Canada's Two Europes: Brexit and the Prospect of Competing Transatlantic Relationships

Achim Hurrelmann, Carleton University

1. Introduction

For the past five decades, Canada's relationship to Europe has been based on two main pillars: collective security through membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and economic cooperation through bilateral agreements with the European Communities (EC) and later the European Union (EU). In the context of each pillar, Canada's link to the United Kingdom (UK) has been fundamental. To this date, the UK remains Canada's most trusted partner in Europe – its main ally in the field of security, preferred intermediary when dealing with the EU politically, and principal entry point into the Single Market. Brexit will bring an end to this established pattern of interaction; it will create the need for Canada to forge separate economic, political and perhaps even security relationships with the UK and with the EU27.

This chapter assesses the impact that the "Leave" vote and the Brexit process have had on Canadian perceptions of the EU. It develops its argument in three main steps: First, it retraces the development of Canada's relationship to Europe since the Second World War (Section 2). This discussion shows how Canada's involvement with Europe reflects the country's history as a part

of the British Empire, in addition to being shaped by attempts to counterbalance the influence of the United States (US). In a second step, the chapter discusses how this peculiar relationship to Europe has affected Canadian views of European integration (Section 3). Building on this volume's distinction between exogenous (EU-related), endogenous (Canada-related) and global influences on external perceptions of the EU, it argues that Canadian assessments of the EU have depended less on EU policies or activities than on endogenous and global factors. In a third step, Brexit is incorporated into this analysis (Sections 4-5). The analysis presented in this chapter focuses on discursive contributions by Canadian politicians, which highlight the role that Brexit has played in Canadian party politics.

As debates on Brexit are ongoing, both in Europe and in Canada, and it is unclear which form Brexit will take (for instance, whether a "soft" or a "hard" Brexit will be realized), it is too early to draw definitive conclusions on how Brexit will reconfigure Canadian perceptions of the EU. The analysis in this chapter suggests, however, that Canada-Europe relations post-Brexit could become increasingly politicized, with links to the UK and to the EU27 being pitted against each other. In this respect, emerging fault lines run between Canada's main political parties at the federal level – the traditionally multilateralist Liberals and the more UK/Commonwealth-friendly Conservatives – as well as to a lesser extent between the Francophone and the Anglophone populations. The result for Canada may be the emergence of two competing transatlantic relationships, each based on its own specific perception of the EU, whose popularity shifts based on short-term factors such as domestic election results. The chapter concludes by discussing how the EU, through its external policies, can help counteract this development.

2. Setting the context: Canada's post-war relationship with Europe

Canada established its independence as a foreign policy actor during the first half of the 20th century (Nossal et al. 2015, 138-155). While the British North America Act of 1867 formally created the country as a self-governing entity within the British Empire, Canada did not achieve external sovereignty until the passage of the Statute of Westminster in 1931. The country also built its reputation as an international actor through its participation in the First and Second World Wars. Participation in these "European" wars was controversial within Canada, especially among French Canadians. Nonetheless, it was largely with reference to the country's war efforts that Canadian foreign policy makers insisted, after 1945, that Canada should be recognized as a "middle power" in international relations that deserved a seat at the table in efforts to rebuild regional and global institutions (Nossal 2010).

With respect to the relationship with Europe, Canada participated particularly actively in the creation of NATO (Haglund 1997; Pentland 2004; Jockel and Sokolsky 2009). Initially, Canadian negotiators conceptualized the alliance as significantly more than just a defence pact. Canada was the main driving force behind Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty, sometimes called the "Canadian article", which commits NATO states to various forms of political and economic cooperation. Canada's enthusiasm for NATO stemmed from the expectation that, in addition to providing security, membership in the alliance would protect Canada's political role in international relations, by forging an institutional relationship with its Western allies, including the US, while counterbalancing excessive American influence. As Jockel and Sokolsky (2009, 317) point out, this "meant nothing less than trying to make the NATO Europeans into a substitute for Britain". What was particularly attractive, in this context, was that, in contrast to the colonial role in the British Empire, NATO membership did not threaten to sow internal

