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VERBAL AGGRESSION BETWEEN ALLIES

CANADA IN DONALD TRUMP'S TRADE WAR RHETORIC

ABSTRACT The article explores Donald Trump's protectionist rhetoric relating to bilateral trade relations between Canada and the U.S. In particular, it presents how Trump's isolationist economic platform evolved into trade war rhetoric and how this rhetoric affected Canada. To that end, the article analyzes President Trump's statements and policies regarding the renegotiations of NAFTA, his administration's tariff policies relating to imports of Canadian softwood lumber, steel and aluminum, and Trump's opinions published in social media, mainly on Twitter. It also takes a comparative look on Donald Trump's and Justin Trudeau's ideological profiles to explain Trump's lack of sympathy and hardline rhetoric against Canada.

Keywords: Trump, rhetoric, Trudeau, trade war, economic relations, Canada, United States of America

The American presidents and the Canadian prime ministers have a tendency to use illustrative metaphors when making references to bilateral relations between their respective countries. President John F. Kennedy is, for that matter, remembered in Canada for his famous speech in Ottawa in 1961, in which he characterized the Canada–U.S. relationship along the following lines: *Geography has made us neighbors, history has made us friends, economics has made us partners, necessity has made us allies.*¹ In 1969, Canada's Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, on the occasion of his visit to Washington, D.C., coined a famous catchphrase that has come to be widely quoted as the essence summary of the problem that Canadians had long had with their American neighbors: *Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly and even-tempered the beast, one is affected by every twitch and grunt*, he said to American audiences.² Naturally, what Pierre Trudeau was referring to was the fact that Canada was a country with almost ten times smaller population and proportionately smaller economy than the U.S., and as such it remained – and still remains, in fact – under the profound demographic pressure and overwhelming economic influence of the United States. Trudeau was also raising awareness among his American interlocutors that Canadians, faced with disproportionately more powerful neighbor, need to be extremely attentive, careful – and sometimes fearful – observers of American economic trends and political rhetoric. Paradoxically, half a century later Pierre Trudeau's own son, Justin, also Canada's prime minister (since 2015), came to learn how bitterly true his father's observation was, and how not particularly friendly and not even-tempered 'the beast' can be.

Historically speaking, tensions over a wide range of political or economic matters have been frequent in the bilateral Canada-U.S. relations. Oftentimes they led to interpersonal conflicts and offensive verbal attacks and counterattacks in the communication between the Canadian prime ministers and American presidents. The history has, in fact, witnessed such frictions since the beginning of the relations between the two countries. Lawrence Martin, in his book *The Presidents and the Prime Ministers* describes with a wealth of detail how certain Canada's prime ministers came into rhetorical conflicts with some of the U.S. presidents or even how, starting from Canada's first prime minister, John A. Macdonald, they would *alienate all of Washington with displays of contempt for the presidents and their men.*³

Focusing only on the postwar period, profound personal animosities over various aspects of American policies, including the reaction to the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War, the War in Iraq, developed between Canadian prime ministers and American presidents. The interpersonal enmities would be significant enough to drive leaders

¹ P. Heinbecker, *Getting Back in the Game: A Foreign Policy Handbook for Canada*, Toronto 2011, p. 233.

² J. Granatstein, R. Bothwell, *Pirouette: Pierre Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy*, Toronto 1990, p. 51.

³ L. Martin, *The Presidents and the Prime Ministers: Washington and Ottawa Face to Face: The Myth of Bilateral Bliss 1867-1982*, Toronto 1982, p. 16.

of both countries to the use of undiplomatic rhetoric and tactless behavior. John Dieffenbaker, for instance, is remembered for calling President Kennedy in 1961 *a fool – too young, too brash, too inexperienced, and a boastful son of a bitch!*⁴ In 1965, on Lester Pearson's visit to the White House, President Lyndon Johnson supposedly grabbed the Canadian prime minister by the lapels or shirt collar, lifted him off the floor, and shouted: *Don't you come into my living room and piss on my rug!*⁵ This was Johnson's over-reaction to the harsh criticism of American war conduct in Vietnam that Pearson had expressed the day before in his speech at Temple University in Philadelphia. In 1971, the Watergate tapes revealed that President Nixon referred to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau as *a lousy son of a bitch, an asshole, and a pompous egghead*. Trudeau's response to those verbal attacks was rather subtle: *I've been called worse things by better people.*⁶ More recently, in 2002, top advisors and aides for Prime Minister Jean Chrétien were reported to call President George W. Bush *a moron* and *a failed statesmen*. One of Chrétien's ministers even appeared on a national television program and crushed a Bush doll with her feet, for which she was forced to leave the Liberal Party caucus.⁷ Meanwhile, Chrétien's nickname privately used by the White House staff of the day was *dino*, for in Dinosaur, a character in the animated series *The Flintstones*.⁸

None of the above conflicts, however, reached the level of tensions that would invoke such a strong discursive opposition in Canada as President Trump's anti-Canadian rhetoric. In that regard, as some observers accurately pointed out, the ascension of Trump to presidency was *a major reset* in the bilateral Canada-U.S. relations.⁹

TRUMP VS. TRUDEAU: IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES

The 2016 U.S. presidential election took place slightly over a year after Justin Trudeau's triumph in the Canadian parliamentary election. Undoubtedly, the core elements of Trudeau's political platform and foreign policy goals contrasted sharply with Trump's isolationist agenda. There is no overstatement in saying that in his approach to international relations and in terms of his image and rhetoric, the American president was the exact antithesis of the Canadian prime minister. Trudeau, at least in his verbal

⁴ K. Nash, *Fear and Loathing Across the Undefended Border*, Toronto 1990, p. 11.

⁵ T. Harper, *Justin Trudeau's 'Trump Management' to Be Tested at Summit*, "Toronto Star", 5 June 2018, at <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/star-columnists/2018/06/05/trudeaus-trump-management-to-be-tested-at-summit.html>, 18 July 2020.

⁶ L.-A. Goodman, "Nixon Tapes Include Testy Trudeau Chat", *Toronto Star*, 8 December 2008, at https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2008/12/08/nixon_tapes_include_testy_trudeau_chat.html, 18 July 2020.

⁷ T. Harper, *Justin Trudeau's 'Trump Management'...*

⁸ R. Bothwell, *Your Country, My Country: A Unified History of the United States and Canada*, New York 2015, p. 389.

