little domestic controversy.

This study explores Canada’s foreign policy behavior in the first year of the Ukraine conflict and positions it in the wider context of Canada’s foreign policy. First, it discusses five orientations in Canada’s foreign policy practice that enable its actions on the world stage. Second, it details Canada’s Ukraine policy and its contributions to Ukraine’s war efforts in the first twelve months of the war. Third, it discusses an uncomfortable question about Canada’s foreign policy: how can Canada act independently when its foreign policy is so closely tied to the actions of others?

Canada’s Foreign Policy Orientations

Canada occupies a peculiar place in world politics. It is a relatively small country in terms of power politics, and its military is chronically underfunded. At the same time, it is prosperous, internationally ambitious, and mostly secure from external threats. Canada’s core national interests—security, prosperity, and sovereignty—are largely achieved because of its geographical advantages and proximity to the United States, notwithstanding the trepidation that causes for some (Barry & Bratt, 2008; Carment & Sands, 2019; Clarkson, 2002; Lehre, 2013). Importantly, the privileges of relative safety have not led to any form of Canadian isolationism.

Quite the opposite, Canada is outwardly oriented in its international policy, fixing its sights on the United States, Europe, and international organizations as guides for its own foreign policy. Indeed, much of the debate about Canada's international policy is a matter of external orientation—to *what* is Canada looking to guide its foreign policy. Therefore, understanding Canada's foreign policy orientation is key to explaining its behaviors in any given case.

Canada's foreign policy orientation forms the crux of this analysis. Conceptually, "orientation" is a useful way of analyzing Canada's foreign policy because the country has long defined "who and what is to be made secure in terms broader than the Canadian state" (Nossal, 2004, p. 520). But how are Canada's foreign policy orientations defined? In foreign policy, states understand themselves, in part, based their relationship to other forces in the international system. This study adopts national role conception theory which offers a theoretical framework for explaining how elites and non-elite populations understand Canada's global role and make decisions based on those understandings (Holsti, 1970). National role conceptualization theory applies directly to individual decision-makers and informs their understanding of the appropriate norms, behaviors, and interests they should pursue. Indeed, foreign policy behavior cannot be explained without considering how decision-makers understand the positions and the norms and expectations that shape a particular position. This internal understanding of role co-exists with role-based prescriptions emanating from external environment, including international values, expectations of other states, international public opinion, and other implicit understandings (Holsti, 1970, p. 246).

National role conception is a useful way to theorize individual decision-makers' understandings of foreign policy, but it has its limitations. Cantir and Kaarbo (2012) note that it is elite-focused and elides matters relating to how the conceived roles emerge, how they are defined, contested, or managed when incompatible, and how they ultimately change. To remedy this "elite black-boxing" of role theory, Cantir and Kaarbo offer domestic sources of foreign policy to bridge elite and non-elite conceptions.

One such option is strategic culture—the "collectively shared systems of meaning about the state" and its security (Massie, 2009, p. 630). Strategic culture can help to explain the cultural context that generates role conceptions held by elites and explains prevailing public sentiments toward the external envi-

ronment. Another important factor is the role of diasporic political interests in foreign policy making. This “second image” consideration represents an essential element in understanding the mutual embeddedness of foreign and domestic politics. Ultimately, national role conceptions, strategic culture, and diasporic politics help explain Canada’s foreign policy orientations. In turn, these mechanisms can explain Canada’s response to Russia’s war in Ukraine. Moreover, this theoretical frame can help anticipate some of the problems that are likely to arise from Canada’s support for Ukraine.

It is important to note that theory-laden explanations of Canada’s foreign policy make for “just so” explanations. In practice, these orientations and political imperatives are not all compatible. Foreign policymakers must often confront competing pressures that arise from different roles. At times, according to historian Norman Hillmer, some of Canada’s national interests have clashed or have been internally contradictory (quoted in Chapnick, 2022, p. 516). However, all orientations and enabling factors aligned in 2022 in the case of Ukraine. This section examines one domestic and four external orientations related to Canada’s foreign policy. Together they help make sense of Canada’s response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Internationalism

In the abstract, internationalism is an approach to world politics that supports active engagement in conflict and a commitment to global organizations charged with maintaining peace (Nossal, 2013). In this conception, the fate of any one state and the peace of the system are interconnected (Nossal, 1997, p. 155). As Nossal explains, internationalism is marked by four related elements: responsibility to the whole, multilateralism, commitment to international institutions, and a willingness to commit national resources to serve the system. How internationalism manifests itself can vary depending on different types of state groupings and the functions they perform in world politics (Nossal, 1997, p. 36).

In Canada’s case, internationalism manifests itself as an abiding commitment to multilateralism, defined by Ruggie (1992) as coordinating relations among three or more states in accordance with generalized principles of conduct and usually through institutionalized forums. Multilateralism is not itself an orientation; rather, it is a value-laden way of operationalizing institutional-

ism. Multilateralism establishes mechanisms through which internationalism works and the processes by which collective management of world politics unfolds. In normative terms, multilateralism is a belief about how a state ought to conduct its affairs (Keating, 2010, p. 9). Ruggie explains that multilateralism does not necessarily mean internationalism: coalitions of willing states can practice multilateralism without any commitment to internationalist principles. That last point is important for Canada: as much as possible, Canadian foreign policymakers are keen to practice multilateralism through international organizations like the United Nations and NATO.

