The Maple Leaf as Guiding Star

Abstract: Twenty five years after its reunification, Germany is still searching for its role in international relations. Due to its violent past, the country struggles to find the right balance between its international responsibility and its reluctance to use military power. Likewise, Canadian people perceive themselves as peace-loving. Nevertheless, Canada has been deeply committed to peace-keeping missions and has also been willing to use military power as ultima ratio. However, unlike Germany, Canada has managed to develop independent guidelines for its foreign policy actions. This paper aims to answer the question, if Canada can be an example for German foreign policy. Thus, the paper compares the countries behavior in the 2003 Iraq War and during the military intervention in Libya in 2011. By comparing the surrounding discourse, it uncovers the underlying self-image and answers the question, in how far the Canadian example can be valuable for Germany.
Introduction

During the 50th Munich Security Conference in February 2014, prominent German politicians such as Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen and President Gauck voiced their support for a more active role of Germany in World Politics, appealing to Germany’s responsibility in the world. Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier joined this chorus by stating that “Germany is too big to just comment World Politics from the sidelines” (quoted in Süddeutsche Zeitung 2014). These statements sparked a new debate about the direction German foreign policy should take.

Germany has indeed been reluctant to join military operations abroad, even leaving its strongest European ally France in the lurch in the case of Libya. What is troubling about the fact of German non-engagement is the lack of consistency in its foreign policy (Stahl 2012). Germany seems to be abandoning its traditional role as a Civilian Power, but it has not found new principles to follow. In search for guidelines and a possible role model, I turned my attention to Canada. Canadian foreign policy has been more consistent and even though Canada is perceived to be a peace-loving country, it has been willing to use military force if necessary. It even seems to be more of a Civilian Power than Germany.

This paper addresses the question in which aspects Canadian foreign policy might set examples that Germany should follow. My hypothesis is that Canadian Foreign Policy has been more consistent than German foreign policy. In order to test my hypothesis and answer the research question, I will compare the foreign policy behavior of the two countries in the cases of the Iraq War 2003 and the intervention in Libya. I chose those cases to show that even though Canada abstained in one case and joined military action in the other, while Germany abstained in both cases, it was indeed Canada’s foreign policy behavior that was more consistent with its underlying principles.

By stating that the foreign policy of one country was more principled than that of the other, I do not intent to judge the outcome of this policy. My focus is on the decision-making process and the consistency of the decision with foreign policy principles, not on the execution of the policy. Therefore, I do not evaluate the mission’s success or outcome nor do I argue in favor of interventions in general. My focus is solely in the behavior that one would accept from a Civilian Power and in how far the behavior of Germany and Canada was in line with it.

At first, I briefly outline the concept of Civilian Power. Secondly, I introduce the principles of German foreign policy. Subsequently I will focus on Canada’s foreign policy and in how far it
can be characterized by the Civilian Power Concept. In the second part of the paper I conduct the behavior analysis in the cases Iraq and Libya. Finally I will summarize the outcomes of the analysis and give an outlook on aspects of the study that might be worthwhile further research.

**The Concept of Civilian Power**

After World War II, Germany’s and Japan’s foreign policy were characterized by a culture of restraint that lead Hans Maull to formulate the concept of Civilian Power, in order to explain their foreign policy behavior (Maull 1990/91). Kirste und Maull define Civilian Power as a role concept: The totality of different expectations, values and ideals, which the role owner (in this case the state) commits to (1996: 289). There are two kinds of expections that form the role concept: On the one hand, there is the ego-part, the collective self-understanding and shared norms and values of the national decision makers, which are internalized through socialization and historic learning processes (ibid.). On the other hand, the alter-part subsumes the expectations that external actors place in the state and the systemic framework in which it operates (ibid.). Following Kirste and Maull, Stahl summarizes the characteristic role features of a Civilian Power as follows:

1. *Gestaltungswille*: the will to shape its (international) environment, normally by peaceful means
2. Employment of military means as *ultima ratio* only
3. Multilateralism
4. Institution builder
5. Rule of Law: A Civilian Power follows international norms even if it is against its own interest, in order to promote the rule of law in the international system.
6. Forgoing of autonomy in order to strengthen institutions

(Stahl 2014: 276)

Kirste and Maull argue that a fruitful application of the role theory and thus the Civilian Power Concept is the search for long-term stability in the patterns of the foreign policy principles and comparing these to those of other states (Kirste/Maull 1996: 288). In the following, I apply their concept to the cases of Germany and Canada.
**German Foreign Policy**