⁹ K.R. Nossal, "Promises Made, Promises Kept? A Mid-term Trudeau Foreign Policy Report Card", in N. Hillmer, P. Lagassé (eds.), *Justin Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy*, Ottawa 2018, p. 46.

statements, has always declared his strong attachment to multilateralism, consensus-building and free trade. President Trump, in turn, rejected multilateralist policies and fora, preferring bilateral talks and agreements. Both politicians also differed remarkably in their perceptions of global warming, refugee crisis, gender equality or minority rights. Unsurprisingly, with so many opposing views, Trump's and Trudeau's interpersonal relationship promptly evolved into an ongoing verbal struggle, marked by Trump's exceptionally unfriendly rhetoric against Canada and its government. Obviously, as one author noted, the politics of insults was nothing extraordinary for Donald Trump; it can be said that it was inseparable from him.¹⁰ For Canada, however, it set a new opening, even a revolution, as it threatened Canadian basic global, particularly economic, interests. For Trudeau, as Roland Paris correctly remarked, *Donald Trump's unexpected election in November 2016 was the first real foreign-policy crisis* (2018, 24).

The protectionist economic platform of the new American president and his aggressive and insulting rhetoric towards Canada's trade policy caused a stir in the government circles in Ottawa. The most disturbing were Trump's announcements to terminate or renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement and his swift decisions to significantly increase tariffs on imports of Canadian softwood lumber, steel and aluminum, as well as his plans to extend protectionist tariffs on other Canadian products. Given the scale of the Canadian economy's dependence on the relatively unrestricted availability of the American market for Canadian goods, Trump's policy was detrimental to Canada's economic security. Unquestionably, Trump's presidency became the biggest challenge of Trudeau's prime ministership.

Trump's foreign trade agenda, in general terms, stemmed from a strong belief that only economic protectionism could bring Americans an antidote to economic woes and – as his 2016 election slogan proclaimed – could 'make America strong again'.¹¹ The very approach was not new. Former U.S. presidents had often exploited protectionist themes both in rhetoric and in action.¹² Trump's economic platform, however, went further than any of his predecessors' plans or policies as under his presidency trade disputes escalated to a previously unknown scale and were frequently used as tools of political threats. Moreover, Trump's economic platform was announced with the use of an unprecedentedly aggressive, highly protectionist and nationalistic rhetoric, in which Trump explicitly articulated the strongest accusations against trade partners and allies ever heard from U.S. presidents after the Second World War. Foreign industries, he claimed, were *killing us on trade*, stealing American jobs, and *ripping us off*.¹³ *We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries*, he declared in his inaugural

¹⁰ O. Winberg, "Insult Politics: Donald Trump, Right-Wing Populism, and Incendiary Language", *European Journal of American Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2017), p. 1.

¹¹ C.D. Johnson, *The Wealth of a Nation: A History of Trade Politics in America*, New York 2018, p. 558.

¹² T. Healy, "North American Community from Above and from Below: Working-Class Perspectives on Economic Integration and Crisis", in J. McKelvey Ayres, L. Macdonald (eds.), *North America in Question: Regional Integration in an Era of Economic Turbulence*, Toronto 2012, pp. 153-154.

¹³ L. Cao, "Pride and Prejudice in U.S. Trade", *Notre Dame Journal of International & Comparative Law*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2017), p. 6.

address as president and announced *a new vision [that] will govern our land': From this moment on, it's going to be America First. (...) We will follow two simple rules: Buy American and hire American.*¹⁴

In real terms, Trump's declarations were a notification of upcoming hardline policies, especially towards the countries which had had trade surpluses with the U.S. and hence were suspected by Trump of using foul trade practices; this included Canada. Such an approach, however, contravened Ottawa's traditionally open and free-trade policies. Due to the key importance of trade exchange with the U.S., Ottawa has generally promoted the elimination of barriers blocking the flow of people and goods across Canada's southern border. It has been a consistent policy of all Canadian governments, Conservatives and Liberals alike, at least since the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement was signed in 1988. From the Canadian perspective, thus, Trump's new foreign trade agenda was an alarming signal that Canada would soon be thrown into a whirlwind of economic uncertainty.¹⁵ As it turned out such suspicions were accurate. Canada promptly became an easy target for Trump's anti-trade rhetoric.

NAFTA

Multilateral trade deals, Trump often argued, had never brought Americans anything good but unemployment, trade deficits and investment stagnation. They required thorough revision and, if necessary, the U.S. withdrawal. After all, Trump's credo was *Americanism, not globalism.*¹⁶ One of the first targets for Trump's rhetorical attacks was the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a free trade zone established in 1994 by Canada, the U.S., and Mexico.

As early as in July 2016, in his campaign speech at the Republican National Convention (RNC), where he accepted his party's nomination for president, he called NAFTA *one of the worst economic deals ever made by our country.* He blamed NAFTA for moving production, investment and jobs outside the United States. Trump's promise was to reform NAFTA or abolish it.¹⁷ To that effect a renegotiation process with Canada and Mexico was planned to be launched immediately after Trump's ascension to the U.S. presidency. Unsurprisingly, it was a highly alarming signal for Canada. The prospect of any revolutionary changes in NAFTA, no to say its dissolution, would have had catastrophic consequences for Canada's prosperity, affecting its entire economy, not just

¹⁴ "Inaugural Address: Trump's Full Speech", *CNN*, 21 January 2017, at <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/20/politics/trump-inaugural-address>, 17 August 2020.

¹⁵ J. Markusoff, "Canada Remains on Donald Trump's Nice List – for Now", *Macleans*, 23 January 2017, at <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/canada-remains-on-donald-trumps-nice-list-for-now>, 17 August 2020.

¹⁶ "Donald Trump's Complete Convention Speech, Annotated", *Los Angeles Times*, 21 July 2016, at <https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-donald-trump-convention-speech-transcript-20160721-snap-htmlstory.html>, 19 August 2020.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

some of its sectors. Therefore, after Trump became president, Canadian ministers and diplomats wanted to avoid at all costs any rhetoric or actions that could unnecessarily provoke the Trump administration. Ottawa's message to Americans was conciliatory and unantagonizing. In general, it went along the same friendly lines as Trudeau's famous message to the UN General Assembly in 2016: *We need to focus on what brings us together, not what divides us.*¹⁸ Canadian officials started to convince Americans that open and free trade bilateral relationship was of crucial importance not only to Canada, but also for the economic well-being of particular American states and the U.S. as a whole.¹⁹

For some time, this tactic proved wise and effective. While Washington did not stop pressing on the reform of NAFTA, promising signals were sent to Ottawa. Canadians were reassured by Stephen Schwarzman, Trump's economic advisor who visited Canada in January 2017, that *Canada's held in very high regard*, and that the bilateral trade *is very much balanced and is a model for the way trade relations should be.*²⁰ Trump himself confirmed this during Prime Minister Trudeau's visit to Washington in February 2017 by acknowledging *a very outstanding trade relationship with Canada.*²¹ Trump's critics, however, warned the Trudeau government not to attach too much importance to the U.S. president's verbal statements, as Trump had a very loose attitude to facts and substantive arguments and, as the symbol of *the culture of cynicism*, he will say *anything, any time, anywhere.*²²

The fact of the matter is that Trump's rhetoric on NAFTA was intrinsically contradictory. During the presidential campaign, he complained about NAFTA and promised either to *get a much better deal for America* or *walk away.*²³ In February 2017, during Trudeau's visit to Washington, Trump only spoke of *tweaking* NAFTA.²⁴ Conversely, in April 2017, after meeting Wisconsin farmers complaining about the unfair practices of the Canadian dairy industry, Trump returned to his previous radical rhetoric, dubbing NAFTA *a total disaster for the U.S.*²⁵ A few days later, however, after Trump's telephone conversations with Canadian Prime Minister and President of Mexico, the

¹⁸ "Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Address to the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly", *Government of Canada*, 20 September 2016, at <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/09/20/prime-minister-justin-trudeaus-address-71st-session-united-nations-general-assembly>, 15 September 2020.