Historically, as Nossal (1997, p. 36) puts it, Canada has been a great “joiner” in world politics. He explains that Canada’s coming of age as a sovereign state in the post-World War II era happened under the auspices of multilateral agencies, making multilateralism a “relative invariant” in Canadian foreign policy (Nossal, 1997). For multiple generations of Canada’s foreign policymakers after World War II, securing a “seat at the table” was both a preferred means of international conduct and a way to legitimize foreign policy decisions (Sokolsky, 1989). For Canada, securing a “seat at the table” in international organizations has been an animating feature of its foreign and defence policy, especially *vis-à-vis* the United States. For generations, Canada has made a public virtue of its commitment to multilateralism, happily joining alliances and international organizations. However, “multilateralism” can lead to great tensions in Canadian foreign policy when different visions of multilateralism come into conflict, such as the NATO-led air campaign over Kosovo in 1999 or the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. In both cases, the *ad hoc* US-led multilateral coalitions ran contrary to Canada’s preference for UN-sanctioned multilateral action. Canada took part in the operations over Kosovo but not the invasion of Iraq.

Canadian internationalism and multilateralism have become essential parts of how elites and publics see Canada’s external orientation (Nossal, 2013; Paris, 2014). The archetypical statement of this orientation was made by Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland in 2017. In an address to the House of Commons, Freeland defended the principles of liberal internationalism and declared the government’s intention to continue on that path. Some of the most striking passages in her speech amounted to full-throated endorsements of the liberal internationalism that has guided much of Canada’s foreign policy for over seventy years (Canada, 2017). Thus, internationalism remains the prevailing foreign policy orientation under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, as

it has been for previous prime ministers to varying degrees of enthusiasm (Nossal, 1997, 2013).

Atlanticism

A variation on multilateralism in Canada's foreign policy orientation is the transatlantic community, embodied by NATO. States that value the transatlantic multilateral alliance that binds the United States to Europe. Within the Atlantic community, institutionalized multilateralism is valuable because it provides a platform for influencing the actions of the United States that they would not otherwise have. In exchange for such influence, Atlanticist states are expected to participate in United States-led coalitions, make meaningful contributions to multilateral military operations, and share the burden of collective security (Massie, 2019, p. 579). Since the 1990s, Canada's most prominent military missions have been undertaken under NATO auspices in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Libya—even when they were not sanctioned by the UN Security Council. Moreover, Canada has contributed to every NATO-led military operation in the post-Cold War era. This contrasts with UN peacekeeping which has seen Canadian contributions shrink in the same period (Young, 2020). Of course, there are significant difficulties associated with an Atlanticist orientation that have landed Canada in difficult places, most notably Afghanistan.

Within the transatlantic community, there are specific bilateral relationships that have an outsized place in Canada's foreign policy mindset. Canadian policymakers are favorably inclined toward a Britain and France, core allies with important historical connections to Canada's own political development (Massie, 2016a, p. 51; Massie, 2010). At the same time, there are other members of the Atlantic community that Canada regards as closer partners in multilateralism, such as the Netherlands. Operational experiences working together in conflict zones like Bosnia and Afghanistan have forged long-term relationships of trust among officer corps and common political understandings (Auerswald & Saideman, 2014: Chapter 5). Overall, the Atlanticist orientation in Canada's foreign policy is evident in the factors that determine whether Canada goes to war. Massie finds that the chief determinant of Canada's participation in multilateral war is the value of its contribution to NATO, its effect on alliance unity, and the ability to enhance Canada's visibility within that setting (Massie, 2019). This makes Atlanticism a crucial subvariant of multilateralism and an

influential factor in Canada's foreign policy, perhaps more so than liberal internationalism.

Continentalism

One step removed from Atlanticism is continentalism, an orientation that places the United States at the center of Canadian foreign policy. In this construction, the North American continent is the principal site of security and prosperity and as such, should be the primary concern in Canada's foreign policy. Skeptics and supporters alike regard the United States as an irresistible gravitational force in Canadian political, economic, and social life (Bothwell, 2015; Bow & Lennox, 2008; Clarkson, 2002; Macdonald, 2010; Massie and Roussel, 2013). Deep integration has its drawbacks. Canada enjoys the benefits of American continental hegemony but must constantly guard against intrusions on its sovereignty. In terms of security, Canada does not have the wherewithal to defend its vast terrain. It is largely protected from conflict by its sizable distances but is forced to share the continent with a perpetually alert neighbor. Therefore, Canada has long followed the strategy of "defense against help." This policy allows Canada to take just enough action as required to reassure Washington that the country will not pose a security problem (Barry & Bratt, 2008). In so doing, Canada discharges a marginal but not inconsequential role in continental defense and participates in the co-management of the North American homeland (Paquin & James, 2014). This policy often results in Canada's political marginalization in the defense and economic policies of the United States. According to one account, such marginalization renders Canada "invisible and inaudible in Washington" (Mahant & Mount, 1999).