After the disastrous experiences of the Third Reich and World War II, Germany was deprived of military power, its economy and society were shattered and the nation morally traumatized (Maull 2006: 422). Germans had to face their responsibility for the Holocaust and horrendous war crimes, leading to a Constitution (Grundgesetz) that aimed at preventing such aggressive, unilateral foreign policies and national isolationism in the future (Bierling 2005: 15). Thus, in its preamble, the Grundgesetz obliges Germany to “serve the peace of the world”. Moreover, in Article 24 II, it commits Germany to international cooperation and guaranteeing human rights as the basis of peace.

However, the restraints on Germany’s foreign policy are not only legal ones, the trauma of the Third Reich also led to internalization of the principles ‘never again’ and ‘never alone’. In the process of the West-Integration and the formation of the EU, Germany showed strong commitment to strengthen international institutions and thus the rule of law. Moreover, Germany accepted giving up autonomy in the process of further integration in the EU. Although Germany has shown considerable *Gestaltungswille* within the EU, Germans remain skeptical about a stronger engagement of their country in world politics. As the strongest economy within the EU, Germany has been confronted with rising expectations from its partners and allies, leading to role-conflicts, as the case studies will show.

**Canadian Foreign Policy**

Canadians perceive themselves as peace-loving and feel that they are “respected, listened to, and admired abroad” (Hampson/Heinbecker 2010a: 3). According to their self-image, they favor “the use of international institutions to solve global conflicts (ibid.). This behavior corresponds with the Canadian self-understanding of being a “good international citizen” and a “helpful fixer” (Busse 2010: 37). Canada’s foreign policy has often been described as that of the typical middle power: seeking multilateral solutions to conflicts (Nossal 2010: 27) and being able to “fight above their weight in international affairs” (Hampson/Heinbecker 2010a:3).

However, the middle power concept is not very helpful when it comes to analyzing the foreign policy of a state. There are two ways to conceptualize the term: Firstly, in an hierarchical approach, middle powers “are those states in international politics whose size and

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2. 60% argue that Germany should continue to restrain itself instead of taking more responsibility, 37% think that Germany should indeed play a more active role. (TNS Infratest 2014).
power put them in the 'middle' between the great powers and smaller states” (Nossal 2010: 24). Yet, this purely relational and descriptive definition does not tell as much about what to expect in terms of behavior from such a middle power. Secondly, it can be interpreted in terms of behavior: middle power diplomacy tends to seek compromise and multilateral solutions and tries to embed these solutions in international institutions (ibid.: 26f.). However, as Nossal points out: “In short, 'middlepowermanship' is how one defines middle powers, and those who engage in 'middlepowermanship' are middle powers- a classic tautology” (ibid. 28). Moreover, as Jennifer Welsh emphasized, the concept of middle power misses “all the domestic and societal influences on our foreign policy” (2004: 158) and focuses mostly on processes, while “it lacks substantive content” (ibid.). I therefore renounce the concept of middle power in this paper and argue that the Civilian Power concept proves more helpful to analyze and understand Canadian foreign policy.

The Canadian perception of being a peaceful nation and its multilateralism are reflected in Canada’s strong engagement in peacekeeping under U.N. auspices (Jackson/Jackson 2008: 69). Canada played a crucial role as an institution builder in the creation of the U.N. and by introducing the peace force in 1948 (ibid: 539 f.). Besides, this willingness to engage in international affairs also shows Canada’s Gestaltungswille. In spite of its peaceful (self-) image, Canada participated in the Korea War, made modest contributions to the Gulf War from 1990-1991 (Freedman/Karsh 1994: 348f.), and engaged in a training mission in Afghanistan (Government of Canada 2013). In reaction to the Ukraine Crisis, Canada imposed sanctions against Russia and states that it “remains ready to intensify its actions if a peaceful resolution is not reached” (Government of Canada 2015). However, Canada has never gone to war alone and can be considered to only use violence as ultima ratio.

Its most important relationship is without doubt to the US. Not only is it officially “Canada’s closest ally” (Government of Canada 2013a) in military terms, but also its most important trading partner. Moreover, the US has an important impact on Canadian self-perception and Canada emphasizes its differences and independence from the US (Jackson/Jackson 2008: 46). Most notable, after the nuclear agreement with Iran, Canada decided to uphold its sanctions against the country, regardless of Washington’s decision (Clark 2014).