¹⁹ M. Gabryś, T. Soroka, *Canada as a Selective Power: Canada's Role and International Position after 1989*, Kraków 2017, p. 261.

²⁰ J. Markusoff, "Canada Remains..."

²¹ J. Ivison, *Trudeau: The Education of a Prime Minister*, Toronto 2019, p. 170.

²² E. Solomon, "Is NAFTA a goner? Don't bet on it. We've heard this before", *MacLean's*, 27 July 2016, at <https://www.macleans.ca/politics/washington/is-nafta-a-goner-dont-bet-on-it-weve-heard-this-before>, 19 August 2020.

²³ "Donald Trump's..."

²⁴ J. Ivison, *Trudeau...*, p. 170.

²⁵ A. Dimitrova, "Trump's 'America First' Foreign Policy: The Resurgence of the Jacksonian Tradition?", *L'Europe en Formation*, vol. 1, no. 382 (2017), p. 37.

rhetoric guns turned 180 degrees again. The statement from the White House said that *both conversations were pleasant and productive* and that *President Trump agreed not to terminate NAFTA at this time* but to renegotiate it *to the benefit of all three countries*.²⁶

As time showed, Trump's harsh rhetoric was not merely a political game, but an expression of his genuine determination to transform NAFTA. At his insistence, in August 2017 a lengthy renegotiation process was formally launched, which ended in September 2018 with the adoption of a new tripartite free trade deal – the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).²⁷ Fortunately for Canada, the reform of NAFTA turned out to be surprisingly moderate when compared to Trump's initial statements and intentions. Nonetheless, Trump's aggressive rhetoric, generally unseen in trade deal negotiations among allies, was extraordinary and crossed the boundaries of an accepted language of diplomacy. It was brimmed with insults and blackmailing. The U.S. president was repeatedly setting deadlines for Canada to complete the negotiations or *there is no political necessity to keep Canada in the new NAFTA deal*.²⁸ In one of his off-the-record remarks to journalists, Trump even used vulgar language, depicting the Canadian negotiators as people so desperately *working their ass off* to get the deal done that they were ready to agree to anything, *totally on our terms*. When ultimately his comments leaked to the media, Trump remained unapologetic: *At least Canada knows where I stand!*, he said.²⁹ In his most insulting remarks, the U.S. president waged disparaging ad hominem attacks against Chrystia Freeland, Canada's foreign minister of the time and a key figure negotiating the new NAFTA, whom he reportedly labeled *a nasty woman*.³⁰

Trump's incendiary rhetoric on Canada was not only undiplomatic and unprecedentedly indelicate, but, most of all, it had tremendous repercussions on Canada's foreign policy conduct. Saving NAFTA became an issue of the highest priority and overshadowed other aspects of Canadian external relations. This does not imply that Canada was accepting Trump's insults without any response. The Canadian negotiators, and the prime minister himself, repeatedly declared that only an agreement benefitting Canadians would be signed and that *no NAFTA deal is better than a bad NAFTA deal*.³¹

²⁶ A. Panetta, "Trump Backs off Threat to Terminate NAFTA – for Now", *Maclean's*, 27 April 2017, at <https://www.macleans.ca/politics/trump-backs-off-threat-to-terminate-nafta-for-now>, 6 September 2020.

²⁷ A. Krueger, *International Trade: What Everyone Needs to Know*, New York 2020, pp. 211-222.

²⁸ F. Gagnon, "Breakpoint in Time: Donald Trump's Trade Policy Toward Canada", in M. Quessard, F. Heurtebize, F. Gagnon (eds.), *Alliances and Power Politics in the Trump Era: America in Retreat?*, Cham 2020, p. 245.

²⁹ M. McGraw, J. Parkinson, "Trump's Leaked 'off-record' Comments Complicate Trade Deal with Canada", *ABC News*, 1 September 2018, at <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trumps-leaked-off-record-comments-complicate-trade-deal/story?id=57528243>, 6 September 2020.

³⁰ A. Wherry, *Promise and Peril: Justin Trudeau in Power*, Toronto 2019, p. 142.

³¹ E. Helmore, "Trudeau: Canada Will Aim to Meet Nafta Deadline but 'no Deal is Better than a Bad Deal'", *Guardian*, 29 August 2018, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/29/nafta-latest-news-canada-trump-mexico-deal-deadline>, 6 September 2020.

For the most part of the negotiations, however, Canada maintained a *practice of refusing to respond directly to Trump's regular incendiary statements* and, as Trudeau put it smartly, Canada was focused on engaging in talks *on the substance of issue*.³² Nonetheless, the aggressive rhetoric of the American president impacted the ways Trudeau managed his government. In order to strengthen Canada's negotiating power, in January 2017, several days before Trump's inauguration, Trudeau shuffled his cabinet so that trade pundits and skilled negotiators were elevated to more prominent governmental positions.³³ In the long-term perspective, it appears the Canadian strategy proved effective – the tripartite Canadian-Mexican-American free trade agreement was saved, which ended one of the most uncertain periods in the postwar economic history of Canada.

On other economic and trade fronts, however, Canada was less successful when dealing with the U.S. president's belligerent rhetoric, especially that Trump's far-reaching verbal declarations were swiftly followed by political actions, which put several sectors of Canadian industry in a dire situation.

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

One of the most emblematic and long-lasting bilateral trade disputes concerns the Canadian exports of softwood lumber. In fact, since the early 1980s, the Americans have repeatedly refused to accept Canada's system of subsidies for its softwood lumber industry, considered by Washington as unfair practices, contradicting the rules of a free market competition. The dispute was not resolved until 2006 when finally both countries reached an agreement which temporarily eased the tensions. In 2016, however, the deal expired and both partners failed to renew it until the inauguration of Trump's presidency in 2017.³⁴ Knowing his highly protectionist economic platform and his penchant for eliminating trade deficits in all sectors possible, it became clear that under President Trump any chance for a negotiated compromise looked rather bleak. On the one hand, in such circumstances, Ottawa might have expected radical actions from Washington against the imports of the Canadian softwood lumber to the U.S. On the other hand, the scale and the tempo in which the dispute was progressing must have been shocking. Especially that the Americans had always tried negotiations with Canada before making any ultimate decisions and abstained from offensive, undiplomatic rhetoric. This time, however, the conflict was to be dealt with by Washington in a different manner.