Neo-continentalism is a sharper variant of continentalism. Neo-continentalism embraces a right-wing neo-conservative perspective on Canada's interest in the world. Massie and Roussel (2013, pp. 44–48) posit six elements of Canadian neo-continentalism. First, it is conservative in its political, economic, and social values. Second, it embraces philosophical conception of human nature and the structure of anarchy in world politics. Third, it seeks to restore Canada to a position of influence on the world stage. Fourth, neo-continentalism embraces certain principles and values in its understanding of foreign policy rather than pragmatic realist's conception of national interests. Fifth, neo-continentalism accepts that power and force are legitimate tools to secure international order and the values it embodies. Sixth, neo-continentalists regard the United States as the indispensable foundation of every aspect of

Canadian foreign policy. Taken together, neo-continentalism advises Canada to act as the best possible ally to the US, militarily and otherwise, and to prioritize that relationship above all other forms of multilateralism. This neo-continentalism was observable in the foreign policy of Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper (2006–15), who sought with limited success to reorient Canada's foreign policy away from internationalism and towards the United States (Bratt, 2018; Nossal, 2013; Sjolander, 2009, 2014), and whose rhetorical support for Ukraine after 2014 was deeply moralistic and value-laden.

The four foreign policy orientations discussed here are not mutually exclusive, indeed, they all overlap to some degree. In the political arena, politicians sometimes collapse them into an undifferentiated lump of reasoning to justify government policy. For example, during Parliamentary debates about participation in the NATO mission over Libya in 2011, Conservative Defence Minister Peter MacKay argued against withdrawing Canadian contributions because it

[...] would send the wrong signal. It would have dire consequences for the citizens of Libya, it would be contrary to the core Canadian values of freedom, democracy and human rights, it would not conform to our commitment to the international community, and it would undermine the credibility of the North Atlantic Alliance. (Payton, 2011)

Whatever the merits of MacKay's all-in-one logic, this example speaks to the inescapable fact that Canada is fundamentally an externally oriented country, and the great political debate is over which external orientation will prevail (Boucher, 2009; Bow, 2008). However, Canada's engagement with the world is not entirely externally oriented. Domestic orientations also matter in the conduct of Canada's foreign policy.

Diasporic Politics

Domestic politics covers a wide range of considerations. Here, however, we are concerned with the role of ethnic diasporas in Canada's foreign policy. This concept differs from role theory, which explains Canada's sense of self in the world. If role theory is a matter of place, then the influence of domestic diasporic groups is a matter of policy process. In this case, it is domestic demographics that shape, but not necessarily determine, the behaviors of foreign policy decision-makers. The matter of ethnic diasporas or ethnic lobbies is well-established in the analysis of foreign policy (Haglund, 2015; Mearsheimer

& Walt, 2007; Smith, 2000). Though controversial at times, diasporic activism in diverse immigrant societies like Canada is a feature of its politics and results in the imbrication of domestic interests and foreign policy.

As a multicultural state in the twenty-first century, Canadian policymakers consider both the country in the world and “the world in Canada” (Carment & Bercuson, 2008). The reason is plain to see. The 2021 census reported 450 ethnic or cultural origins, 200 places of birth, 100 religions, and 450 languages in a country with a population of 39 million (Statistics Canada, 2022). Politically, the arrows of influence run in two directions. Ethnic diasporas lobby the Canadian government to enact policies that serve the interests of a particular kin state or group or of a diaspora vis-à-vis its kin state or group. Meanwhile, Canadian governments enact foreign policies that aim to satisfy diasporic communities in exchange for political support, especially if those communities are concentrated in areas of electoral significance.

Superficially, this appears as a cynical transactional relationship. In reality, though, diasporic communities are complex. They are not necessarily politically homogeneous, electorally consequential, or guaranteed to support a government that satisfies their interests. As Koinova (2017) points out, having a large ethnic population does not make any one group influential. Rather, a combination of factors makes diasporic communities influential in establishing government policy.

In Canada, the Ukrainian diaspora enjoys influence, at least, because of a combination of size, history, and institutional organization. The 1.3 million Canadians claiming Ukrainian descent make this group the largest Ukrainian diaspora outside Russia and is one of the oldest established diasporas in the country, coming in four waves between the 1880s and 1980s (Carment et al., 2021). Moreover, ethnic Ukrainians settled mostly in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, and have become an important geographically concentrated ethnic electoral group (Stick & Hou, 2022). The Ukrainian diaspora's political salience is evident in multiple instances. In 1991, Canada was the first country to recognize Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union (Carment et al., 2021). During the Stephen Harper era, electoral districts in the Prairies have become core to the Conservative Party electoral strategy, with outreach to ethnic Ukrainian communities, and Ukraine's interests being central parts of Canada's foreign policy (Carment & Landry, 2016). More recently, younger

Ukrainians have moved to or settled in Canada's urban centers, especially the Greater Toronto Area. The Ukrainian vote has thus become politically consequential in the current era of minority governments (Canadian Press, 2015). On average Ukrainian Canadians have slightly higher levels of education and rates of employment than the national population and tend to have higher incomes and occupational skill levels than the national population (Stick & Hou, 2022). The Ukrainian diaspora in Canada has a strong institutional relationship with the state, extensive and long-standing activism, and a powerful conception of itself as a community (Carment et al., 2021). The institutional expression of ethnic Ukrainian interests in Canada is undertaken through different civil society organizations, the largest of which is the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. These combined features put the Ukrainian diaspora in an "intergenerational sweet spot" for exerting political influence in Canada (Carment et al., 2021).

