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MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY

CAPSTONE PROJECT

Canada's role in NATO: Foreign Policy Role Conceptions in the Canadian News Media

Submitted by:

Hailey Jarvis

Approved by Supervisor:

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Capstone Approval Page

The undersigned, being the Capstone Project Supervisor, declares that

Student Name:

has completed the Capstone Project within the

Capstone Course PPOL 623 A&B

(Name of supervisor)

(Supervisor's signature)

(Date)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The media influences foreign policy narratives at elite and public opinion levels. The media has the power to profoundly impact policy decisions – and international security policy is no exception. In a rapidly changing security environment, it is now more critical than ever that Canada examine its historic role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and prepare for the role it intends to play in the future. This study seeks to answer the question, "How do international role perceptions shape the narrative surrounding Canada's participation in NATO within the Canadian media landscape?".

Role theory has provided the theoretical basis for this analysis, arguing that democratic policymakers will act in accordance with how they are perceived both domestically by the public and internationally by other states to maintain political popularity. A supervised machine learning model was utilized to analyze Canadian news articles which discussed NATO and identify when Canada was portrayed in specific roles. The three roles defined and placed in this study are ‘good international citizen’ (GIC), ‘faithful ally,’ and ‘free-rider.’ The findings show that, as a baseline, the Canadian media predominantly portrays Canada’s role as a GIC; however, during times of increased pressure from allies or intensified international conflict, the media reacts with dramatically increased portrayals of Canada as a faithful ally.

While these findings challenge initial hypotheses, they still provide valuable insight into the reactionary nature of foreign policy news coverage in Canada. Rather than acting in a manner that holds the government accountable for their actions, during increased scrutiny, the media attempts to justify federal government actions by reinforcing that Canada is deeply intertwined with their historical allies and not accountable for their actions. Alternatively, during times of calm when the GIC role is dominant, the media is trying to portray Canadian military actions abroad in an idealistic and popular manner to the public rather than what would be considered the most balanced or accurate. This cyclical nature of national defence media coverage speaks to the changing quality of media in Canada, where content is increasingly chosen based on what will attract viewership and feed the elite narrative rather than balanced political coverage that contributes to the democratic process.

To combat the cyclical nature of foreign policy media coverage, it is recommended that the Department of National Defence (DND) form proactive and positive relationships with the media, amendments be made to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to combat the monopolization of media publishing by elites, and that foreign policy decision-makers construct a coherent path forward in terms of the role Canada wishes to play in NATO as a new security era emerges. I hope that with these steps, a more coherent foreign policy role conception will begin to be formed when the media discusses Canada's role in international security, which will assist in informing the public and holding political elites more accountable.

KEYWORDS: NATO, Canada, Faithful Ally, Good International Citizen, Free-Rider, Role Theory, Media, Foreign Policy.

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INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by an evolving geopolitical landscape, international organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) play a pivotal role in shaping the global order and securing peace in the Atlantic region. NATO is a collective security and defence alliance that provides a forum for diplomacy between members and promotes shared liberal internationalist values (Gheciu, 2019). Canada is a respected member of NATO, having played a considerable role in the alliance's creation and later evolution in the post-Cold War era. Perceptions of Canada's role both within NATO and on the larger international stage are not static; they shift in response to evolving domestic policy and global factors. The media has a role in framing how the public views Canada's role in international relations and setting expectations for how national defence policymakers should act in relations with NATO. In a time when the international security environment is rapidly evolving, understanding Canada's perceived role within the transatlantic alliance is more important than ever, and media coverage can provide valuable insight into both the public and political elite's perceptions.

The media, serving as a bridge between public opinion and political elites, plays a vital role in shaping the discourse surrounding foreign policy decisions (Boucher, 2019). Therefore, analyzing the media's articulation of Canada's role within NATO speaks to a larger conversation about foreign policy decision-making and the public's perception of Canada's role in the world. This research examines the interplay between international role perceptions and Canadian media coverage of NATO over the past decade to understand how the news media portrays Canada's role in NATO. The central research question that guides the study is "How do international role perceptions shape the narrative surrounding Canada's participation in NATO within the Canadian media landscape?" Role theory will provide the basis for this analysis, suggesting that, in most cases, political actors will make decisions that align with their perceived role in international politics. This study will focus on three main role conceptions in Canadian role theory scholarship: The good international citizen (GIC), the faithful ally, and the free-rider.

