

**Middle Powers and Multilateralism in an Unstable Region –
Canada's Role in a Post-Arab Spring Middle East**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to assess and answer the question of, **in a highly globalized world where the destabilizing effects of the regional security in the Middle East are felt internationally, should Canada, through multilateralism, employ its middle power status with others political actors of equal calibre, to support cooperation amongst the key Middle Eastern powers: Iran and Saudi Arabia?** Following the Arab Spring of 2011, numerous Western nations voiced support and efforts for political reform in the region. Canada appeared to waver and maintained a blasé and reactive foreign policy stance, which could be misconstrued as Canada refusing a leadership role in historically significant events. The research and literature cited will evaluate how global events and alliances that began in the early 20th century and continued into the 21st set the trajectory for how Middle East actors would try to establish dominance at the expense of social progress, especially now, in the wake of the threat to liberal internationalism and the liberal order. The study addresses how regional instability can affect the whole region and spread as far as Canadian shores. This study will present its findings on Canada's historic role in the region, its role as a middle power, and if working towards regional cooperation amongst historic rivals is a possible solution for the Middle East.

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1.0 Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Since the end of the Ottoman Empire at the start of the twentieth century and throughout the decades following WWII, the Middle East underwent several geopolitical transformations. Driven by political and economic conditions indigenous to the region, the most impactful changes resulted from the actions of foreign entities, European pre-independence, and eventually followed by United States and Russian actors, culminating in the profound political upheaval of the Arab Spring, whose ripple effects continue to spread.

Historical and contemporary research on the relations and issues of the Middle East have typically been conducted through the lens of the international system. Until the Soviet collapse, the region's political order was specifically assessed through the bipolarity of the US and the USSR. Of the numerous crises to grip the region, the 2011 Arab Spring rattled the established Arab order, ushering in region-wide protests for reform, leading to civil wars, shifting alliances, toppling of regimes and culminating in regional instability that has spread internationally. One thing is certain, this social upheaval brought forth unexpected changes to the region and the effects are being felt to this day and will continue to for decades more.

With the end of Soviet influence, and a turn towards US hegemony in the region, Soviet allies like Syria, Iraq, and Libya were forced to reconfigure their economic and political social contracts, while conservative monarchies and nation states like Saudi Arabia and Israel, appeared unscathed due to their US-allegiance. Looking to cement their rule, regional powers established a rivalry and race to create a new power structure, paving the way to a more authentically regional system, defined by competing Arab and Iranian nationalism, as well as religious sectarian identities.

As mass protests turned to civil war in Syria and unstable security led to the eventual state collapse in Iraq, factors destabilizing the entire region, the essential socio-economic problems were neglected as states fought other states and their own people. Aside from uprooting the established socio-political order, the Arab Spring did not appear to shift the balance of power from the historic ruling classes to the people. In fact, the disorder allowed Iran and Saudi Arabia, the two main

powers vying for power and influence in the region, to play pivotal roles in the region's civil wars through ethno-religious sectarian ideologies.

At the height of the Cold War, Russia and the US used the Middle East as a stage for their rivalry, whereas recently, these powers developed their personal interests in the region through allegiances, wars, and investments. This enmity continues still, as Washington and Moscow attempt to leverage what they must continue influencing the region for their individual national interests.

In my research, I have evaluated the diverse approaches to conflict in the Middle East. Prior research on historic events substantiates that despite the fractured parts of the region, it remains an interconnected regional system, where any change in one area can result in disturbances in another. While a reasonable number of experts promote the idea of a balance of power between Iran and Saudi Arabia, more study is being invested in the concept of cooperation between rivals through the identification of mutual socio-economic and security interests meant to promote prosperity and broker stability.

Given the history of the region, and the role superpowers had in supporting particular states, some experts identified the deliberate inclusion of middle power actors in forging cooperation among the regional powers of the Middle East. The concept behind this idea is that middle powers could be viewed as more credible than superpowers, whose intent could be mistrusted and appear not to necessarily be aligned with the best interests of regional actors. Past research conducted expands on the evidence that discusses the importance of superpowers relieving themselves from direct involvement in the region's conflicts by allowing middle powers to exercise a softer approach through mediation and multilateralism. The hope from this method is it results in the proactive pursuit of cooperation from key players, which could possibly lead to regional security and stability.

My research corroborates that for decades, Middle Eastern states, led by newly established absolute monarchies or totalitarian politicians, were frantically attempting to establish and maintain domestic legitimacy in the wake of independence from European colonialism, only to be placed under the influence of Cold War rivalries. For a region that has been subjected to divide and conquer tactics,

while employing the same approach on weaker rivals, this paper attempts to demonstrate how a group of middle powers can serve in limited capacity to try to bring regional players together. More importantly, the use of middle powers with no previous imperialistic aspirations, where influence and power reside in value systems, and their reputation of maintaining autonomy while working in conjunction with the international community, would be ideal. In the case of this research, should a middle power also have a proven record of conflict resolution in the Middle East, it would be prudent for the sake of international security and order that such a player invest.

Canada, acting in unison and in cooperation with other middle powers, could possibly be a viable contender to broker stability or at least assist in creating a blueprint for regional cooperation. Drawing from its history as the pivotal actor during the Suez Canal Crisis, and by prompting prosperity and security through its values system, while as a member of multilateral bodies, my research brings forth the concept that Canada could be a viable contender for such a feat should Ottawa decide to act on its rhetoric of promoting human rights and ensuring security. Should Canada, along with Western middle powers, continue to sell weapons to Arab regimes with poor human rights records, then its credibility as a facilitator would be questionable.

There are numerous implications for Canada should it decide to go down this road. In an unstable world, where revolutions have rocked the Middle East, and nationalist sentiment has swept through Europe and the US, taking on such a task with others would be a Herculean feat where domestic sentiment may affect actions. The Middle Eastern region is attuned to cues from the international community. This paper asks whether a coalition of middle powers, supported by stable superpowers, and through collective effort aimed at economic revival and social liberation, can possibly halt and maybe reverse the political animosity between Iran and Saudi Arabia, ensuring maximum long-term economic prosperity and political security. More inspiring is that should Middle Eastern powers cooperate, it is conceivable that civil strife would decrease in the wake of mutual advancement.

2.0 Research Methodology and Ethics Statement

To answer the proposed research question, I will be mainly relying on qualitative methods. Since the research will delve into historical accounts, events, contemporary issues, and established facts, exploratory research through secondary sources that have made use of primary sources and collected data such as individual groups and participation/observation. My data selection focuses on literature published no earlier than 2001. The aim is to support the research through sources that have had the luxury of time to thoroughly study the themes of my thesis, including most importantly, Canada's role on the world stage vis-à-vis the Middle East up until the end of 2019.

To perform effective analysis on the quality of the data, I have been undertaking checks to ensure the literature and studies used had been extensively reviewed and had provided credible sources. This is done by ensuring the primary sources I use are reputable scholarly journals and publications, as well as researching the authors to confirm their credentials and expertise in their fields. By using diverse sources on the topic, I began to discern fact from opinion and recognize traces of cognitive bias from the authors.

In my main analysis stage and conclusion, I have opted to employ an exploratory rather than confirmatory approach to answer the research question. I chose this method early on in my research because of the lack of recent research in the field of Canadian intervention in the Middle East via its middle power status. I worked towards discovering ideas for a theory, and not to necessarily test the theory. I assessed an array of academic and expert literature, presenting the theories to assist the reader in drawing their own conclusion as to what is feasible for the players involved in this theoretical mediation. My exploratory method also enabled me to be open to different possibilities for my research.

Ethics Statement

My MRP was completed based on primary and secondary sources written by experts in the fields of globalization, international development, political and economic studies, the Middle East,

international security, terrorism, and Canadian foreign policy and history. I did not use any human subjects in any form to conduct my research; therefore, there will be no ethical risks or dilemmas to manage.

3.0 The Arab Uprisings of 2011

3.1 *Globalized Social Movements*

Supporting the idea of the linkages between a globalized world and social movements, whether revolutionary or not in nature, Cristina Flesher Fominaya presents her research in her book *Social Movements and Globalization* on how globalization and social movements are inextricably linked. Contemporary social movements both shape and are shaped by globalization. The work explores this link, providing a fascinating insight into the dynamics, challenges, and opportunities of contemporary social movements in a globalized world, whilst simultaneously revealing the effects, critiques and limitations of globalization¹.

Fominaya makes an important and original contribution to the dialogue surrounding the topic by drawing on an array of research, up-to-date analysis, and offering coverage of key areas of study - with chapters on the 'Global Justice Movement', cultural resistance, media, cyber-activism and the recent 'Global Protest Wave' of anti-austerity and pro-democracy movements. In her research of social movements, she claims that in the search for the “new” and attention to “global” there needs to be balance with a recognition of the importance of historical legacies, cultural practices, and identities to social movements. Social movements are powerful acts that can cause entire governments to collapse and political regimes to become history as witnessed with the dissolution of Soviet countries when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989². In 2011, the world witnessed the collapse of two governments, the Tunisian and the Egyptian. In attempting to define the success or failure of a movement, one should take care not to attribute these labels to the entirety of a social movement. It becomes difficult to see how a movement is progressing because humans naturally want to define it

¹ Fominaya, Cristina Flesher. *Social Movements and Globalization – How Protests, Occupations, and Uprisings are Changing the World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2014) p. 6.

² *Ibid*, p. 11.

as a unified actor when it is a complex dynamic entity³. What can be gleaned from an effective, if not successful, movement are two vital political outcomes: one, when authorities recognize a social movement as a legitimate actor, and two, is when a movement gains new advantages for a group on behalf of which it mobilized⁴.

The Arab Spring gave way to an ever-expanding field of literature that delved into the reasons behind mass uprisings, and how country-by-country case studies showed the long-term ramifications of this social and political upheaval engulfing the region. The revolution initially started in Tunisia, where the authoritarian government censored all aspects of daily life. The repression allowed for ingenuity amongst the population, so that when internet blackout happened, the protestors had the technical savviness to circumvent the blockage and stream footage to the world⁵. Unlike Egypt or Morocco, Tunisia had very little public space available to express their opposition; thus, censorship of books, internet, and communications forced the youth to use their ingenuity to circumvent⁶.

As the unrest reached Cairo, protests were intensified by the end of January 2011. The government ordered the army to act against the crowds on 31 January, and upon refusing, the power shift significantly changed⁷. It did not take too long for Mubarak's regime to fall and it can be argued that it was due to technology and the mass uploading of live footage from the protests; the mass demonstration effect; and, the deep-seated economic and political grievances⁸.