³² D. Dale, "Donald Trump Confirms Star Story on His Secret Bombshell Remarks about Canada", *Toronto Star*, 31 July 2018, at <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2018/08/31/bombshell-leak-to-toronto-star-upends-nafta-talks-in-secret-so-insulting-remarks-trump-says-he-isnt-compromising-at-all-with-canada.html>, 6 September 2020.

³³ R. Paris, "The Promise and Perils of Justin Trudeau's Foreign Policy", in N. Hillmer, P. Lagassé (eds.), *Justin Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy*, Ottawa 2018, p. 25.

³⁴ G. Hufbauer, E. Jung, "NAFTA Renegotiation: US Offensive and Defensive Interests vis-à-vis Canada", in C.F. Bergsten, M. de Bolle (eds.), *A Path Forward for NAFTA*, 2017, at <https://www.piie.com/system/files/documents/piieb17-2.pdf>, 7 September 2020, p. 60.

In January 2017, the same month Donald Trump took presidential office, the U.S. International Trade Commission determined in its preliminary finding that *a U.S. industry is materially injured by reason of imports of softwood lumber products from Canada that are allegedly subsidized and sold in the United States at less than fair value* and declared to propose *a preliminary antidumping duty determination*.³⁵ Three months later, without prior consultation with Ottawa and with no attempt at negotiating with Canada being made, Donald Trump declared the intention of imposing a *tax on softwood lumber (...) coming into the United States from Canada*. The decision was communicated with what could be called a Trump-style clarification – *Canada has treated us very unfairly*, and in a Trump-style entourage – at a closed gathering with conservative media reporters at the White House, released by some of them afterwards on Twitter, and only later confirmed by Trump's officials.³⁶ The same day the U.S. Department of Commerce proposed a new up-to-24% tariff on Canada's softwood lumber.³⁷ The following day President Trump had one more comment to add: *People don't realize Canada's been very rough on the United States. (...) But they've outsmarted our politicians for many years, (...) so we did institute a very big tariff*.³⁸

In reaction, the Canadian government called the Trump's accusations *baseless* and *unfounded* and the imposed duties – *unfair and punitive*. Expressing its disappointment with the decision and promising to *vigorously defend the interests of the Canadian softwood lumber industry, including through litigation*.³⁹

For the Canadian government, litigation was an option of last resort had the negotiations with Washington failed. When it became evident that the Trump administration had no intention of backtracking from the imposed tariffs and the duties would result in severe consequences for Canada's timber industry, which is the source of a quarter of all the softwood lumber sold in the U.S.⁴⁰, Ottawa decided to challenge the American

³⁵ "USITC Votes to Continue Investigations on Softwood Lumber Products from Canada", *U.S. International Trade Commission*, 6 January 2017, at https://www.usitc.gov/press_room/news_release/2017/er010611702.htm, 7 September 2020.

³⁶ K. Nielsen, "Donald Trump Announces 20 Per Cent Tariff on Canadian Softwood Lumber", *Global News*, 25 April 2017, at <https://globalnews.ca/news/3401242/donald-trump-announces-20-per-cent-tariff-on-canadian-softwood-lumber-report>, 7 September 2020.

³⁷ "U.S. Department of Commerce Issues Affirmative Preliminary Countervailing Duty Determination on Softwood Lumber from Canada", *U.S. Embassy in Canada*, 25 April 2017, at <https://ca.usembassy.gov/u-s-department-commerce-issues-affirmative-preliminary-countervailing-duty-determination-softwood-lumber-canada>, 15 September 2020.

³⁸ J. McGregor, "Wilbur Ross Says Canada Is 'Dumping Lumber', as Ottawa Vows to Push Back", *CBC News*, 25 April 2017, at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-reaction-softwood-countervailing-tuesday-1.4084390>, 7 September 2020.

³⁹ "The Honourable Jim Carr, Minister of Natural Resources Canada, Remarks on the U.S. Department of Commerce's preliminary decision to impose countervailing duties on Canadian softwood lumber from certain products", *Natural Resources Canada*, 25 April 2017, at https://www.canada.ca/en/natural-resources-canada/news/2017/04/remarks_on_the_usdepartmentofcommercespreliminarydecisiontoimpos.html, 12 September 2020.

⁴⁰ P. Emrath, "Even Modest Cap on Canadian Lumber Threatens 8,900 U.S. Jobs", *National Association of Home Builders*, 24 May 2016, at <http://eyeonhousing.org/2016/05/even-modest-cap-on-canadian-lumber-threatens-8900-u-s-jobs>, 13 September 2020.

tariffs before the World Trade Organization. The legal dispute was long-running and both sides waited for the decision until August 2020. In its ruling a special WTO dispute-resolution panel backed almost all Canadian claims. The panel determined that the U.S. Department of Commerce had *acted inconsistently* with international trade rules and agreements when imposing most of its duties on Canadian softwood lumber and wrongly accused Canada of using unfairly subsidizing its softwood industry.⁴¹ Ottawa cheered the decision. For Canada the ruling was yet another confirmation that *U.S. duties on Canadian softwood lumber are completely unwarranted and unfair*. The Canadian government's statement concluded that *Canada expects the United States to comply with its WTO obligations. U.S. duties on Canadian softwood lumber must not persist. They have caused unjustified harm to Canadian industry and U.S. consumers alike*.⁴²

The American reaction was less enthusiastic. U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer called the panel's decision a *flawed report* and used the occasion to attack the WTO for using its dispute settlement system to *shield non-market practices and harm U.S. interests* and for protecting *Canada's pervasive subsidies for its softwood lumber industry*.⁴³ Donald Trump called the WTO *a catastrophe and a disaster* and threatened to pull out the U.S. from the WTO.⁴⁴

The decision is not final and, as a matter of fact, may take effect only if it is upheld by the WTO's appellate body. The U.S. has the right to appeal the ruling and, notwithstanding Trump's complaints about WTO's irrelevance, has already notified the WTO about its intention to do so. On the other hand, the Trump administration, disappointed with the WTO, was obstructing its workings by blocking the nomination of judges to its appellate panel. This has led to the situation in which *at this time, no division of the Appellate Body can be established to hear this appeal*.⁴⁵ In its reaction to U.S. dealings with the WTO, Canadian government expressed its astonishment and anxiety. Canada, Ottawa's formal statement declared, *was surprised that the United States has appealed given the stated position of the U.S. Trade Representative that there is no need for an Appellate Body*. The statement was also a firm and unambiguous critique of U.S. damaging

⁴¹ "United States – Countervailing Measures on Softwood Lumber from Canada: Report of the Panel", *World Trade Organization*, 24 August 2020, pp. 221-224, at <https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/WT/DS/533R.pdf>, 13 September 2020.