The nature of that influence needs some specification. Indeed, there are many ways that diasporas may influence security and foreign policy. David Haglund (2015) focuses on initiatives by the diaspora to gain influence on the foreign policies of that community's kin state, and the second is the community's efforts to influence the host state's relationship with the kin state. Here, the Ukrainian Canadian community's relationship with Canada matters. To be clear, the argument here is not that ethnic Ukrainians in Canada exert some kind of extraordinary policy influence on the Canadian government, though there is evidence that the Ukrainian diaspora is particularly effective (Carment et al., 2021). Rather, the line of influence runs the other way. The argument here is that the large, well-organized, and electorally significant Ukrainian diaspora in Canada presents any government or party with an opportunity to make political inroads with this community. Put bluntly, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Trudeau found that doing the popular thing internationally, and profitable thing domestically, aligned neatly with the morally right thing. The large Ukrainian population in Canada makes supporting Ukraine a political winner.

Taken together, the external and internal orientations of Canadian foreign policy can force policymakers into difficult decisions where one or more enabling condition is absent, such as in Iraq in 2003. At other times, the absence of one enabling factor does not preclude Canada from participating in a military operation, as was the case in Kosovo in 1999. In the case of Ukraine

in 2022, all these orientations aligned, thereby enabling the Trudeau government to join the international coalition in support of Ukraine.

Canada's Unsurprising Support for Ukraine, 2022–2023

With these foreign policy orientations in mind, this paper turns to Canada's support for Ukraine in the first year of the war. Entering the fray was an easy choice for Canada. Russia's invasion violated the principles of the liberal international order to which Canada is committed. The Atlantic community, including the United States, NATO, as well as core allies were full contributors to the Ukrainian cause in military, economic, and rhetorical terms. Accordingly, Canada stood alongside its allies. Additionally, Canada's support for Ukraine allows Canadian politicians to appeal to the sentiments of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada. Given the prominence of these foreign policy orientations and enablers on a matter as significant as Russia's invasion, it is unsurprising that Canada behaved as it did. Making Trudeau's support even more predictable is the fact that it is largely a continuation of existing policy. Stephen Harper had been strident in his rhetorical and material support of Ukraine after Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014.

Between January 2022 and January 2023, Canada ranked fifth in total bilateral commitments after the United States, all EU institutions, the United Kingdom, and Germany (Trebesch et al., 2023). This section lays out the hard and soft power contributions that Canada has made to Ukraine.

Operational Support and Material Donations¹

In the first twelve months of the war, Canada committed \$1 billion in military assistance to Ukraine. Measured in total military bilateral commitments, Canada ranked fifth behind the United States, United Kingdom, Poland, and Germany, and ahead of the Netherlands Italy, and France (Trebesch, 2023, p. 36). In terms of operational support to Ukraine, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has engaged in training Ukrainian soldiers on equipment drawn from Canadian stockpiles. These training programs were run through CAF missions Operation Unifier and Operation Reassurance, which have been operating in Eastern Europe since 2014.

Between April and July 2022, as part of Operation Reassurance, Canada deployed as many as 150 CAF personnel to Poland providing support to the

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all information in this section is drawn from Government of Canada (n.d.a).

Polish Territorial Defence Force as it managed the intake of Ukrainian refugees. CAF members have assisted with administrative support, medical care, mental health and spiritual services, and translation support. Beginning in March 2022, the The Royal Canadian Air Force committed 55 personnel and three Hercules aircraft as part of Air Mobility Detachment Prestwick in Scotland, the purpose of which is to assist with the transportation of aid within Europe. According to the Government of Canada, this task force has transported over seven million pounds of aid from multiple donor states. Also, part of Operation Unifier, beginning in August 2022, as many as 225 CAF personnel deployed to the United Kingdom to train recruits of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). This training mission was undertaken in collaboration with Britain, a key Canadian ally. The five-week training courses were designed to provide basic instruction to Ukrainian recruits with little or no military experience. In November 2022, the training mission was extended to 2023, and then extended again until 2026. As the first anniversary of the war neared, the CAF had trained 800 recruits. Additionally, as part of Operation Unifier, beginning in November 2022, Canada deployed forty combat engineers to support mining training programs for the AFU, which by January 2023 had trained approximately 100 sappers. Moreover, civilians from the Ministry of National Defence as well as officers in the CAF participate in the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, which works closely with the United States Department of Defense and comprises 54 countries, including all NATO member states.

