Canada in a Unipolar World: New Directions for Canadian Foreign Policy?

CALL FOR CONFERENCE PAPERS

Proposals Due: 1 May 2011

Introduction

The Center for the Study of Canada at State University of New York College at Plattsburgh, in partnership with Fulbright Canada and Canadian Foreign Policy Journal (CFPJ), are pleased to convene an international scholarly conference to examine and assess the relationship between the conduct of Canadian foreign policy and the changing international political system. The conference, titled Canada in a Unipolar World: New Directions for Canadian Foreign Policy?, will be held at the High Peaks Resort in Lake Placid, New York, from October 13 to 15, 2011. Dr. Christopher Kirkey, Director of the Center for the Study of Canada, and Dr. Michael Hawes, Executive Director of Fulbright Canada, will serve as the conference coordinators. We invite submissions from junior academics, doctoral candidates and established scholars as well as practitioners. The deadline for proposals is May 1, 2011.

Background

The most striking and significant characteristic of our current international political system is its fundamental anarchic nature. In sum, the world lacks an overarching central authority or what is often referred to as a common interstate government. Within our anarchic international political system, material resources and capabilities are distributed unevenly (often in a decidedly asymmetric fashion), with some states having more military, economic, and political assets than others. The distribution of capabilities in the international political system has over time resulted in three particular configurations: multipolarity, with three or more great powers (1648–1945); bipolarity, featuring two great powers (1945–1991); and unipolarity, with the United States as the sole great power (the state of the system since 1991), which may in fact be something of a fragmented unipolar model. Each of these configurations has had an important impact on the foreign policy behavior of states. The number of
great powers present at any given time serves to create discernible constraints and opportunities for states. States, in turn, formulate and conduct foreign policy in accordance with “differently structured international-political systems.”

The conduct of Canadian foreign policy since 1991 needs to be understood in terms of the unipolar moment, as well as in the context of an increasingly complex and complicated international order. What are the implications for Canada of this unipolar world? Scholarly accounts of Canadian foreign policy behavior in the post-1991 period have to date overwhelmingly been rooted in decidedly domestic analysis – i.e., they hold that internal, state-level factors specific to Canada produce and explain Ottawa’s external political actions. The seemingly divergent foreign policy pursuits of Liberal governments led by Prime Ministers Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin (characterized principally as following a human security agenda reliant on “soft power”) and the Conservative government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper (with a dominant emphasis on defense and security supported by hard military capabilities) are explained by reference to domestic factors. The international system – namely, the context in which this behavior takes place – is seen to be an outcome of domestic political and economic realities, as opposed to a contributing factor in determining policy behavior.

Conference Focus

This conference, Canada in a Unipolar World: New Directions for Canadian Foreign Policy?, expressly seeks to analytically assess how significant changes in the international political system have impacted Canada’s foreign policy goals, priorities and actions. This conference will specifically consider what effects a profound structural shift – from the post-World War II international political system, featuring only two great powers (the bipolar Cold War period of 1945-1991, headed by the United States and the Soviet Union, nations that during this time dominated the initiation and scope of diplomatic and military actions by their respective allies), to a system that today is considered unipolar (with the United States currently recognized as the sole great power) – has created in crafting and implementing foreign policy initiatives for Canada. At the same time, we are interested in the corresponding (or, perhaps, conflicting) implications of the rise of other state and non-state actors.

The focus of the conference is designed to address a wide range of issues, including:

- the theoretical implications and the practical realities of a unipolar system and how it affects Canadian foreign policy;
- how the current unipolar system differs from the bipolar order, specifically in terms of the constraints and incentives that impacted the conduct of Canadian foreign policy;
- how unipolarity impacts on Canada’s international engagement with a variety of actors including states (e.g., the United States, Afghanistan, Haiti, China), international organizations (e.g., the United Nations, G-8, G-20, the OAS, the Commonwealth, La Francophonie and APEC), non-governmental organizations and alliances (e.g., NATO, NORAD);
- how the unipolar system impacts on Canada’s foreign policy initiatives in key world regions including, in no particular order: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, the North and the Middle East;
- how the unipolar system impacts Canadian foreign policy efforts on key international issues including climate change, security, development and human rights;

---

o how the unipolar system impacts Canada’s commercial (trade and investment) focus in the world; and,
o which foreign policy instruments (military, economic or diplomatic) are most likely to advance Canadian foreign policy interests in a unipolar world.

Conference Participation, Timing and Results

If you are interested in submitting a proposal for the conference, please electronically forward an abstract not to exceed 300 words (explaining the theoretical approach/empirical evidence to be examined), proposed title and current vitae to the conference coordinators (kirkeycj@plattsburgh.edu and mhaynes@fulbright.ca) no later than May 1, 2011. All submissions will be examined by a peer review panel and individuals will be contacted no later than May 15, 2011 regarding their submission. Accepted contributors will be provided with detailed writing guidelines (length, format, footnote/reference style requirements, etc). A maximum of 15 proposals will be accepted for the conference.

Confirmed participants will be required to submit their draft contributions by September 1, 2011. Manuscripts will then be forwarded to a senior scholar who will prepare a review of each paper to be presented at the conference. Five senior Canadian foreign policy/international relations scholars will each be assigned three conference papers. These scholars, grouped into five panels, will then introduce each paper and present the following:

o a summary of the key issues, findings, theoretical approach and empirical evidence of each paper; and
o substantive areas that the paper needs to take into consideration during the revision process.

Contributors will be provided an opportunity to respond to the commentary offered by the senior scholar and the floor will then be opened to general discussion from all conference participants (who will have received all of the conference papers in advance of arriving in Lake Placid), the purpose of which is to provide general and specific direction in the course of revising manuscripts.

In late October 2011, contributors will be provided with a formal written commentary/analysis of their contribution, reflecting the views and requested edits of the senior scholar as well as those of the conference coordinators, Drs. Kirkey & Hawes. Contributors will have until January 31, 2012 to undertake any requested revisions and to electronically re-submit their papers. Selected proceedings from the conference will be edited (by Kirkey & Hawes) and published as a special issue of the journal Canadian Foreign Policy Journal in 2012. Edited proceedings from the conference will form the basis of a book manuscript (co-editors Kirkey & Hawes).

Conference Support for Participants

To facilitate involvement in this project, The Center for the Study of Canada and Fulbright Canada are pleased to be able to provide conference participants the following support:

o an opening evening reception on October 13, 2011;
o full breakfast, breaks, lunch and dinner, October 14, 2011;
- lodging for two nights (arrival October 13 and departure on the morning of October 15) at the High Peaks Resort in Lake Placid; and
- a full breakfast on October 15.

Selected participants are also eligible for an honorarium of $500 to help offset travel expenses. Should you indeed require travel support, please indicate so when you submit your proposal.

We trust that you will agree that this is an exciting initiative, one which will lead to a special issue of Canadian Foreign Policy Journal and a significant new book. We encourage you to contact us with any inquiries you may have. We look forward to receiving your proposal!

**Canadian Foreign Policy Journal**

*Canadian Foreign Policy Journal (CFPJ)* is a fully peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal published three times a year by the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs (NPSIA) at Carleton University, in Ottawa, Canada. Established in 1992, *CFPJ* is now Canada’s leading journal of international affairs.

The Journal’s international advisory and editorial boards reflect diverse political, disciplinary and professional perspectives. Contributors are drawn from Canada and around the world. Essays are fully referenced, peer-reviewed, authoritative yet written for the specialist and non-specialist alike. Our readers include government officials, academics, students of international affairs, journalists, NGOs, and the private sector. We welcome your submission.