When the Egyptian popular revolt forced long-ruling President Hosni Mubarak to resign on February 11, 2011, U.S. President Barack Obama hailed the victory of peaceful demonstrators in the heart of the Arab World. But Washington was late to endorse democracy - for decades, the

³ Giugni, Marco, "Political, biographical, and cultural consequences of social movements," *Sociology Compass*, 2: 20 September 2008: p. 600.

⁴ Gamson, William, *The Strategy of Social Protest*, Homewood, IL: Dorsay Press (1990): p. 104-25.

⁵ Ryan, Yasmin, "How Tunisia's revolution began", Al-Jazeera, 20 Jan 2011, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/01/2011126121815985483.html>.

⁶ Ayeb, Habib, "Social and Political Geography of the Tunisian Revolution", *Review of the African Political Economy* 38 (129), 26 August 2011: p. 467-69.

⁷ Fominaya, p. 158.

⁸ El-Ghobashy, Mona, "The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution", *The Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)*, 4 June 2011: p. 2-13.

United States favoured Egypt's rulers over its people, which ensured some semblance of stability for US allies Israel and Jordan, in an otherwise volatile area of the region. Since 1979, the US has provided the Egyptian regime more than \$60 billion in aid and immeasurable political support to secure its main interests in the region: Israeli security and strong relations with Persian Gulf oil producers. During the Egyptian uprising, the White House did not promote popular sovereignty but instead backed an "orderly transition". Even after protesters derailed that plan, the anti-democratic U.S.-Egyptian alliance continued. As citizens took to the street demanding Mubarak to step down, then-US Secretary of State would later reveal that as a cautious realist, she did not want the US to be seen pushing a long-time partner out without a "clear picture for the regional allies such as Israel and Jordan"⁹.

3.2 *The Middle East's Political Order and the Arab Spring*

In an article by Peter Jones, he explores three main questions around the Arab Spring: what happened and why; who the key actors and their wants are; and what the implications are for the west. He claims that the general consensus for countries most at risk for rapid destabilization is if they are vulnerable to a combination of poverty, lack of economic opportunity, and repressive regimes¹⁰. He further elaborates that monarchies have remained relatively unharmed by the social protests, except for the Gulf Kingdom of Bahrain, where a disenfranchised Shi'a population demands decent living standards from the Sunni monarchy. Autocratic republics, like Egypt or Tunisia, two countries that experienced mass unrest sparked by a lack of the economic opportunities forcing people to undertake drastic steps to make a point, as the case was with the Tunisian vendor Mohammed Bouazizi.

In December 2011, the unemployed Bouazizi self-immolated outside of a local government building in protest to societal oppression and economic hardships and the alleged humiliation he had endured at the hands of a corrupt official. In that act of desperation, he became the

⁹ "Hillary Clinton: Obama administration divided over 2011 Arab uprisings" The Guardian with the Associated Press in Washington, 20 Sep 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/07/hillary-clinton-obama-administration-split-arab-spring-mubarak>.

¹⁰ Jones, Peter, "The Arab Spring – Opportunities and Implications", International Journal: Spring 2012, p. 447-463.

revolutionary symbol that sparked an awakening amongst millions of young, educated, disenfranchised, and unsatisfied Arabs¹¹. One of the main elements that has allowed for the spread of the Arab Spring is the technological mediums used to communicate and organize¹². With the internet on mobile devices, and social media platforms allowing for the dissemination of real-time events, footage, and first-hand accounts on the ground, the regimes could not contain the spread. Footage of the protests from inside Tunisia was the reason it spread so fast in that country. Having an authoritarian regime censor most modes of telecommunication, the people would not know when to mobilize if it were not for the videos being streamed online¹³.

3.3 *The Demographic Force Behind the Arab Spring*

Bessma Momani, in her work *Arab Dawn*, explores the change occurring in the Middle East following the Arab Spring uprisings and contends that the cause is demographic. With a regional population that is one-fifth between the ages 15-24, it is this group that will shape the region's future. Momani does not make any explicit conclusions; however, her research, derived from subject interviews, surveys, and academic literature, allots her the ability to present a thorough analysis of the transformative power of the younger generation of the Arab world. Without dismissing the security and stability challenges posed by the region, or its vital geostrategic role in international politics, Momani attempts to veer away from a Western-created myopic vision of the Arab world and the issues plaguing it. Her research delves into the youth demographic that is ready for progress as it actively seeks an active role in its future, highlighting the possibility that the transformation is one of the region's positive elements¹⁴. Places like Lebanon, perceived as relatively progressive, do not offer the same life experiences as religiously conservative states, such as Saudi Arabia. Momani indicates that her research shows that views across the region are similar, despite these nuances in the region's subcultures.

¹¹ Joyce, Robert. "The Regional Inequality Behind Tunisia's Revolution". *The Atlantic Council*, 17 December 2013.

¹² Jones, "The Arab Spring – Opportunities and Implications" p. 451.

¹³ Ayeb, p. 467-79.

¹⁴ Momani, Bessma. *Arab Dawn*. Toronto: Toronto University Press (2015): p. 4.

The Arab youth's call for “bread”, as witnessed in Tunisia, the home of the uprisings, is shorthand for economic dignity and productive work¹⁵. The Arab youth, she examines, are predominately educated, many of who are defined as part of the “creative class”: the socio-economic group of workers who effectively create and sell their ideas, knowledge, and innovations in high-value added professions¹⁶. The issue remains that despite being educated and possessing university degrees, young Arabs are disillusioned with the high rates of unemployment coupled with mounting challenges when seeking work opportunities in their respective fields. Challenges like a corrupt political and social system steeped in nepotism and personal networks stagnates the generation's ability to compete based on merit. Female university graduates outnumber their male counterparts in the Arab world, yet female employment can be twice as high, posing another challenge within a challenge¹⁷. Regardless of the setbacks, young Arabs have turned to entrepreneurship like never, especially women. In Lebanon, women account for half of the country's entrepreneurs¹⁸.

The 1990s-2000s ushered in decades of economic liberalization in the Middle East. By opening the borders to new goods, money, and services, Arab governments also began to reduce subsidies for food and rent. They dramatically clawed back government services, reducing public sector job opportunities as well. In addition to the aforementioned reductions, these governments decreased wages relative to the rise in inflation, increased university tuition fees, privatized manufacturing, waste management, airports, and telecommunications¹⁹. The changes brought on by economic liberalization drastically reoriented the typical Arab city, ushering in the era of Western-inspired shopping malls. The spread of these malls had a massive impact on local economies and by extension, youth. These retail entities, many financed and developed by Gulf developers, flourished under relaxed laws that promoted investment²⁰.

¹⁵ Momani, p. 11.

¹⁶ Florida, Richard, "The Revolt of the Creative Class," *The Atlantic*, 3 March 2011.

¹⁷ OECD-MENA Investment Programme, “Gender Inequality and Entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa: A Statistical Portrait.” <<http://www.oecd.org/mena/competitiveness/Statistical%20Portrait.pdf>> December 2013.

¹⁸ Aoun, Bassem. “Entrepreneurship for Growth.” *Your Middle East* <<https://yourmiddleeast.com/2013/08/23/entrepreneurship-for-growth-ae-starting-small-not-a-bad-idea/>> 23 August 2013.

¹⁹ Momani, p. 21-22.

²⁰ Cammett, Mmelani and Ishac Diwan, *The Political Economy of the Arab Uprisings*, Coulter: Westview Press (2013): p. 21.

Designed to attract the middle and middle-upper classes, Momani claims, through her research and interaction with informal focus groups in the region, there is a generation enjoying the economic trappings of Western culture but exposing them to a relationship that is mixed. In a region notably absent of free public spaces, many youth, especially those who are unemployed, converged onto these mega-malls, where for small payments, they were served in cafes, and exposed to some aspects of a Western style of life²¹. Jillian Schwedler defines these individuals as “aspiring cosmopolitans” who see their interaction with symbols of Western culture as having an empowering effect on sense of self. Here, the young Arabs were able to be comfortable in elite-dominated places, while engaging in the benefits of economic liberalization²². The flipside to the sense of empowerment is that Arab youth were growing aware of the socio-economic inequality around them. The rapid urban development exposed the public to how limited economic mobility was for the majority, and how economic security cannot be assessed without dissecting the political situation many Arabs face.

In her chapter on the political catalysts behind the movements, Momani argues that behavioural theorists who blame socio-cultural factors for the slow political-economic development are just as out of touch as the Arab governments are with the needs of their people²³. Eva Bellin in her work “The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East” dissects the numerous theories applied to the region and keeping it stagnant. One theory is that the region and Arab culture, implicitly Islam, somehow are antithetical to democracy; thus, allowing for the Western-driven argument of “Arab exceptionalism”, a cultural reductionist argument stipulating that the region is a holdout against globalization, democracy and modernity²⁴. Oftentimes, blame is placed on Arabs, who are characterized as apathetic, indifferent, or apolitical, lending way to political-economic elites, who stand to gain the most from the status quo, to still argue that Arabs are not “ready” for democracy, while some academics will add to this with the description of how “authoritarian resilience” has

²¹ Schwedler, Jillian, “Amman Cosmopolitan: Spaces and Practices of Aspiration and Consumption.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 30, no. 3, (2010): p. 947-50.

²² Ibid, p. 955.

²³ Momani, p. 217.

²⁴ Bellin, Eva. “The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspectives.” *Comparative Politics* 30, no. 2, 2004, p. 139-45.

institutionalized its presence in the Arab region²⁵. Furthermore, below the surface and beyond the academic focus on politics and civil society, the new generation of Arabs view politics in a fundamentally different way than previous generations²⁶.

Echoing her research, Flore Gubert and Christophe J. Nordman support the case for economic stimulation, in the form of job creation, falls to the governments. She introduces the immense, but not impossible task of designing policies that capitalize on the demographic dividend of Arab youth, by having governments: foster such an environment that scales up the value of their educated young workforce; invests in skill formation; and, tailors education curricula to work in tandem with the needs of the market²⁷. She expands on these points by warning that governments should not value economic success solely on using macro-economic indicators like GDP, but also on the increased productive capacity and employment of society for “inclusive growth”. She points to the political imperative for job creation.

Juan Cole, like Momani, argues for the inclusion of the Arab youth in the dialogue for change. In his work *The New Arab*, he delves deeper into the revolutionary history to argue that the youth will push the Arab region to a better political future. Maintaining the positive tones associated with the younger generation, Cole claims that the Arab Spring was just the beginning. There is still need for longer historical views to see the fruit of these revolutions that aim to overthrow stagnant autocrats. Middle East expert, Prof. Peter Jones echoes the sentiment that the Arab Springs, being one of the most significant events since the end of WWII, needs several years to unfold²⁸. Touching back on Momani's discussion on the effects of economic liberalization, Jones affirms that many of his interviewees for his research noted that the “debate over the economic future of these countries will be a difficult one and the ability of the west to influence discussion will be limited²⁹. Should the

²⁵ Ibid, p. 145-47.