In Canada, most public attention has been paid to the “arsenal of democracy” approach: military donations of both lethal and non-lethal equipment to Ukraine, which Canada had been sending since August 2014 (Kordan & Dowie, 2021, p. 101). Canada’s military assistance to Ukraine began with relatively small contributions and grew to include the most lethal weaponry in Canada’s arsenal. Where Canada’s contributions in the first two months were small-scale, one year later Canada began sending tanks from its stocks and purchasing surface-to-air missiles. Before February 2022, Canada had donated a wide range of non-lethal equipment, including 10,800 pieces of personal protective equipment valued at \$15 million. In the first weeks of the war, Canada donated 640,000 individual meal packs to Ukrainian forces out of CAF stockpiles. Other donations in the first month of the conflict include \$10 million in small arms and ammunition, including 78 sniper rifles, 200 machine guns, 600 Glock handguns, and 7000 anti-tank rockets, along with 1.5 million rounds of ammunition. These weapons came from CAF stocks. That same month, Canada

delivered 4200 anti-tank rocket launchers from its inventory along with 7000 hand grenades, valued at \$7 million. Into March and April, Canada delivered 100 anti-armor weapons systems including Carl Gustaf M2 recoilless rifles and 3000 rounds of ammunition. Beginning in March 2022 and rolling out over the rest of the year, Canada has funded the purchase of commercial satellite imagery. Canada's \$22 million commitment is part of a multilateral program to provide the AFU with battlefield intelligence. Similarly, in October 2022, Canada funded \$2 million for a project to provide reliable satellite communications to the Ukrainian government and its non-government partners.

In the spring, Canada began donating heavier and more lethal equipment. Starting in April 2022 and continuing throughout the year, Canada provided M777 Howitzers from Canadian stocks, along with replacement barrels and ammunition worth over \$100 million. As the year unfolded, Canada purchased equipment from the United States and delivered it in multiple tranches. In April 2022, Canada donated eight armoured vehicles purchased from the manufacturer with plans to deliver 200 more. In June 2022, Canada announced that it would deploy combat support vehicles and related equipment and would train AFU forces beginning that fall. This was the most expensive donation to that point worth \$245 million. In October 2022, Canada announced \$47 million in new aid, inventory, howitzer ammunition, and winter gear. As the cold weather neared in late 2022, Canada provided 500,000 pieces of winter clothing and warming equipment. Approximately \$25 million was provided to source commercial equipment and 100,000 pieces of winter clothing were drawn from CAF stockpiles.

As the calendar turned over, and in conjunction with its allies, Canada began supplying Ukraine with its biggest-ticket items yet. In January 2023, Canada agreed to donate, from its inventory, four Leopard II battle tanks along with parts, ammunition, and training. This was a major change in the pattern of donation. Until then, the objective of donating countries was to supply AFU forces with weapons that could not threaten Russian territory. Western allies were reluctant to deliver equipment that could be interpreted by Russia as an escalation of hostilities. Moreover, Germany, where the Leopard II is manufactured, was reluctant to provide the required export permits to transfer tanks to a third country. With the commitment of battle tanks, a threshold was crossed, and Canada, mirroring its allies, committed Leopards of its own. The first Leopard tanks arrived in Ukraine from Germany and Britain in March 2023 (Olson, 2023).

Similarly, in January 2023, Canada purchased a National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System and its ammunition from American supplies and donated it to Ukraine to support its air defence system. The total cost of that purchase was \$406 million. In June 2023, Canada pledged financial support for a tank maintenance center in Poland. On the same day, Canada committed to training Ukrainian pilots to fly F-16s.

Sanctions²

One of Canada's contributions to the collective effort against Russia is sanctions, undertaken in collaboration with its allies and partners across the Western world. Canada began imposing sanctions on targeted individuals in Russia and Ukraine in April 2014 and expanded the list in 2022. In the year following the Russian invasion, Canada has imposed sanctions on individuals and entities in Russia, Belarus, as well as Ukraine, using the *Special Economic Measures Act*. These regulations prohibit Canadians from engaging in economic activity with named individuals. Canada began sanctioning Russians beginning in 2014 with the annexation of Ukraine. When the 2022 war began, new names and entities were added to the list. By the end of November 2023, 494 Russian entities and 1460 Russian nationals had been sanctioned. Sixty Ukrainian entities and 483 individuals had been sanctioned, along with another 71 Belarusian entities and 190 individuals. Sanctions are intended to prohibit any economic dealings between Canadians and the targeted entities. The prohibitions target Russian political and economic institutions including the Russian Parliament and major ministries, Russian elites that are close to the regime, and Russian agents working in Ukraine as senior officials in the occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia. There are also prohibitions on dealings with entities in the Russian defence, financial and energy sectors. This includes individuals and entities trading in Russia's sovereign debt, that provide direct or indirect support for the war. Canada has imposed prohibitions on exporting items vital to Russia's oil, gas, and chemical industries, as well as items that can be used in weapons manufacturing. In December 2022, Canada coordinated with other close allies and partners to impose a price cap on Russian crude oil. The restrictions prohibited the maritime transport of Russian oil unless it was purchased below the price threshold established by the G7+ countries. Sanctions have also been placed on Russian-backed proxies in Ukraine and their family members, as well as Russian entities who are complicit

² All information in this section is drawn from Government of Canada (n.d.b).

in disinformation and propaganda campaigns. Individuals and entities in Belarus and Ukraine are also subject to similar sanctions.