Nevertheless, he argues that the term should not be discarded (Nossal 2010: 31).

One possible explanation for the Canadian characteristic of seeking compromises might be its internal diversity, most prominently represented by the French speaking Québec. In contrast to the US, Canada does not see itself as a big melting pot and has not tried as hard to assimilate different cultural groups, but rather accepted diversity as part of its national culture (Jackson/Jackson.: 55f.).
Germany and the Iraq War

In the US, the internal discussion by the Bush administration about a possible attack on Iraq started as early as January 2001 (Fawn 2006a: 1). The public was prepared for the war in January 2002, when George W. Bush included Iraq in the »axis of evil« in his state of the union address on January 26th of 2002 (ibid.: 2). In fall 2002, the US government tried to persuade the UN to support an attack with an UN resolution, but ultimately failed to gain approval (ibid.). While the Bush administration interpreted the liberation of the Iraqi people as an ideological duty, the German public was not willing to follow this argumentation. From their point of view, the war would pose a new source of suffering for the Iraqi people (Joetze 2010: 86). While the majority of the German public had supported the Afghanistan War, it was not willing to join the US in Iraq (ibid. 85).

On the 5th of August 2002, before it was certain that there would be no majority for an intervention in Iraq in the Security Council, the German chancellor Gerhard Schröder announced in a speech that Germany was not going to be involved in any “adventures” (Schröder 2002). While the German public shared the sentiments of the government, the German media were more critical of the government’s decision and their way of communicating it. Many saw the behavior as imprudent and claimed that the government “deepened the transatlantic rift” (Hacke 2005). Maull called the German behavior “eine unilateralistische Entgleisung” (2006: 429), a unilateral faux-pas. The opposition party CDU worried about the government’s decisions, mainly because they feared the strain the decision put on the transatlantic relationship (Joetze 2010: 103), which indeed deteriorated considerably. However, they also argued that not sending troops in the case that the UN would pass a resolution meant leaving the multilateral consent and impaired the peace order (ibid.).

In conclusion, Germany took a unilateral decision without even waiting for the UN to vote on the issue. Its chancellor communicated this decision in a rather harsh way. Overall, Germany did not behave in order with the Civilian Power model in this case. Even though it proved to be a wise decision not to participate in the war in hindsight, it remains a highly idiosyncratic behavior, which many (for instance Maull 2006: 429) attribute to the domestic circumstance of the upcoming elections. However, the unilateral approach Germany chose was not fit in the

\[4\] In fact, chancellor Schröder’s promise to stay out of the war was one of two deciding factors in the elections in October 2002, the other one being a major flooding. The Social Democrats and the Green Party were able to win the election, although they had lacked behind in the polls in the beginning of the campaign.
long run to become a reliable partner, but rather stands at the beginning of a German 'muddling through' foreign affairs.

**Canada and the Iraq War**

As the US intention to start war against Iraq became clearer, Canada´s minister of foreign affairs Bill Graham voiced in November 2002 that “Canada should not be intimidated to enter into an alliance to attack Iraq” (Fawn 2006: 116). Thus, the issue whether Canada should join the alliance against Iraq was discussed several months before a final decision was made by the Canadian government.

While Canada had participated in the Gulf Conflict in 1990/1991, supporting the mission with aircraft, warships and the deployment of 2,300 personnel in the Golf (Freedman/Karsh 1993: 348), Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announced on March 17th of 2003, two days before Operation Iraqi Freedom started, that Canada would not participate in it without UN approval (Fawn 2006: 17). He reaffirmed this decision in a speech in the House of Commons on the 8th of April of 2003 (Chrétien 2003). While Canada refused to be actively involved in Iraq, it indicated that it would be involved in post-war reconstruction (Fawn 2006: 123).

According to Chrétien the decision was “a principled stand” (Chrétien 2003) based on the decision of the United Nations and further emphasized that Canada “worked very, very hard to achieve a consensus in the Security Council (ibid.). The prime minister also addressed the issue how the Canadian 'No' might affect the US-Canadian relationship. Finding a much more placable words than his German counterpart, he argued that “[c]lose friends can disagree at times and still remain close friends” (ibid.). He assured that even though Canada would not join military operations in Iraq, “this government and all Canadians hope for a quick victory of the U.S. lead coalition with a minimum of casualties” (ibid.).