The analysis will first explore the theoretical framework underpinning the relationship between media coverage, public opinion, and political elites. Next, an overview of role theory is provided in the study of foreign policy analysis. The subsequent section will discuss NATO's evolution in the post-Cold War era and how Canada fits into this evolution, followed by a review

of the three leading roles in the scholarship on Canada's role in foreign policy. Following the theoretical background, we will discuss the details of the supervised text classification model used to identify National Role Conceptions (NRC) in the selected media publications. Finally, the results of this analysis will be discussed, and conclusions will be drawn that offer insights into how the media portrays Canada's role in NATO and the resulting impact on foreign policy decision-making. As we move into a new global order, with a resurgence in Russian and Chinese power, it is now critical for Canada to grasp their role on the international playing field and what it will do in the face of existential threat.

THE MEDIA, PUBLIC OPINION, AND FOREIGN POLICY

The media's portrayal of Canada's role within the transatlantic alliance has greater implications than initially apparent. Growing foreign policy analysis (FPA) scholarship on public opinion has established a connection between three dominant actors: the public, the media, and political decision-makers/elites. Forming a theoretical understanding of the connections between public opinion, news media, and foreign policy decision-makers will build the basis for the analysis that follows. It has been proven that how legacy national media outlets portray Canada's role in NATO has significant implications on public opinion and national defence decision-making. This section will outline the nature of the connection between these actors and the tools the media uses to gain influence over foreign policy and public opinion.

The scholarship agrees that public opinion and political elites are connected and have influence over each other, concluding that public preferences correlate with foreign policy decision-making. This is especially true in democracies where political elites must legitimize defence policy decisions in a way that gains public support to solidify their position in office (Boucher, 2019). Where the scholarship diverges, however, is in the directionality of this influence. Three unique models can summarize this. 1. A bottom-up model in which the public's preferences guide foreign policy decision-making (Moravcsik, 1995; Bueno De Mesquita et al., 2005; Tomz et al. 2020; Holsti, 2004; Mueller, 1973). 2. A top-down model where political elites, defined as people who devote themselves full time to politics (e.g., politicians, government officials, policy specialists, etc.) (Zaller, 1992: 6), shape the public's opinions on foreign policy issues (Wittkopf, 1990; Zaller, 1992; Western, 2005; Druckman, 2001). 3. A multi-directional

causal relationship between public opinion and political elites where both levels influence each other (Hartley & Russett, 1992; Nobel, 2001; Soroka & Wlezien, 2004).

As a factor of foreign policy decision-making, the media lies between the public's general ideas and preferences and political elites. Any study on the media's portrayal of Canada's role in international relations must include a conversation on how the media interacts and impacts (or is impacted by) both the masses and the influential few in the top ranks of our institutions. Some argue that the media is used as a microphone to amplify a narrative of the political elite's push. Public opinion is viewed as the product, or projection, of what journalists, politicians, pollsters, and influential 'elites' believe and communicate through the media (Glynn et al., 2015; Zaller, 1992; Western, 2005). The average citizen is not an expert on most topics and tends to form opinions based on what they hear or read from popular news outlets. This definition of media as a projection of elite influence follows the broader top-down directional influence model outlined above while including the media as a factor of influence. Others challenge this model with the idea that it is wrong to assume the relationship between the media, political elites, and the public is one-directional and straightforward. They instead argue that this relationship is complex and multidimensional, with all involved actors influencing each other (Entman, 2004; Groeling & Baum, 2008). No matter the direction of influence, the media is an essential factor in this relationship and should not be overlooked.

When discussing media effects, it is vital to identify *how* the media impacts public attitudes and political decision-making. The framing effect (Cacciatore et al., 2016; Druckman, 2001) occurs when the media presents the same information in different lights, whether positive or negative. Those creating media display conflicted extremes rather than a balanced opinion from the middle/majority or a comprehensive account of the facts (Stairs 1998). The way the media chooses to frame an issue can have a dramatic impact on the public's attitude toward a particular event. The media also works to influence public attitudes through agenda-setting. Without news coverage, most of the public would never become aware of specific issues or events, especially regarding security issues that do not pose an imminent threat domestically. Therefore, the media has the power to choose what events the public does, or does not, become aware of. Because the media often chooses what to publish based on anticipated salience, this can become problematic (Page, 1996; Graber, 1997; Powlick & Katz, 1998; Zaller, 1992). The connection between the media, political elites, and public opinion is undeniable. The existing scholarship highlights that the media

influences public preferences through tools such as framing, agenda-setting, and acting as an amplifier for elite agendas. It also identifies the media's impact on foreign policy decision-making by holding political elites accountable in a democratic institution.