²⁶ Momani, p. 47.

²⁷ Gubert, Flore and Christophe J. Nordman, “Return Migration and Small Enterprise Development in the Maghreb” in *Diaspora for Development in Africa*, ed. Sonia Plaza and Dilip Ratha, Washington, DC: World Bank, (2011): p. 19.

²⁸ Jones, “The Arab Spring – Opportunities and Implications”, p. 447.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 451.

younger generation view the economic reforms and tools of the west as being the reasons for their stagnation, it could spell out more issues.

Jones asserts that socio-political dilemmas are stunting the region. He claims that due to a lack of “broadly agreed set of societal goals” for Arab governments and their people to aspire to is a problem in and of itself. Collective, cooperative aspiration, as witnessed with European states after the collapse of communism, would allow for a rallying cause for action at an unstable time. For all the former Warsaw pact countries, except Russia, Jones writes that “mainstream political life in these countries became a debate over how best to get there, but the destination was accepted by just about everyone”³⁰. Middle Eastern states have no such agreed-upon goals, let alone agreed targets for reform, lending a sense of drift for where these revolutions should go, and opening a vacuum for undesirable forces and events.

To maintain some semblance of control over a region that is in turmoil and ripe for chaos with power vacuums, it is prudent that western states attempt to keep dialogue open with most regional players. In his piece on engaging Iranian dissidents, as an example, Jones makes the case for western governments maintaining ties with countries they are trying to influence and cites the most hardline anti-Communist ones as some that kept dialogue with the west³¹. Three years after arguing that cutting ties with Iran greatly weakened Canada's overall ability to usher change in the country, Thomas Juneau brings forth the costs of not having a diplomatic presence in Tehran. He argues that because Canada is a marginal player in Iran, it missed out on many opportunities by foregoing relations³². Having a footprint in one of the major regional powers' territories would have allowed for Canadian diplomats to provide valuable reporting on political situations within the country; thus, lending that good information to assist in the formulation of “sound policy-making”. The Conservative Canadian government of Stephen Harper ensured that future governments would have their hands tied when it came to deal with Iran. By listing it as a state sponsor of terrorism, it would be politically catastrophic to delist, ensuring that the Conservatives would have their preferred

³⁰ Jones, “The Arab Spring – Opportunities and Implications”, p. 453.

³¹ Jones, “Engaging Iranian Dissidents, or Catering to the Tory Base?” Centre for International Policy Studies, 11 January 2015.

³² Juneau, Thomas. “Iran protests point to the need for a Canadian embassy in Tehran.” *The Globe and Mail*, 9 January 2018.

outcome even when not in power, but also guaranteeing that the status quo disables Canada's ability to pursue its interests and values in the Middle East³³.

Jones concludes, as other experts before him and after him have, that the regional upheavals brought on by the uprisings are to remain for the foreseeable future. The Arab Spring will be the long-term force that will lend its hand to realigning regional societies and the politics³⁴. For the west, and especially Canada, it needs to design thoughtful strategies if it aspires to play a role, whether economic or political in the region. Unlike the past, where the ruling elite provided sole access to influence and opportunity in the region, Canada, but especially dominant western powers, need to be aware of how they are not associated as having been on the side of the people³⁵. Having never been an imperial power with a colonizing past, Canada stands to be possibly more welcomed than the United States or the United Kingdom; however, with a foreign policy track record that is not very involved in the Middle East except when it comes to rhetoric, it is unclear if Canada will initiate anything on its own.

More importantly, in an increasingly globalized world, Canada does not have the luxury of being neutral or isolated. In his paper, "The Dynamics of Geopolitics in the Middle East", Florin Iftode discusses the geopolitical changes around the uprisings and the factors that influence them. He argues that due to the interconnectedness of the globalized community, these events cannot be dismissed by Europe, and by extension North America³⁶. Where the likes of Samuel Huntington argue that it is in the best interest of the West to "promote greater cooperation and unity within its own civilization, particularly between its European and North American components"³⁷, Iftode sees that to promote a clash of civilizations scenario is futile because the state of the modern globalized world has rendered no country immune to the rippling effects of global processes³⁸. Huntington's concern about the survival of western civilization stops him from promoting cooperation between

³³ Ibid, 2018.

³⁴ Jones, "The Arab Spring – Opportunities and Implications", p. 462.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 463.

³⁶ Florin Iftode, Cristian. "The Dynamic of Geopolitics in the Middle East". Acta Universitatis Danubius. Relationes Internationales, Vol 6, No 2 (2013): p. 87.

³⁷ Huntington, Samuel, "The Clash of Civilizations", Foreign Affairs, Summer 1993.

³⁸ Florin Iftode, p. 87-88.

east and west, creating an example for the Middle East region to follow, which is currently steeped in rivalry and isolationism.

4.0 Regional Cooperation and De-Escalation in the Middle East

The Middle East is not unique. It is not the first region to experience a period of intense conflict. Europe and East Asia, in the previous decades, endured conflict and violence, to finally exit towards a path of regional cooperation. Eventually, as seen with the latter two regions, the hope is that Middle East governments will realize the toll of conflict on states, societies, and economies. As contended by other experts, the disorder in the Middle East is due to an absence of collective long-term collective vision on the part of the region's states.

In the same venue of cooperation, Peter Jones addresses the region's lack of inclusive mechanism for the promotion of regional cooperation and security. In place of a multilateral defence treaty amongst all actors, Middle Eastern countries instead rely on bilateral defence arrangements with the US³⁹. Should such a system be adopted, Jones suggests that a flexible one with a framework on regional principles, with the ability to approach problems collectively or sub-regionally, would be suitable. Jones allows for the option of outside powers in two capacities. The first is for those powers relevant across the region and sub-regions, with overlapping memberships to the UNSC or the G7; and the second is a power that plays a functional basis for an issue that has arisen⁴⁰.

In their collection of expert views on cooperation in the region, Ross Harrison and Paul Salem and the other authors, tackle the question of regional cooperation from specific sectors in either politics and security or economics and environmental spheres⁴¹. Each expert discusses what cooperation could potentially look like in their specific sectors, the obstacles in the way, and what positive impact such cooperation could have should it happen. The array of research from the collection of essays in *From Chaos to Cooperation*, provides a balanced approach, where the authors are not

³⁹ Jones, Peter, "Structuring Middle East Security" *Survival*, December 2009, Vol.51(6), p. 105-107.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 113-14.

⁴¹ Harrison, Ross and Paul Salem, "Preface." *From Chaos to Cooperation – Toward Regional Order in the Middle East*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (2017) p. x.

naively espousing the optimism of cooperation only, nor are they mired in cynical pessimism that is too easy to fall into given the state of affairs in the region. The research and analysis approach the topic of cooperation in the region as being possibly the only way to move the Middle East from its current instability, destruction, and despair is through the eventual cooperation amongst the regional powers.

Harrison and Salem also offer answers to different questions throughout the work of research. First, they ask, what is the regional and international context for cooperation; second, what are the underlying conditions that affect the prospects for cooperation; and third, what could be specific accelerants to cooperation⁴². Not yet applied to the Middle East as a whole, the authors provide theories for different possible pathways towards cooperation, methods that are steeped in precedent in other parts of the world. Salem contends that the region is not completely devoid of mechanisms for cooperation. The Gulf states have designed a regional governance under the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), while the GCC states, along with Egypt and other Arab countries are grouped within the, albeit weak, Arab League. Similarly, to these councils and groups, the North African countries of the region established the Arab Maghreb Union, despite the Algerian-Moroccan tensions over Western Sahara. Despite the ongoing tension between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation serves as a religious-based association encompassing all Muslim nations of the Middle East, including Turkey, Iran, and other Muslim majority nations in Asia. Economically, OPEC includes Gulf states and Iran, and the group has experienced periods of cooperation on oil production and pricing, as well as competition⁴³. Most recently, and considering current conflicts, the establishment of the International Syria Support Group was brought about as the only venue where Saudi, Turkish, and Iranian leaders met in political context.

Salem's research implies that despite the above-mentioned groups, there is no dedicated forum or mechanism for the main regional powers to communicate, identify concerns, defuse conflicts, build on common interest, or work towards establishing a set of principles for regional interaction other

⁴² Harrison and Salem, p xi.

⁴³ Salem, Paul, "Potential Pathways from Disorder to Order in the Middle East." *From Chaos to Cooperation – Toward Regional Order in the Middle East*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (2017): p. 2.

than proxy wars. The idea of building a stable regional order in the Middle East is not a new challenge, the challenge lies in the governments working toward establishing such a functioning order for the sake of rebuilding regional stability in the broader campaign to take away opportunities from terrorist organizations wishing to take advantage of any power vortex⁴⁴.

The conditions that unfurled in the events of 1979 are still felt today in the region and internationally: ongoing conflict between Iran and its neighbours; the instrumentalization and weaponization of sectarian proxy groups; and, the empowerment of non-state actors⁴⁵. The deep conflict between Iran and the Sunni states of the region, provided opportune conditions for sectarian radicalization, spread of armed non-state actors, and creation of transnational terrorist groups, all of which have lent themselves to fuel the civil conflicts raging in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

Robust and intelligent diplomacy spread out over a few years' timeline could lend a hand to disentangling the legitimate concerns of regime and national security on all sides, where the main powers no longer employ proxy war tactics which have proven to exasperate national and regional stability. Such diplomacy would require global players like the US and Russia, along with middle powers, to show leadership. The strategy does not require military or economic outlays, but rather intelligent and sustained political and diplomatic efforts, which can be initiated at the right time, under three tracks: one, regional contact group; two, deconfliction and de-escalation; and three, regional economic integration⁴⁶.

In early 2018, Russia implemented an approach that brings adversaries together to further dialogue as defined in the Astana Peace Process, which is co-sponsored by Moscow, Ankara, and Tehran⁴⁷. The process was put into place to help in de-escalating the conflict in some of the more fraught parts of Syria, including Russia's attempts at brokering an understanding between Israel and Iran on red lines in Syria. Iran and Israel's willingness to speak could be due to what Ross Harrison labels as a "vertical contagion". The author explains this idea as meaning that conflicts "do not just spread

⁴⁴ Salem, "Potential Pathways from Disorder to Order in the Middle East", (2017): p. 3.

⁴⁵ Salem, p. 3-4.

⁴⁶ Harrison, Ross. "Defying Gravity: Working Toward a Regional Strategy for a Stable Middle East." *From Chaos to Cooperation – Toward Regional Order in the Middle East*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017, p. 12.

⁴⁷ Ibid p. 7.

across borders horizontally to vulnerable neighbouring states, but also vertically to stronger and larger regional powers⁴⁸.