discord between English and French Canadians (Haglund 1997, 467). However, as Canadian policy makers soon came to realize, NATO never did develop a meaningful economic and political dimension. While Canada has remained strongly committed to NATO as the main pillar of its international security policy – a commitment that was recently affirmed by Canada's willingness to lead the "Enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup" in Latvia (since 2017) – it was clear that, in the economic and political fields, another institutional basis needed to be found to facilitate Canada-Europe relations, and to provide the desired counterweight to the US.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Canada's bilateral relations with the UK, now governed through the Commonwealth and its preferential trading scheme, remained paramount. Given the importance of trade with the UK, Canada's reaction "bordered on the hysterical" (Mahant 1981, 268) when the UK, in 1961, submitted its first application for membership in the EC. Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and his Conservative government heavily lobbied the UK to abandon the idea of EC membership, which would have meant the end of Commonwealth trade preferences. The delays in the UK's membership – primarily due to a veto by French President Charles de Gaulle – gave Canada time to revise its position. After the Liberal Party, led by Lester B. Pearson and later by Pierre Trudeau, had regained power, the government gradually warmed to the idea that Western Europe as a whole – and the EC as its institutional embodiment – could become a privileged economic partner (Mahant 1981, 268-271; Potter 1999, 28-34).

The decision by US President Nixon in 1971 to impose a 10% tariff on imported goods provided additional impetus for this shift; it led Canada to adopt a strategy of economic diversification – labelled the "Third Option" – which combined measures of economic nationalization with a turn towards new international partners. Along with the European Commission's interest in expanding its own powers vis-à-vis the member states, this strategy

gave a decisive push to the negotiations for a Canada-EC "Framework Agreement for Commercial and Economic Cooperation" (Mahant 1981, 271-275; Pentland 1991, 127-129; Potter 1999, 34-40). After difficult negotiations – complicated *inter alia* by tensions between Canada and France that originated from Charles de Gaulle's advocacy for Quebec separatism (Black 1996) – the agreement was eventually concluded in 1976 as the first formal cooperation agreement that the EC had ever made with an industrialized country.

The policy effects of the Framework Agreement were relatively modest. It led neither to a reduction of Canada's economic dependency on the US, nor to a diversification of economic relations within Europe. The Framework Agreement did not include specific trade liberalization measures, and its consultation mechanisms proved relatively ineffective in dealing with a series of bilateral economic or political "irritants" between Canada and the EC/EU (or individual member states) that developed in the 1980s and 1990s – particularly over fisheries in the North Atlantic (Barry et al. 2014) – which often overshadowed, though never comprehensively undermined, the friendly and constructive nature of the bilateral relationship (Long 1998; Dolata-Kreutzkamp 2010).

Canada began to slowly abandon the "Third Option" in the late 1970s, and in the 1980s – under Brian Mulroney's Conservative government – fully embraced a continentalist foreign policy approach, which led to the conclusion of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (CUSFTA) in 1988 and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1992. Particularly the CUSFTA was highly contentious in Canada. While Mulroney's victory in the 1988 federal election was interpreted as a popular mandate for proceeding with the agreement, critics feared that it would expose Canada's economy and culture to overbearing US influence (Potter 1999, 51-65; Bow 2015). After the end of the Cold War had put Europe back on the

Canadian political agenda (Pentland 1991; Potter 1999, 70-91), and political power had shifted once more to the Liberal Party with the 1993 federal election, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's government attempted to address these concerns. While it had no intention of undermining NAFTA, Chrétien's government attempted to return to the traditional "counterbalancing" logic of Canadian foreign policy by embracing the idea – first flouted by Mulroney's foreign minister Joe Clark in 1990 – of a Canada-EU free trade agreement (Potter 1999, 198-218). The EU was initially opposed to pursuing bilateral trade negotiations with Canada, since it feared these would undermine the ongoing multilateral trade talks in the context of the World Trade Organization (WTO). It was not until 2009, when the failure of the WTO's Doha Round had become undeniable, that negotiations for the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) were formally launched (Deblock and Rioux 2010).

In the process of negotiating the agreement, Canada – now governed by the Conservative Party, led by Stephen Harper – once again found its most reliable European ally in the UK, with its traditionally free-trade oriented position (Hübner et al. 2017, 848-849). The Harper government de-emphasized Canada's traditional commitment to multilateralism, and instead pursued a foreign policy that more aggressively sought to promote what it defined as Canadian interests and values (Chapnick 2011; Paris 2014). This approach contributed to an intensification of Canada-EU conflicts (Dolata-Kreutzkamp 2010). These concerned bilateral issues – such as the EU's ban on seal products, the emissions classification of the Alberta oil sands in the EU's Fuel Quality Directive, or the Canadian visa requirements for citizens of Bulgaria and Romania – but also broader multilateral policies, including the EU's push for observer status in the Arctic Council (which Canada opposed), Canada's withdrawal from the Kyoto Accord (which upset the EU), and the EU's failure to support Canada's application for a UN Security Council Seat 2010.