⁴² "Meeting of the WTO Dispute Settlement Body: Statement by Canada", *Global Affairs Canada*, 28 September 2020, at https://www.international.gc.ca/controls-controles/softwood-bois_oeuvre/other-autres/2020-09-28-WTO-statement-declaration-OMC.aspx?lang=eng, 21 October 2020.

⁴³ "United States Rejects WTO Dispute Report Shielding Canada's Harmful Lumber Subsidies", *U.S. Trade Representative*, 24 August 2020, at <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2020/august/united-states-rejects-wto-dispute-report-shielding-canadas-harmful-lumber-subsidies>, 13 September 2020.

⁴⁴ T. Miles, "U.S. Blocks WTO Judge Reappointment as Dispute Settlement Crisis Looms", *Reuters*, 27 August 2018, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-wto/u-s-blocks-wto-judge-reappointment-as-dispute-settlement-crisis-looms-idUSKCN1LC190>, 13 September 2020.

⁴⁵ "United States – Countervailing Measures on Softwood Lumber from Canada: Notification of an Appeal by the United States", *World Trade Organization*, 28 September 2020, at <https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/WT/DS/533-5.pdf&Open=True>, 31 May 2021.

international trade policies. Its concluding sentence said that *the United States' behavior significantly reduces the security and predictability that we collectively value in international trade.*⁴⁶

Strong as this assertion was, it did not help solve the ongoing softwood lumber dispute. The conflict remains in limbo and one cannot expect its swift finalization. Joe Biden, the new U.S. president, has moderated Washington's hostile rhetoric, but so far he has failed to moderate the tensions around the WTO appellate panel and Canadian softwood lumber exports to the U.S. In fact, in May 2021, he made the decision to more than double the U.S. tariffs on Canada's lumber after Trump had lowered the anti-dumping rate to 9% due to the WTO's verdict favoring Canada.⁴⁷

STEEL AND ALUMINUM

Disputes around NAFTA and duties on Canadian softwood and disputes around dairy products were not the only fronts on which Trump's rhetorical battles and trade wars against Canada were fought. In March 2018, bilateral tensions between the U.S. and Canada increased even more sharply after Washington announced the intention to enforce a sweeping 25 per cent anti-dumping tariff on steel and 10 per cent on aluminum imported to the U.S. from Canada, Mexico, and the E.U. The planned trade measures were publicized in a highly undiplomatic fashion, i.e. during a hastily organized meeting with industry representatives and with no prior consultations with tariff-affected partners.

The rhetoric used by Trump to communicate his decision was equally undiplomatic. He accused Canada and the other partners targeted by the new duties of a 'bad policy' of dumping *massive amounts of product on our country, which just kills (...) our companies and our jobs.* Therefore, as Trump promised, the new tariffs would stay in place *for a long period of time (...), unlimited.*⁴⁸ In his later Twitter message he only escalated the dispute by admitting, quite shockingly, that his intention was to wage a trade war against every country the U.S. ran a trade deficit with. *When a country [USA] is losing many billions of dollars on trade with virtually every country it does business with, trade wars are good, and easy to win,* Trump tweeted.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ "Meeting of the WTO...".

⁴⁷ Will D., "US authorities Move to Double Tariffs on Canadian Lumber Despite a Meteoric Rise in Prices and Demand", *Business Insider*, 26 May 2021, at <https://markets.businessinsider.com/news/stocks/lumber-prices-us-increase-canadian-tariffs-despite-rising-prices-2021-5-1030468561>, 31 May 2021.

⁴⁸ "Remarks by President Trump in Listening Session with Representatives from the Steel and Aluminum Industry", *U.S. White House*, 1 March 2018, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-listening-session-representatives-steel-aluminum-industry>, 17 September 2020.

⁴⁹ D. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter, 2 March 2018, 11:50 AM, <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/969525362580484098>, 17 September 2020.

Canada, as a major exporter of steel and aluminum to the U.S.⁵⁰, was to be most affected by Trump's new tariffs. Ottawa was predicting its loss at 16.6 billion CAD.⁵¹ Unsurprisingly, with such an enormous cost at stake, the Canadian government took seriously the advice once offered by one of the opposition leaders: *When you're dealing with a bully, at some point you have to stop backing up.*⁵² Rhetorically and politically, the Trudeau administration indeed took a tougher line with Trump about steel and aluminum duties.

In its immediate reaction, Ottawa called Trump's tariff plans *absolutely unacceptable* and threatened the U.S. with *responsive measures to defend its trade interests and workers*.⁵³ When, eventually, Trump did adopt the tariffs – which happened three months later, in June 2016 – Canadian government's firm rhetoric was followed by decisive actions. Canada retaliated with countermeasures, *imposing dollar-for-dollar tariffs for every dollar levied against Canadians by the United States*. The newly established Canadian duties were to *remain in place until the United States eliminates its trade-restrictive measures against Canada*. Moreover, the Trudeau government recognized Trump's trade restrictions as violating international trade rules and announced that Canada would *challenge these illegal and counterproductive U.S. measures at the WTO*.⁵⁴ According to Canada's Foreign Minister, it was *the strongest trade action Canada has taken in the post-war era*, even though it was only *a proportionate response, (...) perfectly reciprocal*. Prime Minister Trudeau criticized Washington in an unusually harsh tone, explicitly saying that Trump's trade policy ignored the *arguments based on logic and common sense* and was not based on the merits of economy or accurate account.⁵⁵ Contrary to Trump's assertions, the U.S. was not losing on steel and aluminum trade with Canada, but had a huge \$2-billion surplus, with Canada being the largest buyer of American steel in the world.⁵⁶

Surprisingly, however, in May 2019, Trump agreed to eliminate *all tariffs the United States imposed (...) on imports of aluminum and steel products from Canada*, but did so only to pave the way for the ratification of the revamped NAFTA.⁵⁷ Donald Trump,

⁵⁰ "Exhibit 4. U.S. Imports For Consumption of Steel Products From Selected Countries and Areas", *U.S. Census Bureau*, [2020], at <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/Press-Release/2020pr/07/steel/steel4p.pdf>, 17 September 2020.

⁵¹ "Address by the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on Steel and Aluminum Tariffs Imposed by the United States", in *Global Affairs Canada*, 31 May 2018, at <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2018/05/address-by-the-honourable-chrystia-freeland-minister-of-foreign-affairs-on-steel-and-aluminum-tariffs-imposed-by-the-united-states.html>, 17 September 2020.

⁵² "Food Fight: Donald Trump Takes Aim at Canada", *Economist*, 29 April 2017, at <https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2017/04/29/donald-trump-takes-aim-at-canada>, 17 September 2020.

⁵³ "Statement by Canada on Steel and Aluminum", *Global Affairs Canada*, 1 March 2018, at <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2018/03/statement-by-canada-on-steel-and-aluminum.html>, 17 September 2020.

⁵⁴ "Address by the Honourable...".