Vertical contagion can be demonstrated through the “bad neighbourhood effect”, where civil wars have drawn regional actors like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Israel into the wider effects of the conflict, whether it be in the form of refugees, terrorism, economic instability, or strengthened hardliners. The second aspect of the contagion, he contends, is perhaps the most profound in terms of shifting balance of power. As witnessed with Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, the civil wars in these states transformed into a regional conflict among some of the major players, where a fierce competition for short-term regional dominance completely overshadows longer-term shared interest of a stable and thriving Middle East⁴⁹.

5.0 Canada, Liberal Internationalism, and the Multilateral Approach

5.1 *Effects of Multilateralism and Middle Power Influence*

Up until WWII, Canada refrained from involving itself in Middle Eastern affairs. Substantial British geostrategic interest in the region ensured sustained involvement from Great Britain, and no assistance would have been needed from Ottawa. By the end of the war, Canada began participating in Near Eastern affairs at the United Nations as part of its commitment to international security through multilateralism⁵⁰. By relying on the UN to resolve global issues, Canada earned plaudits and was viewed by developing nations, suspicious of the US, as a credible player and committed problem-solver⁵¹.

Canada initially joined the diplomatic fray surrounding the Suez because of the fear of disastrous consequences should the crisis not be resolved promptly and peacefully. Canadian officials sensed that the outcome of the crisis would also bear directly on Canada’s position within the international system. The concern was that should war break out, it would threaten to rend asunder the Western

⁴⁸ Harrison, p. 10.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 10-11.

⁵⁰ James, Patrick, Nelson Michaud, and Marc O'Reilly, eds. *Handbook of Canadian Foreign Policy*. Lanham: Lexington Books (2006): p. 337.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 339.

Alliance; therefore, to fulfill its mission, Canada provided France and Great Britain the cover they need so that they could be guided back to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) fold⁵².

In the face of Great Britain circumventing the UN's charter in its push to attack Egypt, the move angered some Commonwealth countries like India. In the face of this aggression, the Canadian government agreed to adopt a "prudent and flexible Middle East policy". The policy would not condone Anglo-French aggression nor promote violence in the Suez Canal zone. Canadian Foreign Minister Lester B. Pearson could not weather a Suez storm that could possibly destroy two highly prized foreign policy structures: NATO and the Commonwealth⁵³.

At a November 1956 cabinet meeting, Pearson proposed the establishment of the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) to allow the two countries the reason to withdraw before any formal condemnation by the UN General Assembly. Since Canada could not vote in favour of a US cease-fire draft resolution because it did not "provide for any steps to be taken by the UN for a peace settlement", Pearson presented the UNEF to the US as a body that would end a Middle East war before it escalated into a superpower conflict, while the force would be large enough to "keep borders at peace while a political settlement is being worked out"⁵⁴. Prior to Nasser vetoing the unit of the Canadian Army, Canada gained a moment in history where developing nations, some of which were colonized, lauded it for criticizing its two motherlands, France and Great Britain

Canadian UN diplomacy, with US economic pressure pushed Britain and France to the edge of an international precipice. The antiquated era of European gunboat diplomacy gave way to an American-Soviet coercive dip⁵⁵. By pushing for a UN ceasefire, Canada won over most neutral states, provided Britain with succor, and an excuse to leave Egypt before the US levied harsh financial sanctions. The UNEF vaulted Pearson and Canada into international prominence, and to capitalize on its success at the UN, Canada worked to pass a General Assembly resolution where the US applied intense financial pressure resulting in the UNEF averting NATO's demise;

⁵² James, Patrick, *Handbook of Canadian Foreign Policy*, (2006), p. 342.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 343.

⁵⁴ Pearson, Mike, Volume 2: 1948-57, p. 244.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 245.

Canadian-US cooperation resulting in ceasefire; and, US economic diplomacy reminding Great Britain and France that the Soviet threat was in Europe, not the Middle East⁵⁶.

The Suez Crisis allowed Canada to display that even a small power could play an important role in securing peaceful resolutions to an affair that threatened to directly involve the superpowers of the time. Canada made most of this opportunity to showcase to the world that it could contribute to international peace while ensuring the sanctity of multilateral bodies like the UN and NATO remain intact⁵⁷. Canada's actions also emboldened other middle powers to increase their involvement in UN conflict-resolution efforts; thus, creating a group of nations that could be called upon when superpowers are not the ideal candidates to solve an international dilemma.

By the end of the 1960s, under Pierre Elliot Trudeau's government, the role of the middle power was under critical review. The concept had increasingly become associated with peacekeeping and attitude to that proud Canadian function were soured by the expulsion of UNEF from Egypt in 1967⁵⁸. Furthermore, the role of a middle power had become confused with "do-goodism", and constantly being misconstrued in debate over nationalism and internationalism.

Articulate critics on the left wanted Canada to play a grand peace-inducing role in world affairs, but thought the country was hindered by its alignment and assumption of embracing "continentalism". The term is based on certain American scholars' tenets, where it is inferred that upon breaking from Britain's influence, Canada embraced the US. Holmes argues that the idea is essentially anti-Canadian because it assumed Canadian incompetence, as well as defining Canada as a victim⁵⁹. The clamour surrounding the topic, derailed the pursuit of national interest and the role of the middle power was confused. Holmes opines that Canada's power is infinitely broader and stronger than it

⁵⁶ Rosner, Gabriella, *The UN Emergency Force*, New Jersey: University Presses of California, Columbia, and Princeton (1990): p. 217-22.

⁵⁷ Boyer, Mark A. *International Cooperation and Public Goods: Opportunities for Western Alliances*. Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press (1993): chapters 3 and 4.

⁵⁸ Holmes, John W. *The Shaping of Peace, vol 2*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (1982): p. 32.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 33-34.

was during the golden decade of foreign policy of the 1950-60s; however, the issue is that there is more competition, and thus, the concept of “power” is regarded more searchingly⁶⁰.

Almost fifty years later, in 2002, Canada remained in line with its belief in the role of multilateralism, voicing that only the UN, and not the Bush administration, could authorize the removal of the head of state, in this case, Saddam Hussein. Opposing the invasion, an ambiguously written resolution was introduced to the Security Council. The US camp, joined by the United Kingdom and Spain, stated that should Iraq fail to comply with the resolution’s provisions, then there would be military intervention, while the China-Russia camp, joined by Germany and France, disagreed, stating that only a second resolution could authorize military recourse⁶¹.

The Chretien government sought the same outcome as Pearson had achieved with the Suez Canal – peace through the UN. Despite Ottawa relying on Pearsonian tactics, Canada was ridiculed by domestic opposition for its impartial stance, despite most of the Canadian public agreeing with the government’s pursuit of a UN solution. A major difference is that in 2002, Canada refused to support the US Administration. These two Canadian examples show that despite frequent marginalization, middle powers can extend valuable assistance, especially in volatile regions like the Middle East, but positive results can be ephemeral⁶². More importantly, if the assistance is of no use to the US, Washington will pay it no mind.

Like Norway’s 1993 Middle East Oslo Accords, Canada’s exploits during the Suez Crisis confirmed the axiom that only superpowers can ensure international peace and security, although they often fail at doing so. The more determined and capable the superpower is, the less likely a middle power, especially one considered marginal to the politics of the issue, can affect the denouement⁶³. With its minimal influence in the Middle East since the Suez, it is not surprising Canada failed to sway the Security Council against the 2003 invasion. True to its tradition, Canada attempted to affect the military option by resorting to reflexive multilateralism, and should it have

⁶⁰ Chapnick, Adam, *The Middle Power Project: Canada and the Founding of the United Nations*, Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press (2005): p. 38.

⁶¹ James, Patrick, p. 349.

⁶² Marc O'Reilly, eds. *Handbook of Canadian Foreign Policy*, Lanham: Lexington Books, (2006): p. 353.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 354.

been brought to the UNSC, the US would absolutely veto it; however, it would showing Canada to be taking a stance and, its faded reputation as a mediator may have recovered.

Holmes concludes that whether or not the role of a middle power is now an exhausted concept, the fact remains that the world requires “middle-powermanship”, especially in light of the US not being able to count on the kind of authority it once wielded. Middle powers and lesser greats are required to show leadership in accepting wider responsibilities even when that means risking US displeasure. Furthermore, isolationism as witnessed during the inter-war years made it impossible for Canada to be neutral⁶⁴.

Nelson Michaud introduces the role of values for a middle power, or what he refers to as a “soft power”⁶⁵. Soft power, he claims is the ability to acquire “what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It rises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced”⁶⁶. Soft power theorists have identified “currency” (resources) associated with the concept. It includes concepts such as values, culture, policies, and institutions, and in terms of international relations, values are essential because they can dictate how a country allocates its resources. The values-based approach clashes with the usual foreign policy analysis grid that places present interests as the main motivation for a state to intervene on the international scene. Canada does not avoid this, but depending on its interests, it takes them into consideration in its policy management. For example, following the 9/11 attacks, security objectives were highlighted, and Ottawa successfully negotiated a “Smart Border” agreement with the US. Ottawa, however, contextualizes security issues, as witnessed with PM Chretien and then Paul Martin, who were both reluctant to embrace US security choices related to the Iraqi invasion and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Defence System⁶⁷.

Michaud argues that Canadian values are at the core of Canada’s foreign policies, but the most scathing criticism comes from the idea that promoting one’s values can be perceived as a lack of

⁶⁴ Holmes, *The Shaping of Peace*, vol 2. (1982): p. 41-43.

⁶⁵ Michaud, Nelson, eds. *Handbook of Canadian Foreign Policy*. Lanham: Lexington Books (2006): p. 433.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 433-44.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 434.

respect for the values held by others; thus, leaving room for Canada to be misinterpreted as imperialistic⁶⁸. Before commencing any mediatory excursion aimed at facilitating cooperation amongst regional actors, it may be necessary that Canada evaluate the role of values in the formulation of its foreign policies. Historically, values were identified as prominent features of foreign policy as early as the Grey Lecture, delivered by the first Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs Louis St-Laurent. He would refer to values as “principles”, and for the “policy of world affairs to be truly effective, it must have its foundation laid upon in general principles which have been tested in the life of the nation”⁶⁹. St-Laurent went further and identified the “basic principles of foreign policy” which included: national unity, political liberty (democracy, rule of law, and willingness to accept international responsibilities. He argues that it is essential to play a role in world affairs⁷⁰.

It was Canada’s values and its perception of the world that motivated its position in the formation of the UN and NATO. With the UN, Canada was influential in the writing of the UN Charter, and with NATO, it was influential in ensuring that Article 2 of the Charter was adopted. The article opens NATO’s mandate to fields other than military and security, leaving the opportunity for other forms of international development. In addition to the UN and NATO charters, the Bretton Wood Talks would bear the fruits that became the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)⁷¹.