The Canadian media were divided: Some argued that it was right and crucial for Canadian foreign policy independence to take its own decisions (Crane 2003) while others focused on the crimes in Iraq and the need for action (DiManno 2003). Some criticized the »middle way« chosen by Canada (being willing to help with reconstruction) (Thorsell 2003), others called it a clear statement “about Canadian values and independence” (Martin 2003). The image of Canada as the advocate of multilateral solutions invoked by Chrétien, while not uncontested (see Thorsell 2003), is shared and supported by several authors (Martin 2003; Cornellier 2003).
While Canada pursued an independent path from the US, it also followed its principles: pursuing a multilateral solution through the UN and abstaining from military action if not absolutely necessary. In contrast, Germany did not only turn away from one of its strongest allies, it also forwent the options of supporting a solution in the UN, in alliance with its European allies France and Great Britain. Only after Germany had already (unilaterally) decided to stay out of Iraq did it later join shoulders with France. While Germany claimed to act as »Peaceful Power« (*Friedensmacht*), it abandoned the principles of a Civilian Power, acting alone and autonomously, without regard for the results of the decision making processes within the UN.

**Libya: Context**

On the 15\(^{th}\) of February 2011 protests started in Benghazi, caused by the arrest of the human rights activist Fethi Tarbel. Only a few days after, the city was no longer under the control of the Libyan government, but in the hands of the rebels. The situation continued to escalate, reaching a climax when Gaddafi “used jetfighters and tanks to crush civilian populations in the city of Benghazi [and] […] threatened to kill uprising Benghazi citizens” (Cooper, Momani 2014: 176). On the 26th of February the UN Security Council unanimously decided to impose sanctions against Libya (Spiegel 2011.). While Gaddafi remained unwilling to leave office or refrain from further violence, on the 1st of March the UN General Assembly suspended Libya’s membership in the Human Rights Council (UN 2011). As the situation continued to deteriorate despite international pressure, France and Great Britain prepared a resolution to establish a no-fly-zone in Libya, given the consensus of the UN Council and the Arab League. On March 17th, resolution 1973 was passed.

In many respects the Libya intervention could be regarded as a prime example for a case in which a Civilian Power should be willing to resort to military action as ultima ratio. First of all, other options, in this case sanctions, had obviously failed, and Gaddafi´s behavior left little doubt that he was not willing to step down voluntarily or stop the violence against his people. Secondly, engaging in Libya meant to this point to support the quest for democracy and a people fighting against dictatorship. This is a case in which one can expect some *Gestaltungswille* and support for the strengthening of democracy and thus the rule of law in the world. Thirdly, actions against Libya were discussed and decided in international institutions and the military intervention was conducted multilaterally. However, while Canada joined the mission, the traditional Civilian Power Germany chose to stay at home.
Germany and Libya

While the joint declaration of the European foreign ministers, published on the 21st of February, was still cautious, Germany’s foreign policy minister, Guido Westerwelle called for sanctions at this early state of developments (Busse/Sattar 2011). When this resolution came to vote on the 17th of March 2011, Germany abstained together with Russia, China, Brazil and India. After the German abstention in the UN, the German government declared unanimously that it did, in contrast to Iraq, support the political goals of the US-led coalition in Libya (Harnisch 2013: 28). It also showed willingness to participate in reconstruction programs. Some authors, such as Hellmann (2011), argue that this part of a normalization process taking place in German foreign policy, leaving behind the traumata of the past. However, not only did Germany not join the multilateral solution its European and transatlantic partners had negotiated. This is all the more noteworthy, as the mission was led by France, the most important German ally and friend. Moreover, the reasoning for this decision remained inconsistent, “no stable discourse hegemony could be established” (Stahl 2012: 589), leaving no guidelines for future foreign policy decisions.