⁵⁵ C. Tunney, "Canada Hits Back at U.S. with Dollar-For-dollar Tariffs on Steel, Aluminum, Maple Syrup", *CBC News*, 31 May 2018, at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trump-steel-deadline-1.4685242>, 22 September 2020.

⁵⁶ "Statement by Canada...".

⁵⁷ "Joint Statement by Canada and the United States on Section 232 Duties on Steel and Aluminum",

however, apparently not without reason, described himself as a *Tariff Man*. Tariffs, he claimed, *make America rich again*.⁵⁸ That is why the tariff truce could not last for long. Only a month after the new NAFTA deal came into force, in August 2020, Trump reinstated a 10% tariff on Canadian aluminum so that Canada *would not flood our country with exports and kill all our aluminum jobs*.⁵⁹

The truth of the matter is that by reimposing the tariffs Trump copied the scenario that had worked well for him four years before. He announced the decision in the middle of the presidential campaign, probably to differentiate himself from Joe Biden, his challenger in the election, who had indicated that he would improve trade relations with America's closest allies. Trump proclaimed it at a meeting with factory workers in Ohio, again showcasing himself as a great defender of working class voters, hoping to gain their electoral support in battleground states. He even used the same figures of language when formulating his accusations against Canada. *Canada was taking advantage of us, as usual. (...) Very unfair to our jobs and our great aluminum workers*.⁶⁰

Canada's government's reaction to Washington's unilateral actions was rhetorically firm and strong. Chrystia Freeland, Canada's deputy prime minister, called the tariffs *unnecessary, unwarranted, and entirely unacceptable*. Freeland assured Canadian aluminum industry that Ottawa would not yield to U.S. *absurd decision*, threats and unilateral moves.⁶¹ Prime Minister Justin Trudeau explained on Twitter that Ottawa would respond exactly the same way as before by imposing *countermeasures that will include dollar-for-dollar retaliatory tariffs*.⁶² Such countermeasures were indeed announced by Ottawa in mid-August 2020⁶³, backed by a cross-section of Canada's politicians and, unexpectedly, by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which called Trump's reinstated tariffs *a step in the wrong direction*.⁶⁴

Global Affairs Canada, 17 May 2019, at <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2019/05/joint-statement-by-the-united-states-and-canada-on-section-232-duties-on-steel-and-aluminum.html>, 27 September 2020.

⁵⁸ D. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter, 4 December 2018, 4:03 PM, at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1069970500535902208>, 28 September 2020.

⁵⁹ "Remarks by President Trump at Whirlpool Corporation Manufacturing Plant", *U.S. White House*, 6 August 2020, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-whirlpool-corporation-manufacturing-plant>, 15 September 2020.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ "Deputy Prime Minister's Remarks for Aluminum Tariff Response", *Deputy Prime Minister of Canada*, 7 August 2020, at <https://deputypm.canada.ca/en/news/speeches/2020/08/07/deputy-prime-ministers-remarks-aluminum-tariff-response>, 28 September 2020.

⁶² J. Trudeau (@JustinTrudeau), Twitter, 7 August 2020, 1:47 AM, at <https://twitter.com/JustinTrudeau/status/1291521260044931073>, 29 September 2020.

⁶³ "Notice of Intent to Impose Countermeasures Action Against the United States in Response to Tariffs on Canadian Aluminum Products", *Department of Finance Canada*, 7 August 2020, at <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/programs/consultations/2020/notice-intent-impose-countermeasures-action-against-united-states-response-tariffs-canadian-aluminum-products.html>, 30 September 2020.

⁶⁴ A. Swanson, I. Austen, "Trump Reinstates Tariff on Canadian Aluminum", *New York Times*, 6 August 2020, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/06/business/economy/trump-canadian-aluminum-tariffs.html>, 29 September 2020.

However, in an astonishing move announced on September 15th, 2020, i.e. one day before Canada's retaliatory measures were supposed to come into force, Trump backed down on tariffs on Canadian aluminum. The official communique said that the decision was made after the U.S. had determined that trade in aluminum with Canada *is likely to normalize*, i.e. Canadian aluminum exports were expected to decline sharply.⁶⁵ More likely, however, it was purely a political calculation. Trump merely intended to shelve an economically risky fight until after the U.S. presidential election, when the economic costs of Canadian retaliation would have been far less hurtful politically for Trump. The Trudeau government appeared to have read Trump's intents correctly as Ottawa's reaction to repealing U.S. tariffs was not overly enthusiastic. Canada's Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland welcomed the *good news* rather calmly commenting, somewhat ironically, that *this is really a day when common sense has prevailed*. She confirmed that Canada would not escalate the dispute and would suspend the imposition of its own countermeasures.⁶⁶

The spat over aluminum, similarly to other trade disputes discussed above, had less to do with American economic well-being and more with Trump's political interests. The U.S. has no choice but to import aluminum as its own production meets roughly a third of the domestic demand. Obviously, American tariffs would have affected Canada gravely given the fact that Canada is the major supplier of aluminum for the U.S.⁶⁷ But they would have also been costly for U.S. businesses and consumers, who would have had to pay increased prices for aluminum products. For President Trump, however, such factual considerations had little weight. When he was fighting for his political survival and found that escalating tensions with Canada might win him votes and approval, he did not abstain from undiplomatic policies and offensive rhetoric. Such was the case of the conflict the American president had with Canada's prime minister at the G7 Summit in 2018.

TWITTER SPATS AND 'KETCHUP WARS'

The G7 Summit hosted by Canada in June 2018 is now mostly remembered for the sharp verbal tensions between Trudeau and Trump that occurred at the summit and immediately after it. In a press conference during the summit, Trudeau referred to the U.S. trade policy as *insulting*, mostly because Trump had cited *a national security*

⁶⁵ "USTR Statement on Canadian Aluminum", *U.S. Trade Representative*, 15 September 2020, at <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2020/september/ustr-statement-canadian-aluminum>, 30 September 2020.

⁶⁶ L. Martin, "Score one for Canada: On Aluminum Tariffs, the U.S. Bully Blinks", *Globe and Mail*, 16 September 2020, at <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-score-one-for-canada-on-aluminum-tariffs-the-us-bully-blinks>, 30 September 2020.