The CETA negotiations, however, were largely shielded from these disagreements. After some delays, the agreement was signed in 2014, then partially revised in response to European pressure, and provisionally entered into force – along with a new Canada-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) that the EU had pushed for – in 2017 (Hübner et al. 2017; White 2017). CETA and SPA mark a high point of economic and political relations between Canada and the EU, a positive trajectory that was further reinforced when, in 2015, the Liberal Party under Justin Trudeau returned to power and the above-mentioned Canada-EU conflicts largely subsided.

3. **EU perceptions research in Canada: Four factors that shape dominant views**

This brief history of Canada's relationship to Europe is essential to understanding Canadian perceptions of the EU in the pre-Brexit era. Relatively little scholarly attention has been devoted to such perceptions, and only three research projects have examined them systematically: a study on parliamentary debates, government documents, public opinion, newspaper reporting, and publications from non-governmental associations between 2000 and 2009 (Croci and Tossutti 2007; 2009); a study of newspaper discourses on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome in 2007 (Gänzle and Retzlaff 2008; Retzlaff and Gänzle 2008); and a study based on a public opinion survey, print media analysis, and elite interviews conducted in 2015 as part of a comparative project funded by the European External Action Service (Chaban et al. 2018; Rayroux 2019). These studies, supplemented with information from other sources, paint a fairly consistent picture of Canadian views of European integration in the past two decades. Four fundamental determinants of these perceptions deserve to be highlighted.

The first is Canada's strong emphasis on NATO in the security pillar of the relationship, which has not weakened following the end of the Cold War (Haglund 1997; Pentland 2004; Jockel and Sokolsky 2009). It implies that the EU is overwhelmingly perceived – both by policy makers and in the broader population – as an economic, but not as a foreign and security policy actor (Croci and Tossutti 2007; 2009; Rayroux 2019). While Canadian foreign policy makers and diplomats do of course interact with the EU in the context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) – Canada has even made small contributions to selected Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions – and also work with European partners on policy-specific issues (Bendiek et al. 2018), the EU's foreign policy role has little influence on how Europe is perceived in the Canadian public. In a Eurobarometer survey conducted in February 2017, 47% of Canadian respondents mentioned the EU's "economic, industrial and trading power" as one of its two main assets – more than in any other of the eleven states included in the survey. By contrast, only 18% mentioned the EU's "ability to promote peace and democracy outside its borders" (European Commission 2017, Table Q1T). Such perceptions have complicated attempts by the EU to broaden the bilateral relationship beyond economic issues (Dolata-Kreutzkamp 2010; Rayroux 2019).

The second fundamental determinant of Canadian perceptions of the EU is the country's dependency on the US. The US is Canada's only real neighbour – but nine times its size in terms of population, twelve times its size in terms of GDP, and a trading partner that accounts for three quarters in value of Canada's merchandise exports. Since the end of the Second World War, Canadian governments have oscillated between embracing and attempting to counterbalance the resulting dependency, usually opting for some kind of combination between both approaches (Mérand and Vandemoortele 2011). The EU and its predecessor institutions have entered

Canadian public debates primarily as "instruments" that might be employed in counterbalancing strategies, especially as alternative economic partners to whom Canada's trade relations might be diversified. This has resulted in public perceptions of the EU that are overwhelmingly positive, but quite shallow in terms of their substantive foundations (Rayroux 2019, 61-66). In the above-cited Eurobarometer survey, 79% of respondents reported a positive view of the EU, slightly more than in the US (75%). However, only 14% of respondents – compared to 25% in the US – described their view of the EU as "very positive", while 65% held a "somewhat positive" view (European Commission 2017, Table Q6).