THE CANADIAN MEDIA

The above section establishes the importance of the media in terms of its connection to public opinion and foreign policy decision-making. It is imperative to examine what political news media coverage looks like in Canada today and what themes have presented themselves in a world defined by a changing digital communication culture where multi-platform political communication has become commonplace (Benkler et al., 2018). Tara and Waddell (2012) discuss a negative feedback loop created in the Canadian media. Greater access to information has created the “peek-a-boo” citizen, engaged in current events at one moment and disengaged the next. Media consumers have become accustomed to eye-catching headline news and short bursts of information rather than in-depth accounts of current events. News publishers have begun to lose their integrity and broader civic responsibility to drive profits and maintain readership levels. They are focused on scandals, failures, and other entertaining matters when covering political matters. Rather than attempt to inform citizens on critical political topics or drive productive partisan debate, the message sent to citizens is a negative one where governments are generally ineffective and should not be trusted. While the public is overwhelmed with information, they remain uninformed, uncertain, and unsure of political leaders' platform differences, policies, or ideas (Hanke, 2007). This destructive loop is exacerbated when political leaders disengage from public debate due to fear of negative media coverage. They will work to fit the ‘media narrative’ with attention-grabbing headlines and photos but not back it up with actual policy. Tara and Wadell (2012) summarize this circular process where “The public's cynicism and disinterest feeds back into and justifies media narratives that view politics with suspicion – which prompts political leaders to avoid clashes with the media and therefore serious engagement with the public”.

The nationwide monopolization of news publishing firms exacerbates the degradation of Canadian political media coverage. A single individual, Conrad Black, owns 60 of Canada's 105 newspapers, responsible for 45 percent of all news circulation in Canada (Taras, 2001). This includes the prominent nationwide publisher, the National Post, although the Globe and Mail

remains the powerhouse in the news industry and is owned separately. Larger than Black's monopoly, 70 percent of daily circulation in Canada is owned by just three publishing chains: Hollinger/Southam, Thomson, and The Sun. In comparison, 75 percent of American circulation is controlled by 19 publishing chains (Taras, 2001). The issues that arise from the news media being controlled by a few powerful media moguls rather than an array of private publishers are apparent. The inability of Canadian media to provide an array of competing political perspectives, with narratives being pushed in the name of profit, is damaging the democratic process and narrowing Canadians' perspectives rather than expanding them. Citizens are increasingly strictly consuming media with common political perspectives rather than considering alternative points of view (Nesbin-Larking, 2013). For Canada, in particular, the country's bilingual nature exacerbates the problem of citizens consuming media that fails to provide diverse perspectives. With 83 percent of the population not fluent in both national official languages, most citizens cannot access alternative perspectives voiced in other languages (Vessey, 2016).

When considering how the Canadian media covers national security issues, a unique challenge is presented when specific details of national security matters are hidden from the public to protect the integrity of a mission. Under the camouflage of operational security, Canadians have been blocked from knowing significant details about Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) operations overseas, including why Canadians were deployed on missions such as Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Libya (Bergen, 2012). There is a fine line between keeping specific details about CAF operations from Canadians to protect the integrity of operations and using operational security as a veil to avoid backlash from the media and public when making controversial decisions.

Taras (2001) places the media on par with parliament, the Supreme Court, and provincial governments when discussing critical institutions of Canada's democratic system. He notes that the main difference is that governmental institutions operate in a system of checks and balances, while the mass media does not operate under the same constraints. The Canadian Radio Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is the central government body responsible for Canadian communications policy (CRTC, 2023). What we see in Canada today is a regulatory system that has failed to appropriately balance the power of mass media, leaving a select few media moguls to control the narrative.