Economic and Development Assistance³

Canada's federal government reported providing \$1.95 billion in loans to Ukraine from early 2022 to the first anniversary of the invasion. That number increased to \$4.85 billion by the end of August 2023. Measured by total financial bilateral commitments, Canada ranks fourth in that same time frame behind the European Union, United States, and United Kingdom, and ahead of Germany, Poland, and France (Trebesch et al., 2023, p. 32). The direct loans and grants, however, are only part of the story. Canada has enacted a series of economic measures to offer Ukraine financial flexibility during wartime. In May 2022, all tariffs were lifted on Ukrainian imports for one year to give Ukrainian goods maximum access to the Canadian market. Along with another twenty-one creditor countries, Canada suspended debt service from Ukraine from August 2022 to the end of 2023 with the possibility of future extensions.⁴ Another trade-related measure includes accelerating negotiations to modernize the Canada–Ukraine Free Trade Agreement in January 2022. First negotiated during the Harper era, free trade was intended to contribute to the integration of Ukraine's economy into the Euro-Atlantic economy. Canada extended a \$50 million loan guarantee to enable a European Bank loan to Ukraine's state-owned gas company to help provide energy through the winter months. Canada also extended \$320 million in humanitarian assistance to the UN, Red Cross and other NGOs that are responding to the crisis. The donations are intended to provide emergency health services, protection, and support to displaced populations. Canada also financed the deployment of humanitarian experts to support the UN and Red Cross responses.

Regarding economic development assistance, Trudeau's government followed a pattern set by Harper. Canada committed \$96 million to development programs intended to keep Ukraine's government and economy functioning. This includes \$50 million to increase grain storage capacity which became

3 Unless otherwise noted, all information in this section is drawn from Canada (n.d.). "Economic, Humanitarian, Development Assistance and Peace and Stabilization Support – Russia's Invasion of Ukraine. Government of Canada. https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/response_conflict-reponse_conflits/crisis-crisis/ukraine-dev.aspx?lang=eng

4 The Group of Creditors of Ukraine includes Canada, France, Germany, Japan, United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Observers to the Group include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland (Department of Finance Canada, n.d.).

necessary after Russia blocked Ukraine's exports in the Black Sea. Additional spending went to funding the Ukraine government and civil society organizations that provide support to women and vulnerable groups, as well as funding to the UN Population Fund which supports victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Canada is contributing to stabilization programs in Ukraine through peace and stabilization support programs. The largest sums include \$24.7 million dedicated to programs associated with demining, removal of explosives, risk education, and hazard mapping. This peace support operation also includes \$9.7 million to fund improvements in accountability for human rights violations with a special emphasis on sexual and gender-based violence, which has been a priority for the Trudeau government. The information war is also on Canada's development agenda. Canada reports committing \$3 million to fund improvements in Ukraine's strategic communication capacity to counter disinformation. Canada also announced \$13.4 million to support the G7 Rapid Response Mechanisms as part of broader efforts to counter misinformation attacks on democracy.

Diplomatic Support or "Slava Ukraini!"

Along with military hardware and economic measures, Canada has also provided diplomatic support to Ukraine, all framed by the values of the liberal international order. This diplomatic support emerges from public statements by members of Canada's foreign policy executive like Prime Minister Trudeau, Minister of Global Affairs Mélanie Joly, and others. While supportive words are sometimes easily dismissed, these "rhetorical commonplaces" help frame the debate in Canada and consolidate a transatlantic identity unified by political identities beyond just mutual defence (Jackson, 2006; Kitchen, 2009). In the case of the Russian war in Ukraine, the Canadian government and key political leaders have deployed liberal internationalist rhetoric as part of its diplomatic support for Ukraine. Public statements from Canadian officials have been thematically similar, from the early days of the war to its first anniversary. Some of the most prominent themes affirm Ukraine's sovereignty, strong language condemning Russia's invasion and noting its violations of international law, and affirmations of democracy in the face of authoritarianism. In most cases, statements from elected officials end with assertions of Canada's ongoing support for Ukraine.

On sovereignty, Trudeau consistently refers to the invasion as a “clear incursion.” A “violation of sovereignty,” and a “flagrant disregard for the independence of a sovereign nation” (Trudeau, 2022a). This rhetorical commonplace was evident from the outset. In the House of Commons, one week after the invasion began, one of Trudeau’s first remarks was about Canada’s “steadfast support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine” (Trudeau, 2022b). Seven months into the war, Trudeau arrived at the following turn of phrase: “Ukraine’s territory will remain Ukraine’s” (Trudeau, 2022c). Also noteworthy is the strong condemnatory language in Trudeau’s public statements. They are notable for their relative rarity in the diplomatic language of world politics. Russia’s invasion is “unwarranted” (Trudeau, 2022d), “unacceptable,” “brazen,” and a “threat to the security of the world” (Trudeau, 2022a) a “brutal” and “terrifying,” horrific and unprovoked, “reckless and dangerous” (Trudeau, 2022a), “illegal, unprovoked, and unjustifiable” (Trudeau, 2022a), “barbaric” (Trudeau, 2022f). Elsewhere he referred to the “sham” and “illegitimate” referenda on annexing Ukraine’s territories (Trudeau, 2022c). Deputy Prime Minister, Finance Minister, and vocal champion of Ukraine Chrystia Freeland repeated many of the same phrases (Trudeau, 2022g). Regularly, Canadian officials refer to the war as “a massive threat to Europe and to the world” (Trudeau, 2022h). Canada’s Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly offers much the same, referring to the war as a “brutal, full-scale invasion...to conquer and erase Ukraine from the world map and to expand Russia’s sphere of influence by force” (Trudeau, 2023).