The third determinant of Canadian perceptions of the EU is the country's postcolonial relationship to the UK. The UK continues to play an important role for many Canadians' collective identities. While immigration and multiculturalism have undermined conceptions of Canada as "British North America", the connection to British cultural and political institutions remains a relevant reference point, not least as a distinguishing factor from the US (Resnick 2005). The economic importance of the UK has declined greatly over the course of the 20th century, but the UK is by far Canada's most important economic partner in the EU: In 2016, it alone accounted for 42% of Canadian merchandise exports, 37% of Canadian service exports, and 37% of Canadian Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the EU (Statistics Canada 2019). In addition to economic exchanges, political relations to the EU are also strongly dominated by British perspectives. This is due to similar political institutions and policy philosophies, but also to the fact that English-language news outlets in Canada often draw on British news agencies and London-based correspondents when reporting on Europe (Gänzle and Retzlaff 2008; Chaban et al. 2018). As a result, Canadian media reporting about the EU usually reflects British preferences for a predominantly intergovernmental EU that focuses mainly on economic cooperation.

The cultural, economic and political influence of the UK is, of course, less pronounced among the French Canadian population, especially in Quebec. However, compared to the UK link, the relationship with France – Canada's other colonial power – has left less of an imprint on Canada-EU relations. The main reason is that, especially in the 1960 and 1970s, but continuing in the following decades, the Canadian-French relationship was overshadowed by France's ambiguous position on Canada's integrity as a sovereign state (Bastien 1999; Bosher 1999). This changed fundamentally only after 2000, when Quebec separatism declined and the province's Premier Jean Charest emerged as a major advocate of CETA (Deblock and Rioux 2010). Despite the positive development of the relationship in recent years, including a good personal rapport between Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and French President Emmanuel Macron, Canada's economic links to France remain significantly weaker than those to the UK – in 2016, they accounted for no more than 9% of Canadian merchandise exports to the EU, 16% of Canadian service exports, and 2% of EU-bound FDI (Statistics Canada 2019) – and French approaches towards European integration have not developed a strong influence on popular perceptions of the EU outside of Quebec.

The fourth and final determinant of Canadian perceptions of the EU has do to with political parties and their ideologies. Control of Canada's federal government has, for the country's entire history, alternated between two main parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives (Wiseman 2016; Johnston 2017). In the period since the Second World War, the Liberal Party emerged as the dominant party, with a particularly solid base in Quebec. Its international policies are grounded in the ideas of liberal internationalism, first formulated by Lester B. Pierson in the 1950s, which emphasize multilateralism, international institutions, and respect for international law (Keating 2012; Nossal et al. 2015, 150-155). Since the 1970s, the Liberals – originally an

advocate of continentalism – have combined these ideas with economic policies that aimed at reduced dependency on the US (Christian and Campbell 1990, 68-93; Mérand and Vandemoortele 2011, 431-436). These positions have made the Liberal Party a strong proponent of Canada's membership in international organizations – including NATO – and of diversification strategies that counterbalance US influence. They have also contributed to a general sympathy for the multilateral project of European integration and to a willingness to pursue joint projects – economically, but also politically – with the EU as a partner.

The international policies of the Conservative Party, which controlled the federal government at important junctures in 1957-1963, 1984-1993 and 2006-2015, are rooted in a strong attachment to the British tradition. In the 1950s and 1960s, loyalty to the UK and the Commonwealth made the party a staunch critic of US influence, but this position shifted in the 1980s, when Prime Minister Mulroney embraced continental free trade (Christian and Campbell 1990, 150-165; Mérand and Vandemoortele 2011, 433-437; Woolstencroft 2016). For the Conservatives, this position was not perceived as being anti-British (or anti-European); rather it was rooted in an ideological preference for economic liberalization. In the 2000s, under Prime Minister Harper, relations with the US and many multilateral organizations deteriorated, but the Conservative government continued to pursue a free trade strategy and explicitly affirmed its link to the UK through a number of symbolic policies emphasizing the British monarchy (Paris 2014, 277-286). Based on these convictions, Conservatives have in the past decades also supported closer Canada-EU cooperation – in large part because the UK was a member of the EU, and as long as bilateral relations were primarily economic in nature.

In short, according to the dominant, pre-Brexit Canadian perception, the EU is (a) an *economic entity*, rather than a foreign or security policy actor; (b) not very well understood but

perceived in vaguely favourable terms because it may provide a *counterbalance to the US*; (c) conceptualized through a British lens as an *intergovernmental organization*, rather than a supranational actor; and (d) perceived as an *international partner* for Canada, especially in the economic field, by actors across the political spectrum, because it is situated at the intersection of Liberal and the Conservative foreign policy priorities. This perception of the EU is of course not universally shared, but it does describe the general tendency with which both Canadian policy makers and the interested public have approached the EU over the past decades.