5.1.1 The 1995 White Paper’s “Three Pillars”

A 1995 White Paper titled “Canada in the World”, identified three pillars on which Canada’s foreign policy would rest: the promotion of prosperity, the protection of security within a stable global framework, and, the projection of Canadian values and culture. These pillars are identified as key to the achievement of prosperity within Canada and to the protection of global security, while

⁶⁸ Michaud, *Handbook of Canadian Foreign Policy* (2006): p. 434.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 438-39.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 439.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 439-40.

the third pillar is essential to meeting the objectives that are more likely linked to economics and security⁷².

It was under Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy's tenure where the concept of **human security** was presented in the values category. Human security was defined as a "people-centred approach to foreign policy which recognizes lasting stability and cannot be changed until people are protected from violent threats to their rights, safety or values"; therefore, as values-driven concept, it gives way to the umbrella concept referred to as the "human security paradigm"⁷³. In keeping with the human security value, Axworthy's legacy was defined by these initiatives: the ban of anti-personnel landmines and the Ottawa Protocol; the campaign to establish the International Criminal Court (ICC); and the fight against the use and exploitation of child soldiers⁷⁴. Axworthy's approach was not followed after he left office. Canadian governments were more focused on rhetoric than action.

5.2 Middle Powers and Weapons Exports

Prior to the events that brought on the 2011 protests in the Middle East, every country in the region had, at best, questionable track records when it came to human rights. The Arab Spring allowed for already strict, authoritarian regimes to clamp down harder on their people, as the waves of protests threatened these leaders' powers. As the people took to the streets demanding basic rights and an end to dynastic, dictatorial rule, they were met with state-sponsored violence. Western liberal governments monitored the initial situation before making any drastic moves. In the case of Egypt, where the citizens took to the street demanding that former President Hosni Mubarak step, down, then-US Secretary of State claimed that, as a cautious realist, she did not want the US to be seen pushing a long-time partner out without a "clear picture for the regional allies such as Israel and Jordan"⁷⁵. Some pessimists would argue that Clinton's position is indicative of a global decline in

⁷² James, Patrick, *Handbook of Canadian Foreign Policy*, (2006): p.440.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 440.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 441.

⁷⁵ "Hillary Clinton: Obama administration divided over 2011 Arab uprisings" The Guardian with the Associated Press in Washington, 20 Sep 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/07/hillary-clinton-obama-administration-split-arab-spring-mubarak>.

human rights linked back to a decline in the rules-based liberal order⁷⁶. These same pessimists will cite the alleged growing disregard at the international level for human rights principles, as Clinton's actions could be interpreted. For the US, ensuring the status quo remains undisrupted is the priority, even in the face of an authoritarian regime with virtually no regards for the well-being of its population.

The pessimist will say that despite the UN Charter prompting human rights, the multilateral institution does not possess the capacity to defend these rights, and thus, there is more proof of a decline in the world order through the inevitable diminished concern for human rights. David Petrasek presents two arguments against what he defines as this “pessimistic view”⁷⁷. Since concern for human rights was never solely dependent on Western powers' commitment to a liberal international order, he stipulates that the assumption of a necessary connection between Western liberal internationalism and global human rights is highly contingent. By making this presumption, the critics are disregarding numerous non-Western states who played crucial roles in establishing or maintaining human rights on the global agenda, as witnessed in the 1960s when universal human rights had their breakthrough with a core group of states leading the movement: namely Jamaica, Liberia, Ghana, and the Philippines. In fact, Western powers were inconsistent with how much priority they allotted to the issue of global human rights, and that inconsistency would become a defining feature of Western governments' activity in the area of foreign policy⁷⁸.

Petrasek's second argument is that the pessimistic position, without setting any benchmarks, assumes there was a golden age for human rights, which is declining or past. Since there is no good-times era to compare to, it becomes difficult to define a dark era. Therefore, he proposes two benchmarks: first, the focus could be on human rights worldwide, and the second would be on the scope and robustness of key international human rights institutions and mechanisms. Petrasek asserts that it is difficult to measure the progress or backsliding in both areas⁷⁹.

⁷⁶ Petrasek, David, “Not dead yet: Human rights in an illiberal world order” *International Journal*, March 2019, Vol.74(1): p.103.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 104.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 104-5.

⁷⁹ Sikink, Katherine, *Evidence for Hope*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.

Human rights institutions and mechanisms continue to expand in numbers and scope, as does international law in this area, and despite the efficacy, the objective conclusion is that the global human rights institutions are at least better equipped today than in the past to confront state misbehaviours in a new and emerging world order that is not dependent on Western liberal powers⁸⁰. Like an evolutionary process, the demise of human rights is far from inevitable, with opportunities rising out of the upheaval created by new shifting power dynamics⁸¹. With these opportunities, there is a crucial role for middle powers ostensibly committed to both multilateralism and human rights, to identify and craft new approaches to sustaining a global rights regime. This role for middle powers is especially crucial when standing next to the US, a staunch champion of human rights abroad and promoter of the global liberal order, but unsupportive of advancing those rights⁸².

In the post-Cold War era, Western-supported efforts advance human rights by banning landmines, cluster ammunition, child soldiers and torture, led in sanctioning the number of abusive regimes like Sudan, Iran, and Myanmar⁸³. In 2016, Canada, a vocal proponent of human rights, became the poster child of a Western liberal nation not adhering to its rhetoric. The 2016 Saudi arms deal was an example of a Western liberal government promoting human rights internationally, but disregarding the likely risks from a known human rights violator, like Saudi Arabia, whose purchase of the Ontario-built light armoured vehicles (LAVs), allowed them to potentially use them for violent internal repression or intervention abroad, such as in Yemen⁸⁴. The deal effectively commits Canada to “helping prop up the Saudi government until 2028”⁸⁵, allowing the Kingdom to potentially deploy its Canadian-made LAVs in a major internal crackdown or in a military intervention in Yemen, Bahrain, or some other state Riyadh considers to be within its sphere of

⁸⁰ Petrusek, p. 105.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 105-6.

⁸² Ibid, p. 106.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 106.

⁸⁴ Vucetic, Srdjan, “A nation of feminist arms dealers? Canada and military exports,” *International Journal* 72, no. 4, (2017): p. 503.

⁸⁵ Simpson, Erika, “Canada’s arms deal with Saudi Arabia,” *Peace Magazine* 32, no. 2, (2016): p. 15.

influence⁸⁶. In return, Justin Trudeau's Liberal government sustains 3,000 well-paid jobs for up to fifteen years, as well as involved the work of 500 small and medium-sized businesses⁸⁷.

Despite the previous Conservative government having made the deal in April 2016, the *Globe and Mail* published a heretofore secret policy memorandum indicating that "key export permits were signed by the new Liberal Foreign Affairs Minister, Stéphane Dion, rather than any of his predecessors in the Harper government"⁸⁸. A quantitative historical-comparative analysis of Canada's arms exports since the 1980s, demonstrated that Liberal and Conservative governments had similar records overall and in terms of their "willingness to grant export permits for military goods going to human rights abusing buyers"⁸⁹, see Figure 1 below. Furthermore, the analysis presented additional similarities with Canada's "recognized peers", Sweden and the Netherlands, in the area of progressive foreign policy. Recognized peers, in constructive international relations theory suggests that all three nations are "like-minded countries" who seek status primarily in relation to each other. Therefore, not only are these two countries similar to Canada on a set of dimensions (such as their historical commitment to peacekeeping and high levels of official development aid) but are in fact, Canada's most recognized peers – "small and middle-sized states that are both rich and democratic and eager to spread their moral capital"⁹⁰. Canada at 15%, Sweden at 10%, and the Netherlands at 14%, are the recorded transfers to recipients with "bad" or "very bad" human rights records during the 1981-2010 period by these three idealistic, progressive nations⁹¹.

⁸⁶ Carment, David and Teddy Samy, "Trudeau may come to bitterly regret the Saudi arms deal," *iPolitics*, 17 February 2016, <http://ipolitics.ca/2016/02/17/trudeau-maycome-to-bitterly-regret-the-saudi-arms-deal>.

⁸⁷ Juneau, "A surprising spat: The causes and consequences of the Saudi-Canadian dispute", (2019): p. 315.

⁸⁸ Chase, Steven, "Dion quietly approved arms sale to Saudi Arabia in April: Documents," *The Globe and Mail*, 12 April 2016.

⁸⁹ Vucetic, p. 505.

⁹⁰ De Carvalho, Benjamin and Iver B. Neumann, "Introduction: Small states and status," in De Carvalho and Neumann, eds., *Small State Status Seeking: Norway's Quest for International Standing*, London: Routledge (2014): p. 1–21, 13.

⁹¹ Vucetic, p. 505.

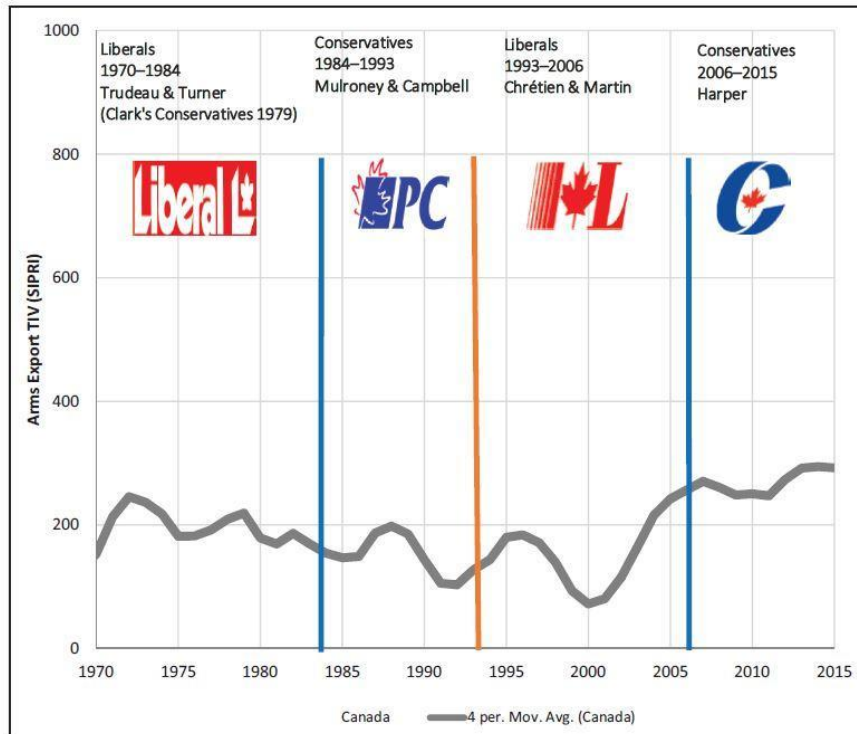


Figure 1 - Canadian Arms Exports (MCW) per Government, 1970–2015⁹²

These actors are “upper second tier” weapons exporters—they consistently appear in the SIPRI’s annual top 15 supplier rankings. Second, Canadian, Dutch, and Swedish defence industries are similar. All three can safely be defined as mature, mid-sized, well-connected, and capable of designing, developing, and manufacturing many kinds of exportable conventional military gear.⁹³ Last, all three countries are defined by themselves and others as “international do-gooders”, “good international citizens”, “internationalist middle powers”, “humanitarian superpowers”, and “global good Samaritans”, reflected in, and reinforced by, their long-standing support for the United Nations (UN), international human rights, international humanitarian law, multilateralism, foreign aid, and other progressive dimensions of the so-called liberal (a.k.a. rules-based) international order. Standard examples include Canada’s historical commitment to peacekeeping and the consistently high level of official development assistance provided by Sweden and the Netherlands⁹⁴. Thus, rather than being merely similar to Canada on a set of dimensions, Sweden and the Netherlands are,