Consistent with these harsh words are reminders of Russia’s international legal violations. Trudeau and his ministers have placed special emphasis on Russia’s violations of the human rights dimensions of the liberal international order. Trudeau has referred to “Russia’s war crimes in Ukraine, which include rape, torture, and the indiscriminate murder of civilians” (Trudeau, 2022c). Russia’s war is a “violation of Russia’s obligations under international law and the Charter of the UN” (Trudeau, 2022a) and a violation of Russia’s international treaties (Trudeau, 2022h). Thus, Canada “will not spare any effort to ensure that violations of international law in Ukraine are investigated...and that perpetrators are held accountable” (Trudeau, 2022i). Standing alongside US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Joly referred to the referendum to integrate Ukraine’s eastern territories into Russia as “political theatre” and dismissed the votes as having “pre-orchestrated outcomes” with “no legitimacy” (Joly, 2022a).

Yet another interesting rhetorical commonplace is the invocation of the clash of *democracy and authoritarianism*. This rhetorical construction became a more prominent part of Canada's foreign policy discourse after Joe Biden adopted it during the 2020 presidential election campaign (Ettinger, 2021). It became a part of Justin Trudeau's lexicon after the Russian invasion. However, these same moralistic overtones were evident in Stephen Harper's response to the 2014 crisis. To Harper, Canada's defense of Ukraine was both a strategic and moral imperative. Hence his language invoking freedom, tyranny, making the defense of Ukraine synonymous with the defence of Canada and Canadian values (Kordan & Dowie, 2021, p. 77). The worldview posits a geo-political competition between liberal democracies and illiberal authoritarian states. It is an austere interpretation of the world and not entirely accurate, but it is rhetorically powerful, nonetheless. On the day of the invasion, public remarks from the Prime Minister deemed "Russia's attack on Ukraine is also an attack on democracy, on international law, and on freedom..." (Trudeau, 2022j) that "[d]emocratic leaders everywhere must come together to defend [democratic principles] and stand firmly against authoritarianism." In the House of Commons, a few days after the invasion Chrystia Freeland declared the conflict as a "fight between freedom and tyranny" (Freeland, 2022). A few days later, Trudeau reiterated the point calling Russia's attack a "direct challenge to democracy" (Trudeau, 2022k). As the war dragged on, Putin's folly was the outcome of underestimating the courage of the Ukrainian people and "the resolve and unity of democratic allies and partners in the face of authoritarianism (Trudeau, 2022h). On Ukraine's Independence Day 2022, Mélanie Joly (2022b) affirmed that Canada stands "with all Ukrainians fighting for democracy as the world faces authoritarian forces trying to tear down the international rules-based order". Similarly, throughout Trudeau's (2022a) speeches is the appeal to multilateralism. Any action Canada takes, he notes, is done "in coordination with allies and like-minded partners". Canada works through NATO and its G7 partners, particularly the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany, and appeals to the "breadth of support across the international community" (Trudeau, 2022i). All of this is consistent with Canada's internationalism and multilateralism.

Other rhetorical commonplaces include reminders of Canada's efforts at celebrations of the heroic nature of Ukraine's resistance, moral support for Ukrainian victims, and in some cases, reminders of the large Ukrainian

diaspora. At the Triennial Congress of Ukrainian Canadians in Winnipeg, Manitoba Trudeau rightly heaped praise upon Ukrainians whose defence of their homelands demonstrates bravery that is “truly remarkable” (Trudeau, 2022g). Elsewhere, he insists that Ukrainians are “bravely defend[ing] their country and our shared values of peace, democracy, and human rights.” As the leadership of Volodymyr Zelensky became apparent, he became the avatar of Ukrainian heroism: “[Zelensky] is extraordinary. He is heroic. He is relentless. One runs out of adjectives, simpler, perhaps to sum it up, He is Ukrainian” (Trudeau, 2022l). Accompanying the heroic praise is moral support for the victims of the war. In the early days of the war, Trudeau reminds Ukrainians that “In these dark hours Canada’s message to the people of Ukraine is this: You are not alone; we are standing with you” (Trudeau, 2022j). Appeals to the plight of the victims get more specific: “In particular, we wish to highlight the plight of women, children, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups fleeing the violence in Ukraine” (Trudeau, 2022m). Appeals to the plight of victims also speak to broader themes about authoritarianism: “Imposing hardship is what bullies like Putin try to do. They try to sow chaos. They try to weaken our resolve. We cannot and we will not let that happen” (Trudeau, 2022l).

The appeal to the victims and the heroes in Ukraine offers a bridge to domestic politics. Canada is home to the largest Ukrainian diaspora in the world and politicians make this connection clear. Says Trudeau: “[Putin] has underestimated the strength and resolve of Ukrainian people. These are traits of Ukrainian Canadians too; you have helped build this country, you’re proud of your culture and your heritage and you don’t back down. Well, neither will Canada” (Trudeau, 2022j). Beyond the shared experience of building a multicultural Canada “[w]e stand together in the fundamental belief in freedom, in democracy, in justice. And of course, in the inevitable, but sometimes difficult triumphs of light over darkness” (Trudeau, 2022l). One of the most vocal Canadian politicians on Ukraine has been former Foreign Minister and current Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland who has drawn upon her Ukrainian heritage to weave the personal and political. Appealing to the sentiments of Canada’s Ukrainian diaspora is a viable political move. The size, distribution, and organization of the Ukrainian population in Canada make it electorally significant, and what is more, it is twice the size of the Russian diaspora in Canada (Statistics Canada, n.d.). Appealing to Ukrainian nationalist sentiment presents an opportunity for Canadian politicians to make inroads

with a significant ethnic population in a manner that is politically free of consequences, for now.

