

Canadian Multilateralist Diplomacy and Governance: Continuity and Change

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Abstract

The practice of Canadian diplomacy consistently revolves around the principle of “multilateralism,” with a special emphasis upon coalition- and network-building and sufficient consultation. In historical context, this practice was closely related to the idea of “middle power” and the deliberation of “Canadian-American relationship.” Its spirit was largely present in the process of Stockholm negotiations between Canada and the People’s Republic of China, 1969-70. At the time, Canada provided or exchanged information with traditional NATO allies, “middle powers,” including Australia, New Zealand and Sweden, as well as some states that might clash with the Canadian policy move. This phase of multilateralist diplomacy was characterized with single-leveled, cob-shaped, multilateral policy network composed of government-to-government mutual interactions.

In post Cold War era, Canadian foreign policy is further oriented toward “multilayered governance.” That is, government and NGOs build a close partnership in participating in international organizations and conferences as well as forge transnational and multilateral policy networks. Meanwhile, the practice of consultation and selective coalition-building among Like-Minded States with respective specialization on some functional issue areas persists. In the cases of the “Ottawa process” and “Rome Statute for International Criminal Court,” the Canadian multilayered governance had successfully overcome possible hurdles created by the absence or objection of the American government.

Keywords: multilateralism, multilayered governance, middle power, Canadian-American relationship, public diplomacy, quiet diplomacy