⁶⁷ "Steel and Aluminium", *International Trade and Investment Canada*, 5 October 2020, at https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/controls-controles/steel_alum-acier_alum.aspx?lang=eng, 10 October 2020.

reason when imposing the tariffs on Canada's steel and aluminum. To call Canada a national security threat to the U.S. was in Trudeau's eyes particularly disrespectful to all *Canadians who either themselves or whose parents or community members stood shoulder to shoulder with American soldiers in far-off lands and conflicts from the First World War onwards*. Trudeau assured that he had 'made it very clear' to President Trump that *Canadians did not take it lightly* and concluded with a forceful riposte that irritated Trump particularly strongly: *Canadians, we're polite, we're reasonable, but we also will not be pushed around*.⁶⁸ Trump, who had departed the summit earlier, reacted fervently to Trudeau's press conference, in his typical manner, i.e. on Twitter. He denied having a straightforward conversation with Trudeau in which Trudeau would have clearly expressed his disappointment at Washington's policies U.S tariffs. On the contrary, Trump tweeted that Trudeau was 'meek and mild' throughout the whole summit and ventured to make *false statements* about the U.S. tariffs only after Trump had left. Trump found such a behavior *very dishonest and weak*. Taking Trudeau's comments as a personal affront, Trump withdrew U.S. endorsement of the G7 Summit's final joint communique.⁶⁹

The American president tried to put a blame of the summit's fiasco on Trudeau's misconduct and undiplomatic manners. What seemed to have skipped Trump's argumentation was the fact that he himself had been escalating tensions during the summit with aggressive anti-trade rhetoric and personal verbal attacks. The night before the summit started he resorted to foul language and invectives, accusing the Canadian prime minister of *being so indignant* for talking about the relations between the U.S. and Canada without recognizing that *Canadians charge us up to 300% on dairy – hurting our Farmers, killing our Agriculture!*⁷⁰ The U.S. was not *the piggy bank that everybody's robbing*, he added.⁷¹ A response from the Canadian government was rather modest, given the scope of direct vocal attacks against Trudeau. Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland only replied that *Canada does not conduct its diplomacy through ad hominem attacks*.⁷²

Trump's aggressive rhetorical tirades against Trudeau sparked widespread outrage in Canada and inspired rare political unity. Politicians across the scene, including Trudeau's long-term foes, rose to defend the prime minister and Canada's good name.

⁶⁸ A. Wherry, *Promise and Peril...*, p. 23.

⁶⁹ D. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter, 10 June 2018, 1:03 AM, at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1005586152076689408>, 23 September 2020; idem, Twitter, at 10 June 2018, 1:04 AM, <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1005586562959093760>, 23 September 2020.

⁷⁰ D. Trump, Twitter, 7 June 2018, 7:44 PM, at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1069970500535902208>, 28 October 2020.

⁷¹ M. Shear, C. Porter, "Trump Refuses to Sign G-7 Statement and Calls Trudeau 'Weak'", in *Trade Wars: Tariffs in the 21st Century*, New York 2018, p. 160.

⁷² L. Macdonald, "Upsetting the Apple Cart? Implications of the NAFTA Re-Negotiations for Canada-US Relations", in D.D. Carment, Ch. Sands (eds.), *Canada-US Relations: Sovereignty or Shared Institutions?*, Cham 2018, p. 205.

Doug Ford, a newly elected premier of Ontario, often dubbed a *Canadian Trump*⁷³, declared in social media to *stand shoulder to shoulder with the Prime Minister and the people of Canada*.⁷⁴ In a very rare move, parliamentarians of all political stripes unanimously supported a motion, condemning *disparaging ad hominem statements by the U.S. Administration which do a disservice to bilateral relations*.⁷⁵ Even former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, defeated by Trudeau in the 2015 parliamentary election, in an interview for the Fox News, a media outlet sympathizing with Trump, said that he did not understand Trump's *obsession with trade relations with Canada*, given that *Canada is the biggest single purchaser of U.S. goods and services in the world*.⁷⁶

Trump's G7 verbal attacks also mobilized his American critics, even from within the ranks of his own Republican Party. Senator John McCain, for that matter, assured Canadians that Americans remain *supportive of alliances based on 70 years of shared values [and] stand with you, even if our president doesn't*.⁷⁷ U.S. Twitter users created a trending #ThankCanada hashtag, under which they praised Canadian talent, products and acknowledged the importance of Canada-U.S. relations.⁷⁸ Canadian Internet users, in turn, promoted purchasing domestic alternatives to American products, especially food, and giving up vacation in the U.S. in favor of supporting the domestic tourism sector by spending leisure time in Canada. Ketchup became a specific symbol of consumers' boycott of American goods in Canada. The U.S.-made Heinz ketchup was made a major target – its sales dropped sharply, and a Canadian-produced ketchup called French's, *made with domestic tomatoes and processed in Canada*, took over the leading position in the market.⁷⁹ Media coined a new term – 'ketchup wars' – to summarize, somewhat ironically but illustratively, the trade spat between the U.S. and Canada and a sudden increase in shopping patriotism among Canadians.⁸⁰

⁷³ C. Porter, "Will a Canadian Donald Trump Become Ontario's Leader?", *New York Times*, 2 June 2018, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/02/world/canada/doug-ford-ontario.html>, 27 September 2020.

⁷⁴ D. Ford (@fordnation), Twitter, 10 June 2018, 8:35 PM, at <https://twitter.com/fordnation/status/1005881169253027840>, 27 September 2020.

⁷⁵ E. Watkins, "Canadian Lawmakers Stand Against Trump's Tariffs and Trudeau Criticisms", *CNN*, 12 June 2018, at <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/06/12/politics/canada-house-trump-trudeau-measure/index.html>, 21 October 2020.

⁷⁶ "Former Canadian prime minister talks trade with US", *Fox News*, 10 June 2018, at <https://video.fox-business.com/v/5795871812001/#sp=show-clips>, 27 October 2020.

⁷⁷ K. Lavelle, *The Challenges of Multilateralism*, New Haven 2020, p. 238.

⁷⁸ J. Forani, "ThankCanada Hashtag Trending After Trump-Trudeau Trade Dispute", *CTV News*, 11 June 2018, at <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/thankcanada-hashtag-trending-after-trump-trudeau-trade-dispute-1.3968445>, 27 September 2020.

⁷⁹ "To Resist Trump, Canadians Try Local Ketchup", *Economist*, 5 July 2018, at <https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2018/07/05/to-resist-trump-canadians-try-local-ketchup>, 27 September 2020.

⁸⁰ S. Harris, "Ketchup Wars: Heinz Defends Its Image as Tariffs Kick in on U.S.-made Condiment", *CBC News*, 1 June 2018, at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/heinz-french-s-ketchup-trade-war-tariffs-1.4728691>, 27 September 2020.

American president's social media rants against the Canadian prime minister were only a harbinger of further rhetorical and political escalations. From that moment forward, for another couple of months, Canada served as a major target of Trump's verbal criticisms, particularly in the context of the negotiations over the new NAFTA deal. As discussed above, the U.S. president repeatedly signaled that he was ready to take radical steps against Canada, including raising and extending tariffs on more Canadian imports or even signing the new NAFTA exclusively with Mexico, ignoring Canada. Obviously, such far-reaching threats were only a rhetorical hoax, aimed at softening Ottawa's negotiating position. They could never materialize, mostly because of Canada's much greater importance for U.S. economy than Mexico's.