Perhaps above all, is the constant invocation of Canada's steadfast support for "as long as it takes" (Trudeau, 2023) which is not a far cry from Stephen Harper's exhortation that "Canada stands proudly, resolutely, and unequivocally with the people of Ukraine" (quoted in Kordan & Dowie, 2021, p. 77). What differentiates Trudeau's response from Harper's is the framing. Harper's framing was stridently moralistic and neo-continentalist. It emphasized the fundamental Canadian values that were threatened by Russia's actions. In security terms, it emphasized Canada's relationship with the United States and not the international institutional considerations. In this regard, Harper's justifications for supporting Ukraine were neo-continentalist while Trudeau's remain internationalist. Both end up producing the same policy response.

Implications

In a sense, it is fortunate that the enabling conditions aligned for Canada in 2022. This made providing support to Ukraine far less controversial than it might have been. In the war's first year, no external foreign policy orientations conflicted with another. Domestically, the alignment of electoral politics, as well as public opinion and elite consensus enabled the Trudeau government's support to Ukraine. The absence of controversy though, does not mean the absence of a problem. There is one significant implication that arises from Canada's unsurprising participation in the international effort to support Ukraine: the danger in linking Canada's foreign policy decisions to external considerations.

The government may be even luckier that the Ukrainian war effort has staved off Russian conquest. But as the war continues, Canadian foreign policymakers will eventually face a nagging question: How long can its support to Ukraine last? Certainly, the cause is just but that does not mean material support to Kyiv can last forever. This is a familiar problem in Canada's post-Cold War multilateral engagements. As the previous sections suggest, external orientations and enabling factors ease a government's decision to enter a multilateral military operation. Exit is another matter. Indeed, those same orientations and enablers make it hard for Canada to end its contributions to a multilateral effort. Research has shown that defection from multilateral operations has become part of the difficulty of maintaining long-term coalition cohesion (Davidson, 2014;

Massie, 2016b). In that sense, Canada is not alone; many smaller NATO states have faced the same problem of when to exit.

In Ottawa, successive governments since 2001 have faced the difficult political choice of renewing or ending their commitments to multilateral wars, with Afghanistan being the most consequential case. At the outset of that conflict, “in together, out together” was the NATO mantra. Twenty-one years after entering the country, the Western egress was anything but “together.” Indeed, the lengthy engagement put on display many troubles of concerted and equitable contributions to multilateral operations, not the least of which is material contributions and risk-taking (Auerswald & Saideman, 2014). A closely related problem is the matter of *how long* to continue contributing (Ettinger & Rice, 2016). In Afghanistan, Canadian governments, Conservative and Liberal, had to set and revisit time horizons for their contributions. These limited-term mission commitments ranged from six months to four years, many of which were determined by external orientations such as key allies’ own time horizons or benchmark dates established by the international community. Put together, they added up to thirteen years of combat and nation-building in an unexpected and unexpectedly long war (Stein & Lang, 2007). For Canada, premature defection meant the possibility (real or perceived) of being seen as a poor ally to the United States and NATO. A similar situation occurred in NATO’s air war in Libya. Thus, as Ettinger and Rice argue, Canada is caught in a dilemma: “participate and be seen as a good ally but yield control over the strategic duration to exogenous forces; or don’t participate and risk your good standing” (2016, p. 372). The Russia–Ukraine war presents a variation on this problem. Canada has the usual suite of international, multilateral, Atlanticist, American, and diasporic conditions enabling its participation. But without a clear end to the conflict, Canada risks being committed to supplying a war on an open-ended basis, with all those factors inhibiting a timely exit.

Conclusion

This article has argued that Canada’s response to Ukraine has been consistent with long-established patterns in the country’s foreign policy. Consistent, however, does not mean predictable. There are too many contingencies in the war for anyone to predict anything. But in retrospect, at least at the war’s one-year mark, Canada’s actions should not be surprising to anyone. The country’s external foreign policy orientations aligned to enable the Trudeau government’s approach without much controversy. As discussed, this allows

Canada to contribute military, economic, development, and moral support, and to do so in partnership with key allies, while appealing to the principles of liberal internationalism, and gesturing to Ukrainian voters at home. Each of these fit with Canada's conception of itself in international affairs. However, the absence of controversy in the first year does not mean that problems will not arise. The war may settle into a stalemate, thereby prolonging the war indefinitely. If, or when, that happens, the government will find itself in a bind. Costs will accumulate, outcomes will be less clear, and it may become more difficult to match the high-flying rhetoric of democracy and outrage with commensurate material support. In that unhappy event, prolongation will raise questions about exit that are as familiar to Canadians as the enablers of entry.

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