⁹² Vucetic, p. 503.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 508.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 509.

in fact, Canada's most immediately recognized peers - "small- and middle-sized states that are both rich and democratic" and, crucially, "eager to spread their moral capital"⁹⁵. If the point about status-seeking is true, then Canadian foreign policy practices are also significantly influenced by Dutch and Swedish developments, and vice versa⁹⁶. It is entirely possible that such peer effects might be operative in the case of arms exports. Following the LAV deal, for example, some Canadian journalists showed interest in the changes to the Swedish arms-exporting regime towards the Saudi Kingdom⁹⁷.

Canadian decision-makers justified the LAVs sale by citing "economic and strategic considerations" as paramount, while pledging to "monitor" the use of the vehicles⁹⁸. The export of arms is likely to remain a major policy challenge for Canada, but future governments will continue to make their own calls about specific deals, balancing support for indigenous defence industries against the need to reduce trade with human rights-abusing actors⁹⁹. Canada should be aware that Saudi Arabia pursues large weapons deals with Western powers, not only to acquire the advanced hardware, but also to invest in a strategic partnership by broadening its relations¹⁰⁰. The issue with weapon sales to regimes like the Saudi, aside from potentially using them against the general population or in unlawful wars, is that if Canada truly aspires to help build gender-equitable societies around the world, then it would be prudent for the government, especially one led by a self-described feminist, to reconsider colossal arms sales to countries with abysmal records on women's rights. A diplomatic approach would be decreasing a buyer's chances for an export permit should they have a "poor democratic status" instead of making an arms sale impossible. This approach could be constructive to keeping the doors of communication and economic dependency open, while adhering to one's rhetoric on advancing human rights. To date, such actions prove

⁹⁵ De Carvalho, p. 14-19.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 1-21, 13.

⁹⁷ Chase, 2016.

⁹⁸ Juneau, "Canada and Saudi Arabia: A deeply flawed but necessary partnership". Ottawa: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, July 2016, <https://www.cgai.ca/canada_and_saudi_arabia#Canadas>.

⁹⁹ Stavrianakis, Anna, "Legitimizing liberal militarism: Politics, law and war in the Arms Trade Treaty," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 5 (2016): p. 840-865.

¹⁰⁰ Juneau, "A surprising spat: The causes and consequences of the Saudi-Canadian dispute", (2019): p. 316.

Canada's own feminist foreign policy is likely to be characterized by “inconsistencies,” “contradictions,” and “exceptions,” especially in arms trade.

Another approach is to mimic the 2017 Swedish model and legislate additional stringency in the Canadian regulations regime, or the Liberals can reverse their stance on the 2016 proposal by adopting NDP MP Helene Laverdiere suggestion to establish a British-style House of Commons committee tasked with reviewing defence exports¹⁰¹. Either one of these policy moves would make it harder for Canada's arms industry to sell their wares to repressive governments in the future—a minimum demand made by the critics of the LAV deal.

5.3 Western Powers and Global Human Rights

In post–Cold War era, the Scandinavian countries, Canada, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and others have been generally reliable supporters of the global human rights agenda. But again, this is by no means an automatic relationship. The official website of Global Affairs Canada introduces its human rights work with the pronouncement that:

Canada has been a consistently strong voice for the protection of human rights and the advancement of democratic values. This started with our central role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR] in 1947–1948 to our work at the United Nations today¹⁰².

That statement is misleading at best and false at worse. Canada played almost no role in the drafting of the UDHR, and for the most part ignored the UN's human rights efforts until the late 1960s. A Canadian, however, by the name of John Humphrey, was the main author of the UDHR, and from 1947 until 1966 headed the small UN human rights department. He was not a seconded Canadian diplomat, nor did his appointment result from Canadian government efforts on his behalf. Canada was in fact the only Western country to abstain in the first UN vote on the adoption of the UDHR, a

¹⁰¹ Vucetic, p. 518.

¹⁰² Global Affairs Canada, “Canada's approach to advancing human rights,” http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/advancing_rights-promouvoir_droits.aspx?lang%eng.

decision it hastily rectified when it was placed alongside the Soviet Union and its allies, as well as Saudi Arabia¹⁰³.

The promotion of human rights still found its way into the stated foreign policy priorities of successive Canadian governments from the 1980s onwards, different governments paid different levels of attention to human rights in practice. Conservative government from 2006 to 2015 was rather hostile towards the broad UN human rights agenda and focused narrowly on using the UN to criticize a select few countries (e.g., Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela). It also disparaged the UN's independent human rights experts when they sought to criticize any aspect of Canadian policy, like the treatment of indigenous people, and refused to sign important new UN human rights treaties. Also, both Liberal and Conservative governments have consistently refused, like the US, to ratify the OAS regional human rights treaty (the American Convention on Human Rights)¹⁰⁴.

Other countries traditionally cited as reliable proponents of liberal internationalism, including Denmark and the Netherlands, have likewise not always been consistent and enthusiastic supporters of global human rights, even as they have maintained a commitment to promoting a rules-based international order¹⁰⁵. However, a weakening of Western power does not necessarily entail a weakening of the global human rights regime, because that regime has had many props, not all of them Western or even "liberal." The active participation of non-Western countries in the adoption of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is well-documented¹⁰⁶, or the 1948 Genocide Convention (Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide), where Western powers, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Belgium, France, and others sought to either forestall debate on the convention or, if that didn't work, adopt a weaker draft. The colonial powers feared the potential scope of the convention might extend to both historical and current colonial practices, and the US was wary of any new

¹⁰³ Schabas, William A., "Canada and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *McGill Law Journal* 43, no. 2 (1998): p. 403–41.

¹⁰⁴ Petrusek, David, "Human rights in Conservative Party foreign policy, 2006–15," *Canadian Yearbook of Human Rights* 1, no. 1 (2015): p. 7–18.

¹⁰⁵ Baehr, Peter R., "Trials and errors: The Netherlands and human rights," in David P. Forsythe, ed., *Human Rights and Comparative Foreign Policy* (New York: United Nations University Press, 2000), 49–86. Lawler, Peter, "Janus-faced solidarity: Danish internationalism reconsidered," *Cooperation and Conflict: Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association* 42, no. 1 (2007): p. 101–26.

¹⁰⁶ Waltz, Susan, "Universalizing human rights: The role of small states in the construction of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *Human Rights Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2001): p. 44–72.

international penal jurisdiction. It was eventually adopted in December 1948 with the support of countries including Pakistan, Egypt, China, Iran, Venezuela, and other Latin American countries¹⁰⁷.

Numerous non-Western countries routinely do support and vote in favour of country-specific resolutions in both the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. In recent years, resolutions sanctioning the human rights record in Iran, Syria, North Korea, South Sudan, and Myanmar have been passed with considerable (and in some cases, overwhelming) non-Western support, from all major world regions¹⁰⁸. Additionally, in regional organizations, states have acted to sanction the human rights record of states within the region. In the African Union (AU), numerous resolutions have been passed condemning human rights abuses in specific countries, including Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, the Gambia, Eritrea, Central African Republic, Libya, and Togo¹⁰⁹.

But the (rightly) notorious cases of Security Council inaction obscure the many cases where the council has acted on human rights issues. Russian and Chinese obstructionism in the Security Council is routinely cited, and it is true they have blocked important efforts to end widespread human rights abuse in Syria, Myanmar, and elsewhere. If there were a waning commitment to global human rights in a post-Western world order, one would expect to see waning interest in signing and ratifying international treaties, regardless of how impactful that action might be. Indeed, a clear indicator for a weakened commitment might be whether states are withdrawing from international human rights agreements.

If the analysis is correct, the question for middle power countries, such as Canada, is how to shape and advance a new human rights agenda, better attuned to a new global politics. If the rise of new powers is unlikely to end global concern for human rights, it will certainly impact the way human rights are discussed and acted on in global forums like the UN¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁷ Irvin-Erickson, Douglas, *Raphael Lemkin and the Concept of Genocide*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press (2017): p. 152–97.

¹⁰⁸ Petrasek, p. 109.

¹⁰⁹ Petrasek, p. 109-10.

¹¹⁰ Universal Rights Group, "China rising: A review of the 37th session of the UN Human Rights Council," URG Blog, 9 April 2018, <http://www.universal-rights.org/blog/china-rising-review-37th-session-un-human-rights-council/> (accessed 10 September 2018).

One clear opportunity for countries like Canada is to take economic and social rights more seriously. Canada and other key middle powers have ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and often support UN initiatives on these rights. Pushing to increase attention to, and meaningful action on, these rights need not imply a downgrading of support for, attention to, civil and political rights. Indeed, properly understood, rights are indivisible, and the Cold War categorization of rights often makes little sense¹¹¹.

Thus, the right to education is of crucial importance to the effective exercise of a range of civil and political liberties, including a free press, political participation, and free expression. Likewise, focusing on girls' education not only fulfils that right, but is part of broader gender equality efforts. Rights to water and adequate housing are increasingly being cited as essential to rights to security and indeed the right to life itself.

5.4 Developmental Aid and the Feminist Agenda

Canada and other middle powers do support many economic and social rights initiatives already. The challenge for Canada is to do so in ways that go beyond development aid programming and show real support for the legal protection and accountability aspects of these rights in the same way that is routinely done for civil and political rights¹¹². It can start by revisiting its aid to one of the most crucial actors of the Arab Spring – Egypt.