How can we classify the main factors that have shaped this perception? Building on the distinction between exogenous (EU-related), endogenous (Canada-related) and global factors developed in the Introduction to this volume, one striking insight is that the EU's own policies and activities have had a relatively limited effect on Canadian perceptions. Such *exogenous factors* have sometimes been at the root of short-term "irritants" in the Canada-EU relationship, such as the controversies over fisheries, the Arctic, the Alberta oil sands, or visa reciprocity. These controversies have undoubtedly triggered debates about Canada-EU relations, but the way in which they are made sense of – and hence their impact on longer-term Canadian perceptions of the EU – has been shaped primarily by more deep-seated *endogenous factors*. These include Canada's attachment to NATO, its colonial traditions, as well as political party ideologies. In addition, Canada's dependency on its southern neighbour turns US policies into a highly relevant *global factor*, making the Americans the "elephant in the room" in almost all Canada-EU interactions. When trying to assess the impact of Brexit on perceptions of the EU in Canada, these factors have to be at the centre of our analysis.

4. Researching Canada's perceptions of the EU after Brexit: A focus on elite discourse

Unsurprisingly given the shape of Canada's European relationships, the British decision to leave the EU has resonated strongly in the Canadian public, especially when compared to other EU-related developments. At the time of writing, public debates about Brexit remain very much in flux, and it is too early to assess their impact on perceptions of the EU. According to an opinion survey published in August 2016, most Canadians see Brexit in a negative light; strong pluralities of respondents characterized it as the wrong decision for both the UK (44%) and the EU (47%), with negative effects on both the UK's and the EU's economy (57% and 55% respectively) and influence on the world stage (46% and 45%). However, when asked if Brexit was the right or the wrong decision *for Canada*, a large majority of respondents (61%) chose the "don't know" option (Ipsos Mori 2016, Tables MG1_1-3 and MG3).

In the light of this ambiguity in public opinion, the research in this chapter examines positions taken by Canadian parties and politicians in debating Brexit. This focus on political elites is informed by the discussion in the previous section, which emphasized the influence of endogenous factors on Canadian perceptions of the EU. It is particularly appropriate in a situation in which most members of the Canadian public have not yet made up their minds about the impact of Brexit, which means that attempts by opinion leaders to push the reconfiguration of public perceptions into a particular direction have the potential to be highly consequential. This chapter analyzes public statements on Brexit by representatives of Canada's two main parties, the Liberal Party (which at the time of writing forms the federal government) and the Conservative Party (which forms the official opposition); it provides a qualitative analysis of how the EU and the UK are portrayed, and which implications for the future of Canada-Europe relations can be drawn from the respective discourses.

In contrast to the ambiguous attitudes in the broader population, Canadian politicians have not hesitated taking clear positions on Brexit, which differ substantially between political parties. In line with most of the UK's Western allies, the Liberal government led by Justin Trudeau sided with British Prime Minister David Cameron and the "Remain" side in the referendum (CBC 2016). After the Brexit vote, Trudeau issued a short statement, affirming that Canada and the UK are linked by "deep historical ties and common values" and pledging that Canada would "build relations with both parties as they forge a new relationship" (Trudeau, cited in *Maclean's* 2016). Trudeau has made a firm commitment to negotiating a post-Brexit trade agreement with the UK, which he argues should be based on CETA, but could subsequently be expanded (*National Post* 2017). Yet in spite of this commitment to positive relations with the UK, he has in his public statements also alluded to the fact that he sees Canada more closely aligned with the EU27 than with the post-Brexit UK. In a press conference on during a visit to Ireland in July 2017, he expressed indirect criticism of the UK as follows:

> There are tremendous opportunities for countries like Canada and Ireland at a time where perhaps our significant allies and trading partners, in the case of the UK and US, are turning inward or at least turning in a different direction, to make the pitch that Canada and Ireland are places that are exciting and open to the world in a positive, progressive way (Trudeau, cited in *Irish Times* 2017).