SUMMARY

Some political analysts claim that Donald Trump should not have been taken seriously for what he publicly declared or tweeted because, as an archetypical populist, he *will say or do anything to get elected*.⁸¹ Others argue that Trump was *more bluster than bite*⁸² and that his *right-wing populism, incendiary political language, and insulting rhetoric* might have been undiplomatic and *norm-breaking*, but *surprisingly, not politically harmful*.⁸³ With respect to bilateral trade relations with Canada, such observations might have been partly right. Trump threatened to abolish NAFTA, but in the end it did not happen. He repeatedly declared the imposition of tariffs on various Canadian exported products, yet in the long run he either backtracked or the actual economic repercussions for Canada were less harmful than previously anticipated.

From the Canadian standpoint, however, Trump's protectionist and nationalistic rhetoric posed obvious threats to Canada's trade and as such was economically dangerous. It exposed Canadian exporters to risk and uncertainty, hindered long-term economic planning and, in general, negatively affected the moods in almost every branch of Canadian industry, agriculture and service sectors. Given the fact that over three quarters of all Canadian exported goods are sold to the U.S.,⁸⁴ Trump's anti-trade verbal tirades and the imposition of tariffs brought Canada-U.S. trade relationship into a crisis unseen in the postwar period. This crisis was exacerbated by Trump's willful and insulting misconduct, such as the lack of consultation with Ottawa before Washington's unilateral decisions, unfavorable for Canada, were made. It was also fueled by the U.S. president's use of offensive language, including ad hominem verbal attacks, which

⁸¹ R. Reyes, "Trump Will Say Anything to Get Elected", *CNN*, 29 June 2016, at <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/06/28/opinions/trump-shifting-views-reyes/index.html>, 10 October 2020.

⁸² L. Martin, *Score...*

⁸³ O. Winberg, "Insult Politics...", p. 1.

⁸⁴ "International Merchandise Trade for All Countries and by Principal Trading Partners", *Statistics Canada*, 2020, at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1210001101&cubeTimeFrame.startMonth=01&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2019&cubeTimeFrame.endMonth=12&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2019&referencePeriods=20190101%2C20191201>, 14 October 2020.

went far beyond the standards of diplomatic communication. In practical economic and political terms, Trump's protectionist rhetoric entailed concrete costs for Canada. He forced the renegotiation of NAFTA, triggered trade feuds by imposing tariffs on certain Canadian products, and also paralyzed the functioning of multilateral organizations and agreements of which Canada is a part of.

Most importantly, however, President Trump, with his antagonistic rhetoric treated Canada as if it was not the closest ally and neighbor, but one of the countries hostile to the U.S. Trump explicitly and repeatedly accused Canada of trading and subsidizing its industries unfairly. He even implied that Canada was violating international rules of honest competition and as such did not meet the criteria of a free market economy. Such rhetoric undermined an important element of Canada's international identity, i.e. the belief shared by many Canadians that their country is a model of economic openness and a free-trade champion. In recent decades alone, Canadian prime ministers, regardless of their political affiliations, have repeated it like a mantra that Canada is a trading nation and that its global posture is a result of Canadian exceptional abilities to establish constructive trade relationships worldwide. As Justin Trudeau argues, *we have always been dependent on trade with the world. So an anti-trade argument really doesn't get very far in Canada from the get-go.*⁸⁵ The factual material does justify Trudeau's statement. Only under Stephen Harper, Trudeau's predecessor, Canada entered into nearly forty free trade and investment agreements. Trudeau has scrupulously continued Harper's approach, finalizing the negotiations over the free trade agreement with the EU and a new formula (i.e. without the U.S.) of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Given all the above, many Canadians seemed to have felt personally insulted by Trump's verbal tirades, which gained him notoriety among the Canadian public opinion. Countless polls and surveys in Canada regularly exposed *the degree of disdain with which Mr. Trump is held by Canadians – at levels higher than any other president since polling began.*⁸⁶ According to the Pew Research Center survey, published by in September 2020, *only 35% of Canadians have a favorable view of their southern neighbor, and 20% trust Trump to do what is right regarding world affairs.* As commented by the authors, this was *the lowest ratings for the U.S. in Canada since Pew Research Center began polling there almost two decades ago.*⁸⁷

The November 2020 presidential election was perceived in Canada as a chance for a substantial change or at least for the elimination of anti-Canadian trade rhetoric of the White House. As one trade analyst opined in an interview: *If it's a President Biden, we're not sure what that something different will be. But one would hope that it would be a bit more rational with respect to economic interests and certainly with respect*

⁸⁵ M. Gabryś, T. Soroka, *Canada as a Selective Power...*, p. 268.

⁸⁶ L. Martin, *Score...*

⁸⁷ R. Wike, J. Fetterolf, M. Mordecai, "U.S. Image Plummet Internationally as Most Say Country Has Handled Coronavirus Badly", *Pew Research Center*, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/09/15/us-image-plummet-internationally-as-most-say-country-has-handled-coronavirus-badly>, 10 October 2020.

to treatment of American allies.⁸⁸ Obviously, Biden's victory does not automatically resolve all Canada's trade disputes with the U.S. On the contrary, certain elements of Trump's policies and rhetoric will definitely survive under the new president. This most likely includes a so-called Buy American approach, especially with respect to federally subsidized public projects. Biden in fact reiterated such a declaration on numerous occasions during the election campaign, including in his official platform, where he promised to *make a national commitment to Buy American – and make this promise real, not just rhetoric.*⁸⁹

Rhetoric, though, is this element that Canadians hope will change considerably and immediately under Biden. Such expectations are in fact fairly realistic and may be relatively easily satisfied by the new president. Biden's platform, though without mentioning Canada by name, promised that Biden would avoid *picking fights* with allies and would work closely with them *to modernize international trade rules.*⁹⁰ When he was still vice-president, Biden once said that he was *a free trader and a supporter of globalization* and that the U.S., in collaboration with the closest partners, should *act urgently to defend the liberal international order.*⁹¹ It is this part of Biden's external agenda that Ottawa hopes he will implement under his presidency. But above all the expectation is that even if Biden pursues some sort of protectionist policies, he will do it in a far less combative and less offensive manner than his predecessor. In other words, there is a widespread expectation in Canada that Trump's rhetoric, aggressive and highly insulting to Canadians, has not become the new norm and that the four years of Trump's fierce verbal attacks on Canada can be undone.

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⁸⁸ I. Austen, "Looking Behind Trump's Latest Attack on Canada's Aluminum Exports", *New York Times*, 14 August 2020, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/14/world/canada/trump-canada-aluminum-exports.html>, 10 October 2020.

⁸⁹ "The Biden Plan to Ensure the Future Is 'Made in All of America' by All of America's Workers", *Democratic National Committee*, 2020, at <https://joebiden.com/made-in-america>, 14 October 2020.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ "Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the World Economic Forum", *U.S. White House*, 18 January 2017, at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/18/remarks-vice-president-joe-biden-world-economic-forum>, 15 October 2020.

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