Since 1993, Canada dedicated a \$150 to \$200 million budget over ten years to be invested on “(a) improving the economic conditions of women by supporting the development of small and medium enterprises (SMES); (b) supporting and improving basic education and human resource development for women and girls; and (c) funding projects that helped build synergy between (a)

¹¹¹ Petrasek, p. 115-16.

¹¹² Alston, Philip, “Phantom rights: The systematic marginalization of economic and social rights,” OpenGlobalRights, 4 August 2016, <https://www.openglobalrights.org/phantom-rights-systemic-marginalization-of-economic-and-social-rights>.

and (b)”¹¹³. Canada’s aim was to adhere to an all-encompassing approach to gender equality as a component of its bilateral relations; however, Egypt’s undemocratic approach to its own citizenry, held it back from enacting fairly with its female population, as depicted with the state-driven efforts to introduce women to the workforce, yet not recognizing that they are underpaid¹¹⁴.

Canada was still instrumental in supporting impactful changes in Egypt’s legal system, like the 2005 child custody law that was more gender-equal, prison sentences for men who failed to pay alimony, reversing a law that required a woman to attain her husband’s consent to travel, and amending the pension law that allowed “men to receive the pension of their deceased wives”¹¹⁵. These laws were spearheaded by Hosni Mubarak’s wife Suzanne under the National Council for Women that she led from 2000-2012. Because of the regime’s direct involvement, Egyptians were wary and believed that the only feminism that would be tolerated would be “state feminism”¹¹⁶.

In 2007, Canada, along with seven international partners, was credited with helping Egypt to introduce a prohibition “on the personal connections that had inspired gender equality for projects for the previous decade”; however, this was short-lived with the arrival of the Conservative government under Stephen Harper. By 2011, project officers working on the ‘Egypt Country Program’ dropped from three project officers and a program manager in 2007 to one officer and one manager whose file was not dedicated to Egypt¹¹⁷. In 2011, Canada drastically decreased its aid to Egypt to virtually no support in the sum of \$1 million for all aid to Egypt per annum. As a result, three major projects totaling over \$90 million that were originally initiated in 2001 were dropped:

- Over \$27.5 million to strengthen the livelihoods, economic opportunities, and income levels of women through support to SMES;

¹¹³ Abu-Zahra, Nadia, Ruby Dagher, Nicole Brandt, and Khalid Suliman, "The Gendered Politics of Deceit in Egypt: The Instrumentalization of Women's Rights for an International Geostrategic Agenda", Eds. Rebecca Tiessen and Stephen Baranyi, *Obligations and Omissions - Canada's Ambiguous Actions on Gender Equality*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press (2017): p. 213.

¹¹⁴ Abu-Zahra, p. 213.

¹¹⁵ Dawoud, 2012.

¹¹⁶ Abu-Zahra, p. 215.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 217.

- Over \$12.5 million for civil society groups and government intuitions to help improve the legal, policy, and societal norms related to gender; and,
- Over \$50 million related to the education of children and youth, with a significant emphasis on women and girls¹¹⁸.

Supporting economic rights will naturally lead to political and social rights. The security that comes from economic development is one of the main calls of the Arab Spring demonstrators. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer many opportunities for advancing women's rights, legal empowerment, tenure and land security rights, and on many other issues. Canada could push for greater attention to the human rights aspects of the SDGs in the existing reporting procedure the goals establish, but also in other venues, like the Human Rights Council¹¹⁹. There have been previous attempts to reform the treaty body system, and to rationalize the work of the Human Rights Council. There is a real opportunity for Canada and other like-minded countries to develop reform proposals that will both strengthen and rationalize the system and then build a coalition of states to get them adopted. This should include significant new funding.

Finally, there is an opportunity for Canada and other middle powers to work with developing countries in defining and agreeing upon measures to address new human rights challenges, including climate change, food and water insecurity, and the impacts of new technologies. The international human rights regime faces many threats; obviously, there are no grounds for complacency. But the assumption that declining Western power will necessarily spell the demise of that regime is unwarranted. Universal human rights hold the promise of global standards of dignity, equality, and freedom¹²⁰.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 217.

¹¹⁹ Abu-Zahra, p. 217.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 217.

5.5 Middle Powers and Liberal Internationalism

Skeptics may still refute the arguments made, asserting that liberal world order has many reasons to worry, starting with a US President whose transactional approach to international relations undermines and hinders international cooperation in key areas, while his disdain for conventional forms of diplomacy has called the solidity of transatlantic relations into question¹²¹. As trade wars escalate, and the US's abdication of global leadership is matched by the growing strength and global assertiveness of illiberal powers such as China and Russia, the world turns to Europe where the rise of nationalism and populism are shaking the foundations and cohesion of the EU. Hungary and Poland's "illiberal democracies" are pushing the boundaries of what is acceptable in European politics, and once-fringe ideas have moved from the extreme right to become part of mainstream politics, as seen most clearly in the rise of anti-immigration sentiments across the continent.

On a global scale, the prospects for liberal politics seem equally dire. Worldwide, democracy is in decline, its basic tenets of freedom of the press, guarantees of free and fair elections, minority rights, and the rule of law under siege¹²². Yet, while there is ample evidence that the institutions, values, and practices that have governed global politics since the Second World War may no longer be taken for granted, the liberal international order is far from dead. In Canada, the government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has confidently restated its commitment to liberal internationalism. President Emmanuel Macron of France has issued a strong defence of multilateralism, as has Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel, and the foreign policies of the Nordic countries still emphasize support for rules-based international cooperation. Canada, the Nordic countries, and a handful of other European states have advanced what is often called "middle power liberal internationalism," and asks to what extent their investment in a rules-bound world order may constitute a pivotal factor in its continuation and reconstitution.¹²³

¹²¹ Abrahamsen, p. 6.

¹²² "Democracy in crisis: Freedom House releases Freedom in the World 2018," Freedom House, 16 January 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/article/democracy-crisis-freedom-house-releases-freedomworld-2018>.

¹²³ Nossal, Kim Richard, "The Liberal Past in the Conservative Present: Internationalism in the Harper Era", in Heather A. Smith and Claire Turenne Sjolander, eds., *Canada in the World: Internationalism in Canadian Foreign Policy*, Don Mills: Oxford University Press (2013): p. S21–35.

The focus here is primarily on how contemporary changes in world politics affect the viability and future direction of liberal internationalism. Small and middle powers are often seen as the main defenders and beneficiaries of a rule-governed, multilateral world order. As such they provide a useful prism for exploring the durability and adaptability of liberal internationalism in the face of hegemonic withdrawal¹²⁴.

Current pressures on the liberal world order cannot be separated from domestic changes within the traditional supporters of liberal internationalism. A case in point is the increased resistance among key voter groups—including in Canada and the Nordic countries—to ever-closer global integration. Middle power liberal internationalism is seen to have developed on the margins of Cold War politics and scholarship and has predominantly been used to describe the foreign policies of the Nordic states of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, as well as the Netherlands and Canada¹²⁵. Internationalism is commonly regarded as a key characteristic of Canadian foreign policy.

Middle power support for liberal internationalism also has to take account of the fact that historical progress towards a more just and equal world order has frequently resulted from prolonged pressure from the Global South and despite Western resistance¹²⁶. In addition, the types of support and investment that middle powers offer to the very bedrock of liberal internationalism—multilateral institutions—have changed considerably. In the 1980s and 1990s, organizations such as the UNDP, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) were supported through core, united funding, but over time there has been a gradual shift to a much stronger reliance on voluntary, earmarked funding. This has reduced the autonomy of these institutions to act as international public actors and has in turn contributed to their image in the Global South as tools of rich countries, employed to buy political influence¹²⁷.

¹²⁴ Abrahamsen, p. 7.

¹²⁵ Lawler, Peter, "The 'good state' debate in international relations," *International Politics* 50, no. 1 (2013): p. 18–37.

¹²⁶ Mazower, Mark, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, (2009).

¹²⁷ Lall, Ranjit, "Beyond institutional design: Explaining the performance of international organizations," *International Organization* 71, no. 2 (2017): p. 245–280; Ole Jacob Sending, "The international civil servant," *International Political Sociology* 8, no. 3 (2014): p. 338–40.

From the perspective of many countries in the Global South, however, these rules are not so much liberal as profoundly hierarchical and unequal. While the current global order has sustained institutions like the UN General Assembly the paradoxical nature of the UN as a halfway house between the national and the global, dominated by the great powers of 1945. The inherent tensions and limitations of the UN system currently manifest in more explicit ways than before, in large part due to the efforts of emerging powers, most notably China, to wield their influence and reshape global norms through multilateral organizations¹²⁸. The contemporary challenges to the liberal world order do not emerge only or primarily from the rise of China and the Global South, or from the aggressive and subversive policies of Russia, but also from within the Western core in the form of populist and nationalist ideologies. The rise of nationalist populism and far-right movements is fuelled by a profound sense of exclusion and marginalization among large sections of the population in the industrialized West, and the main culprit of their misfortunes is perceived to be “globalism,” or what we here refer to as liberal internationalism¹²⁹.

The liberal world order has not come to an end. But in a period of rising populism, nationalism, and authoritarianism, as well as growing protectionism, much of what is worth admiring and valuing about world politics since 1945 is at greater risk than it has been for many years. Current debates should not therefore adopt an unconditional defence of the status quo, but instead ask what elements of the liberal world order should be preserved, what should be dismissed, and what should be reformed¹³⁰.

5.6 Multilateralist Allies and Multilateral Institutions

Finally, there is a paradox at the heart of debates about the rise of nationalist and illiberal policies and the role of multilateral institutions: multilateral institutions are presented as the very culprit of the globalization that these political groups challenge. The problem for proponents of liberal

¹²⁸ Cooley, Alexander, “Countering democratic norms,” *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 3 (2015): p. 49–63.

¹²⁹ Abrahamsen, p. 11-12.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 13.

internationalism is to counter these perceptions with solid arguments and evidence that, in fact, these institutions can augment rather than shrink policy space¹³¹.

It also requires a critical look at how the institutions can be reformed to better embody and practise liberal internationalism, thus charting a feasible strategy for addressing global challenges that resonates with national publics and not only internationally orientated elites. With the world order being in flux, the shape of things to come, however, remains anybody's guess. The emerging order could be multipolar or bipolar or end up taking on new and unforeseen forms of multi-order, multiplex, networked arrangements that defy easy categorization¹³².