In February 2017, Trudeau travelled to Strasbourg to address the European Parliament (EP) – he was the first sitting Canadian Prime Minister to do so. The occasion was the EP's ratification vote on CETA, but Trudeau went out of his way in his speech to portray the EU as much more than just an economic partner for Canada:

[O]ver the course of our historic partnership, Canada and the EU have stood side-by-side on the things that matter. Things like maintaining global security. Advancing the values of peace and justice. And ensuring our peoples' prosperity through trade and investment. We've worked together on issues like climate change, and the rights of women and girls around the world. And, ladies and gentlemen, I am confident that we will achieve tremendous things together in the years to come […]. The European Union is a truly remarkable achievement, and an unprecedented model for peaceful cooperation. Canada knows that an effective European voice on the global stage isn't just preferable – it's essential. (Trudeau 2017)

As the *New York Times* remarked in reporting on the speech, Trudeau "did not once mention Britain, the Commonwealth […] or the United States", a fact that the paper's correspondent, James Kanter, interpreted as "a subtle indication, perhaps, of the reshaping of the trans-Atlantic order, and the world itself, by the political events of 2016" (*New York Times* 2017). It certainly suggests that Brexit, along with the Trump Presidency in the US, has made Canada's current government more, rather than less, appreciative of the importance of the EU as a like-minded partner on a broad range of policy files, well beyond CETA.

On the Conservative side of the political spectrum, Brexit has triggered the opposite sentiment. During the referendum campaign, Interim Party Leader Rona Ambrose took a neutral stance, but a number of candidates in the leadership race to replace her explicitly supported the "leave" campaign. These included Deepak Obhrai, a former Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who accused the EU of "ganging up on us" in the 2010 vote for a UN Security Council seat (*Huffington Post* 2016), but also – and more significantly – Andrew Scheer, the eventual winner of the race and current party leader. In a newspaper column published three days before the referendum, Scheer presented himself as "an admirer of British political traditions", which he argued are increasingly undermined in their mother country:

Local decisions by local representatives – that's the core of the Westminster system of responsible government that we inherited from Britain. Yet that's no longer what's practised in the UK. The supremacy of Parliament – the will of the people expressed through their elected representatives – is increasingly being replaced by the dictates of EU bureaucrats in Brussels. The consequence is less self-determination, less local decision making and less economic dynamism. Britain's foreign economic relations with historic partners such as Canada are now subject to an effective veto from countries such as Romania and Bulgaria. Then there's the host of EU regulations covering everything from hair dressers to vacuum cleaners and olive oil. [...] A stronger, more independent and economically dynamic United Kingdom would not only be good for the country itself, it would also be good for Canada and the entire world. (Scheer 2016)

Since the referendum, Scheer has posted repeated Twitter messages reminding his followers of his pro-Brexit stance. He has also made a post-Brexit Canada-UK trade agreement one of his foreign policy priorities and even travelled to Britain with the explicit purpose of promoting the idea (CBC 2018). Given that no meaningful force in Canadian or British politics opposes such an agreement, these statements should mainly be seen as symbolic politics, intended to demonstrate to his own base a particular closeness to "our cousins across the pond, who […] are in a moment of generational change and newfound independence", as Scheer put it at a conservative gathering in February 2018 (CBC 2018). At the party's policy convention in August 2018, he invited British MEP Daniel Hannan, a prominent Brexiteer and supporter of closer cooperation between the "Anglosphere" countries Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the UK (CANZUK), to give a keynote lecture, and the party passed a resolution calling for closer cooperation "among CANZUK countries" (Bell and Vucetic forthcoming). All of this suggests that Scheer sees Brexit primarily as an opportunity to embrace Canada's British traditions, while he has, since becoming party leader, not made any meaningful statements on Canada-EU relations.

5. Discussion: Towards competing transatlantic relationships?

The long-term effects of party leaders' public declarations on foreign policy are, of course, not always as fundamental as one might expect when a speech is delivered. Nevertheless, the recent Europe-related discourses by Trudeau and Scheer show that Brexit has the potential to undermine the domestic political consensus that has long characterized Canada's relationship to Europe. The statements examined in the preceding section indicates a significant *politicization of Canada-Europe relations*. This is true in two senses. First, while relations to the EU have thus far been perceived by both parties as predominantly economic in nature, it is noteworthy that both Trudeau and Scheer emphasize political considerations and assessments. Second, their statements raise the prospect that each of Canada's main parties might embrace a different one of two European relationships, which are – explicitly or implicitly – conceived as competing. This implies that the long-standing functional distinction between the two pillars of Canada's European relationship – security-Europe (via NATO) and economy-Europe (via the EU) – could be overshadowed by a geographical, but strongly politically charged distinction between EU-Europe (endorsed by the Liberals) and UK-Europe (endorsed by the Conservatives). Such a competitive relationship between two "Europes", if it were to fully develop, would also have repercussions for Canada's linguistic communities. EU-Europe would likely have more appeal for French Canadians, while UK-Europe would be embraced especially in English Canada.