Harnisch argues that the German decision was based on justified concerns of the German administration that the intervention in Libya would not contribute to a sustainable improvement of the human rights situation in the country (2013: 13). However, he also concedes weaknesses of the German foreign minister Westerwelle, such as trying to argue that the joint abstinence of Russia, India, Brazil and Germany in the UN Council was an opportunity for new alliances (ibid.: 35). The online edition of the conservative German newspaper “Die Welt” found stronger words and called Westerwelle’s statements in regard to the intervention “unworthy” (Herzinger 2011). In contrast, Stahl comes to the conclusion that the German decision was the “expression of an ongoing foreign policy identity crisis” (Stahl 2012: 589). According to him, “there is no vision, no strategy or guideline for German out-of-area missions” (ibid.). Once again, Germany’s behavior is rather unpredictable and against the principles of a Civilian Power.
Canada and Libya

Canadian officials also reacted early to the developments in Libya. On the 19th of February 2011 the minister of foreign affairs voiced his deep concern “about the reports of extremely violent attacks on and arrests of peaceful protesters. We regret the loss of life in Libya and call on all parties to refrain from violence” (Cannon 2011). When the situation worsened in the following two days, he warned Canadians against non-essential travel to Libya (Cannon 2011a) and stated: “We support the rule of law; we support freedom …We put forward our considerations in terms of promoting democracy” (quoted in Cooper/Momani 2014: 181).

However, while Germany proved unwilling to join the NATO Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR when sanctions failed, Canada was in fact willing to use violence as ultima ratio. It took part in NATO Operation MOBILE under resolution 1973, which started on the 25th of March, evacuating Canadians and other foreigners from Libya and became a combat mission on March 19 (National Defense and the Canadian Armed Forces 2011). According to the Globe and Mail “compared with previous conflicts, including the 1991 Persian Gulf war and the 1999 Kosovo air war, Canada ha[d] a bigger role and a far bigger command presence” (Koring 2011).

In their analysis of the decision making process in Canada, Cooper and Momani come to the conclusion that the Harper government relied primarily on value based arguments, focusing on human rights, democracy, freedom (2014: 176). The government was able to gain parliamentary support for the mission using these arguments (Nossal 2013: 111) and in parliament no strong discourse against their arguments developed. As Nossal points out, there was some confusion about the use of the term R2P on the part of the opposition parties (ibid.)\(^5\). However, the arguments the government used in no way contradicted the R2P, even though the term itself was not mentioned. Therefore, the value based argument was dominant within the parliament without an important alternative discourse. Unfortunately, an analysis of the media discourse surrounding the Libya intervention has yet to be conducted. Nevertheless, in contrast to Germany, a dominant discourse could be established in parliament and the reasoning of the government was consistent.

Again, Canada acted for more like a Civilian Power then Germany. It showed Gestaltungswille, but also respected the rule of law and acted multilateral within NATO and under UN resolution 1973. In contrast, Germany was not willing to actively defend the rule of

\(^5\) The R2P was central to the argumentation of the opposition parties, however, the government did not use the term in support for the intervention in Libya (Nossal 2013: 120).
law in the international system or even support the mission with a positive vote in the Security Council. Instead, Westerwelle involved himself in profound contradictions, while Chancellor Angela Merkel remained rather silent.

**Conclusion**

While some authors argue that Canada has lost its path in foreign policy (Cohen 2003), the analysis shows that Canada’s behavior in these two cases was far more consistent than the one of Germany. Germany took a bold stance in the Iraq War. However, it was not in line with its principles of multilateralism, the rule of law or strengthening institution. The case of Libya is an even clearer example of the German confusion in foreign affairs. The government did not take a clear stance nor was it able to make a consistent argument to defend its decisions.

Canada, in contrast, opted for multilateral action in both cases, justified by decisions made in the Security Council. Canada shows *Gestalltungswille*, even if this means that military means have to be employed as *ultima ratio*. Thus, the hypothesis can be verified: Canada’s actions were closer aligned with its foreign policy principles than German actions. Moreover, the case study also shows that the Canadian behavior was more in line with the Civilian Power Concept. Furthermore, Canada proved in the case of Iraq that acting multilaterally is not the same as being dependent in one’s foreign policy. Canada managed to pursue a course independent from the US, while still focusing on finding solutions within the institutional framework. Therefore the research question can be answered affirmatively: Yes, Canada could indeed be 'a guiding star' for Germany’s lost foreign policy orientation.

In order to further underpin my argument, an extended discourse analysis of the parliamentary debates and the media discourse in Germany and Canada should be conducted. Unfortunately, this went beyond the scope of this paper. Moreover, the analysis of current decisions, like the Canadian stance on sanctions against Iran, also provides interesting areas for future research.
Biography:


Cooper, Andrew F.; Momani, Bessma (2014): The Harper government’s messaging in the build-up to the Libyan Intervention: was Canada different than its NATO allies? In: Canadian Foreign Policy Journal, Vol. 20, No.2, p. 176-188.