Liberal internationalists have forgotten the pragmatic, even realist, roots of the rules-based world order that has the UN at its centre. If liberal internationalism is to be sustained in the coming order, it must be in a revised form that brings out and revitalizes pragmatism and the will to compromise as a key element in international affairs. And at its core, the UN is, and has always been, a paradoxical creature. It celebrates the sovereign equality of all its members, yet five great powers have been granted a special responsibility for policing the world and maintaining international peace and security. And, the UN promises to combine all efforts to accomplish the aims of the organization, yet its institutional structures promote a fragmented approach to problem-solving. The tensions that spring from this have left the organization vulnerable to criticism from every corner of the political spectrum. The inconsistencies are, however, neither a flaw in the design, nor the main source of the UN's perpetual crisis. On the contrary, they have proven to provide a surprisingly solid foundation for sustained international cooperation in replacement of the failed idealism of the League of Nations. The fact that the UN—despite recurrent crises and severe setbacks—has endured as an organization for more than 70 years is testimony to the longevity of its paradoxical construction¹³³.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 13-14.

¹³² Flockhart, Trine, "The coming multi-order world," *Contemporary Security Policy* 37, no. 1 (2016): p 3–30; Francois Heisbourg, "War and peace after the age of liberal globalisation," *Survival* 60, no. 1, (2018).

¹³³ Andersen, p. 50.

By establishing the Secretariat as a principal organ of the UN, the founding fathers ensured that the UN would have a life of its own via its permanent staff: an international civil service with a (very limited) space for autonomous action. The independent role and global responsibilities of the UN Secretariat rests on Article 99, which authorizes the secretary-general to bring to the attention of the Security Council “any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security¹³⁴”.

Today, the role of the Secretariat underlines that the UN-based order, despite its adherence to state sovereignty. The innovative deployment of UN peacekeepers helped keep the Cold War cold in the Middle East, and behind the scenes, shifting secretary-generals worked as mediators between the rivalling superpowers during periods of intense conflict, including most notably the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. UN also stood at the centre of formulating universal human rights and fostering international standards and cooperation on a range of “technical” issues, from aviation and agricultural development to tourism and telecommunication¹³⁵. When international organizations “work,” they do so not by forcing state leaders to renege on or act against core national interests, but by enabling a broader and longer-term calculus of what constitutes national interests and how best to advance them. At the same time, studies of international organizations have shown that once established, international organizations tend to evolve in manners beyond the control of any single state or even group of states¹³⁶.

IR scholars of both realist and liberal persuasions now widely concur that the end of the Cold War spurred a “surge of liberal triumphalism,” which planted “the seeds of the crisis.”¹³⁷ Freed from the geopolitical constraints of bipolarity, liberal internationalism was transformed into an unsound and unsustainable form of liberal imposition that involved “knowing what is best for others” and acting forcefully to “secure the proper conditions for real freedom”¹³⁸.

¹³⁴ Sending, Ole Jacob, “The international civil servant,” *International Political Sociology* 3, no. 8 (2014): p. 338–340.

¹³⁵ Andersen, p. 53-54.

¹³⁶ Barnett, M. and M. Finnemore, “The politics, power, and pathologies of international organizations,” *International Organization* 53, no. 4 (1999): p. 699–732.

¹³⁷ Ikenberry, G. John, “The end of liberal international order?” *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018): p. 18.

¹³⁸ Georg Sørensen, “Liberalism of restraint and liberalism of imposition: Liberal values and world order in the new millennium,” *International Relations* 20, no. 3 (2006): p. 251–72.

While there is much validity to this notion of liberal hubris, the narrative becomes more nuanced when viewed through the UN prism. From this perspective emerge two distinct yet related paradoxes: Firstly, that the UN served to both enable and constrain liberal overreach in the post-Cold War period. Secondly, that the UN itself was both marginalized and transformed in the unipolar moment. The lofty rhetoric of emancipatory, transformative, liberal peacebuilding of the 1990s has been replaced by a more pragmatic/realist concern with stabilization and containment the current crisis of liberal internationalism extends well beyond the crisis of liberal peacebuilding¹³⁹. The disconnect between a globalized elite and national populations that feel left behind is now jeopardizing the social contract of consolidated democracies. Impressed by the “revenge of the deplorables”¹⁴⁰ reflective liberal scholars and practitioners are now conceding that “the liberal order is rigged,” and that they did not pay enough attention as capitalism hijacked globalization. Economic elites designed international institutions to serve their own interests and to create firmer links between themselves and governments. Ordinary people were left out. The time has come to acknowledge this reality and push for policies that can save the liberal order before it is too late¹⁴¹.

Valid as this may be, the UN has played only a circumspect role in advancing “hyper-globalization”¹⁴². The UN did not pave the way for what historical sociologist Michael Mann refers to as “the Great Neoliberal Recession of 2008”¹⁴³. The agenda of liberalizing trade and financial markets, and the associated privatization and outsourcing of public services, was promoted, supported, and enabled through less universal, more Western dominated institutions such as the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF, the OECD, the EU. By virtue of its curious mix of universal membership, great power control, and international bureaucracy, the UN remains a unique forum for the never-ending political negotiations, contestations, and innovations over what qualify as legitimate international norms and practices. It is thus no coincidence that Donald

¹³⁹ Debiel, Tobias, Thomas Held, and Ulrich Schneckener, *Peacebuilding in Crisis: Rethinking Paradigms and Practices of Transnational Cooperation*, London and New York: Routledge (2016).

¹⁴⁰ Economist Intelligence Unit, “Democracy index 2016: The revenge of the deplorables,” *The Economist*, 31 May 2017, <http://www.eiuperspectives.economist.com/economic-development/revenge-deplorables/white-paper/eius-2016-democracy-index?redirect%TRUE> (accessed 4 February 2019).

¹⁴¹ Colgan, Jeff D. and Robert O. Keohane, “The liberal order is rigged: Fix it now or watch it wither,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2017-04-17/liberal-order-rigged>.

¹⁴² Rodrik, Dani, “Populism and the economics of globalization,” *Journal of International Business Policy* 1 (2018): p. 12–33.

¹⁴³ Mann, Michael, *The Sources of Social Power, vol. 4: Globalizations, 1945–2011*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2013): p. 322–361.

Trump—despite his administration’s disdain for the UN—has twice utilized the General Assembly to present and explain his rejection of “the ideology of globalism,” and his embrace of “the doctrine of patriotism”¹⁴⁴.

The aim in 1945 was not to create a world government capable of delivering global public goods to all, but “merely” to create a political space, or arena would enable sovereign states, including notably the great powers, to solve their differences peacefully and find common solutions to shared problems. Promoting this old-fashioned, pragmatic, and compromise-seeking version of liberal internationalism may offer middle powers a strategy for stabilizing the transition from one form of order to another—ensuring that it proceeds in an orderly fashion, without provoking war between them¹⁴⁵.

This reasoning prominently underpins recent German efforts to build an “alliance of multilateralists.” Centred around Japan, South Korea, and Canada, and with invitations extended to countries such as Mexico, Australia, South Africa, Argentina, and Norway, the initiative cuts across conventional North/South divisions and aims to also engage smaller states, especially in Asia, that may find it “even more difficult than [middle powers] to make their voice heard.”¹⁴⁶ Notably, the initiative does not envision the establishment of new international institutions, but rather a commitment to assume responsibility—financially and politically—for upholding and further developing existing rules and organizations, including in particular the UN. In the words of German chancellor Angela Merkel, “institutions can easily be destroyed – but building them up is incredibly difficult”¹⁴⁷.

Emphasizing negotiated rather than imposed solutions, and the importance of dialogue and compromise in politics and diplomacy, opens a space for a more pluralist and inclusive approach to global governance and international rulemaking. While this will not sustain the liberal order of the

¹⁴⁴ Andersen, p. 61-62.

¹⁴⁵ Andersen, p. 61-62.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 62-63.

¹⁴⁷ Federal Chancellor, “Speech by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel at the opening of the Paris Peace Forum on 11 November 2018,” <https://m.bundeskanzlerin.de/bkinm-en/news/speech-byfederal-chancellor-angela-merkel-at-the-opening-of-the-paris-peace-forum-on-11-november-2018-1549780> (accessed 4 February 2019).

post-Cold War era, it will surely be necessary to stabilize the transition from a US-led order to a post-Western world.

6.0 Conclusion

In 1957, Canada's then-Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson won the Nobel Peace Prize for resolving the Suez Canal Crisis, providing a defining moment for Canada's first direct involvement in the Middle East and the use of its middle power status to avert a regional calamity with the support of multilateral forums. Canada became regarded by developing nations as a prime example of a rising star, autonomous, and willing to push as far as possible for international security and stability. Regardless of which party is in power, Canadian governments, whether Conservative or Liberal, tend to display similar foreign policy approaches, with the occasional government being an outlier by ignoring the conventional wisdom of previous administrations and possibly cementing a weaker foreign policy method for future generations.

There is only so much that Canada and other middle powers can do in terms of influencing the politics of the Middle Eastern region without the support of a superpower. At the crux of what afflicts the Middle East is much needed economic and political reforms, followed by an accountability by the regional powers. If these states are as invested in their economic and security postures as well as the welfare of *everyone* within their border, then maybe it is possible to outside actors start the discussion for an "exploratory approach to cooperative security"¹⁴⁸.

When I initially started my research on this topic, I naively believed that Canada stood by what it said. To confirm that the Liberals and Conservatives do not differ much in terms of decisions is both comforting and disappointing. Canada will not need to worry about partisanship, but with certain issues, the view is.

Unless Canada plans to practice what it preaches, neither it nor any similar-minded Western liberal democracy can do much to make a difference in the Middle East. The fact that government after

¹⁴⁸ Jones, Peter. "Towards a Regional Security Regime for the Middle East". Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, October 2011, p. 14.

government, Liberal and Conservative, did not consider or implement any changes to the weapons exports permits is indicative of short-sightedness. When Canada sells arms to Saudi Arabia, a known human rights violator where to this day, it executes people for witchcraft, it begs the question: has Canada lost its way¹⁴⁹? Securing thousands of jobs for Canadians is a boon to the economy and a great thing for its development, but is it morally acceptable given the image of a good Canada projects to the world? Canada, like its like-minded allies, should strive to push for the right to an education for women and girls in the Middle East. Should it wish to further empower them, dedicate aid that allows them to be fiscally responsible and self-reliant; thus, minimizing the need to rely on a male, and perpetuate the cycle of early marriages.

It is possible that middle powers like Canada fueled by its values-based foreign policy, can look towards other allies to influence change in an unstable region for the sake of global security. Canada, however, needs to find incentive to exert its energy in the region. Thus far, Ottawa will use the rhetoric expected when addressing issues from the Middle East, but it will not go beyond words and platitudes. In a world where superpowers are adversarial, and the US is behaving erratically under the Trump administration, the best option for those who would like to see the Middle East evolve and progress, is to bide their time and wait to see what was planted during the Arab Spring.

¹⁴⁹ Jacobs, Ryan, "Saudi Arabia's War on Witchcraft", The Atlantic, 19 August 2013, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/saudi-arabias-war-on-witchcraft/278701/>.

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