A political confrontation of EU-Europe and UK-Europe would, most likely, be reflected in a bifurcation of Europe-related perceptions in Canada's political elites, and subsequently in the broader population. The model of EU-Europe would embrace the EU as a beacon of multilateralism and enlightened/progressive values, and hence a partner for far-reaching economic and political cooperation, while the UK would be presented as an important economic

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partner, but with less stellar political credentials. By contrast, the model of UK-Europe would be based on a perception of the UK as Canada's oldest and closest political and economic ally, tied to Canada by the Westminister system, the monarchy and perhaps a reinvigorated Commonwealth (or a CANZUK cooperation), whereas the EU would be presented as a bureaucratic Moloch that one can surely do business with, but whose overzealous market regulation and embrace of "leftist" political causes (from environmentalism to gender equality) make it unattractive as a political partner. Neither model would argue for cutting off relations with the less positively perceived European entity, but foreign policy priorities would shift back and forth between EU-Europe and UK-Europe based on short-term factors, such as domestic election results.

Global factors could provide an additional complication. Canada's relationship with NATO – which the UK as well as 21 of the EU27 states also belong to – would probably remain an area of consensus between the two models, though advocates of EU-Europe might be willing to explore new bilateral, non-NATO security policy initiatives with the EU. The US is a greater source of uncertainty, especially as long as Donald Trump remains president. Trump's unilateralist and protectionist sentiments are at odds with the convictions underlying both EU-Europe and UK-Europe. However, Trump has also expressed sympathies for a post-Brexit trade agreement with the UK (*The Telegraph* 2018). This raises, at least theoretically, the possibility of a trilateral US-UK-Canada trade deal – a revival of what was previously called the "North Atlantic Triangle" (Brebner 1966) – which would likely be embraced by supporters of UK-Europe, while supporters of EU-Europe would be extremely skeptical.

From the vantage point of the EU, but also from the perspective of Canadians interested in stability, reliability and domestic consensus on their country's external partnerships, this

politicization scenario describes a rather unattractive trajectory. Given that the Brexit debate it still at an early stage, it is by no means certain that Canada's relations to Europe will take this turn. A "soft" Brexit that would see the UK remain in the EU's Single Market and/or customs union, for instance, would greatly reduce competition between EU-Europe and UK-Europe in the economic sphere. However, recent political debates in Canada suggest that the shift towards two competing "Europes" in Canadian perceptions of transatlantic relations is a realistic possibility, and likely the greatest danger that Brexit implies for Canada-Europe relations.

6. Conclusion

As the discussion in this chapter has shown, Canada's post-colonial relationship to the UK has been a central factor in Canadian perceptions of Europe and the EU. This is why Brexit could be extraordinarily disruptive for Canada-Europe relations. While it is too early to assess the impact of Brexit in a definitive way, Canadian political debates suggest that the main risk lies in the politicization of two separate, and competing European relationships – labelled here EU-Europe and UK-Europe – which are each based on their own set of perceptions of the EU and the UK. This scenario would not only create domestic political conflict within Canada, it would also undermine the longer-term stability and predictability of the Canada-Europe relationship.

The ability of EU external policies to counteract this development is limited, but far from non-existent. To be sure, Canadian views of the EU have, as we have seen, for decades depended mainly on endogenous and global factors, rather than on EU policies or activities. However, EU and UK negotiators can influence the form that Brexit takes, and this is clearly not irrelevant to Canadian perceptions. Most importantly, political confrontation between competing conceptions of Europe would be less likely – or at least less divisive – if an amicable EU-UK relationship

developed post-Brexit. It would also be beneficial for Canadian perceptions of the EU if European and British negotiators explicitly developed institutional openings for Canada (and other external partners) to opt into selected provisions of their post-Brexit relationship, so that Canada's relations to the EU and to the UK are not perceived as mutually exclusive. At a more pragmatic level, EU diplomats in Canada are well advised to engage not only with the current Liberal government, but also with the Conservative opposition, among whom the model of UK-Europe enjoys considerable attraction. While the EU has thus far understood Brexit primarily as an internal challenge, it is important that EU policy also acknowledges its external dimension.

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