ROLE THEORY AS A SUBSET OF FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

As a subset of FPA, role theory emerged through Holsti's 1970 seminal study of NRCs. Role theory has since flourished within the FPA discipline, focusing on where national role conceptions come from and how they impact foreign policy decision-making (Thies & Breuning, 2012). Role theory can help us understand why foreign policies are created and further examine the evolution of the international social order (Harnish et al., 2011). Originating in sociology, 'role' refers to the assumptions and values individuals bring to their interactions with others (Harnisch et al., 2011). These assumptions and values change depending on who you are interacting with, your relationship with them, and the social context in which the interaction occurs. Therefore, individuals can hold multiple roles at any time (Turner, 2002). Differing from sociology, FPA scholarship assumes that it is not only individuals who take on roles in society but that states can fit into various pre-determined roles as well (Thies, 2016).

Role theory literature often refers to and is focused on identifying NRCs, where they originate from, and role change (Wendt, 1999; Le Prestre, 1997; Maull, 1990/91). Role conceptions can be defined as "coherent sets or norms of behaviour" that give actors information about "who they are, what they would like to be about others, and how they, therefore, should interact with others on the international stage" (Pelletier & Massie, 2017, p. 2). Role perceptions are determined through an actor's self-image and values and the effects of others' perceptions. They are focused on the interplay of internal and external perceptions (Harnisch et al., 2011). In his seminal work, Holsti (1970) identified 17 NRCs expressed by leaders during the Cold War, including regional leaders, regional protectors, mediator-integrators, defenders of the faith, faithful allies, etc. Over the years, role theory scholars have expanded the number of defined role conceptions as power balances have evolved, including roles such as mediator, initiator, follower, aggressor, etc. (Wendt, 1999).

Studies have shown that role theory can be particularly useful when examining foreign policy decision-making within democratic states such as Canada. Democratized states often participate more in formal international organizations and tend to trust each other more than other regime types (Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2006, 2008; Mansfield et al., 2002). Often, roles are institutionalized within the existing social structures that pre-date today's decisions (Wendt, 1999). Because of this, states will likely act within their specified role conceptions when decision-making

to not disrupt social order nationally and within the multinational institutions they are engaged with. In short, role theory has descriptive and explanatory value when studying the foreign policy decision-making of democratic states and predicting future decision-making due to political actors' unlikelihood to stray from institutionalized role conceptions. These actors will not defer from predetermined roles due to the risk of becoming unpopular with their voting population and breaking institutional bonds at the international level. Policymakers can use historic NRCs instrumentally to legitimize decisions made about national defence and lower opposition domestically (Massie et al., 2023).

Role theorists have proven the above true through studies on NRCs and associated foreign policy behaviour within several states throughout the global north. These include the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), France, Germany, Canada, Japan, and Israel (Thies, 2017). Role theory provides a sound theoretical background to examine role conceptions in Canadian media. Understanding how the media sets role expectations for Canada's interactions within the transatlantic alliance provides insights into larger-reaching beliefs on what role Canada should play in international relations, and these roles provide guidelines for how decision-makers will act when placed under pressure.

CANADA & NATO: NATIONAL ROLE CONCEPTIONS

Assessments of Canada's role as a member of NATO, how leaders are expected to act, and what the public's preferences are on specific issues have been portrayed in a variety of different ways (Haglund, 1997), spanning from an excellent international citizen focused on promoting liberal democratic values and encouraging political ties among members to a faithful ally dedicated to historic coalition agreements made with Canada's closest allies, or even a free-rider passively existing inside of the Atlantic alliance while not pulling their weight. How Canada's role is portrayed as an actor within NATO depends on how one views the role of the entire transatlantic organization, Canada's more significant foreign policy role, and in what nature contributions to coalition efforts are considered. Throughout the alliance's history, NATO's role in the world has changed, and so too has Canada's role within the organization.

NATO is the primary national defence and security provider for its 31 member countries, creating a transatlantic link between North America and Europe. Comprising three nuclear powers

(the US, UK, and France) and two of the world's most prominent economic actors (the European Union and the US), NATO is a global defence powerhouse holding 52 percent of global military spending (Testoni, 2020, p. 8). NATO was created in the wake of World War 2 (WW2) when nations were looking to secure peace and stability in Europe. The primary mission of NATO in the Cold War era was to contain the Soviet strategic threat to its members in Eastern Europe, the Arctic, and elsewhere (Segal 2018). Some members, including Canada, advocated early on for the alliance to provide security to members and promote shared values such as democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law (Canada, 2022). In other words, “NATO is an institution that was created in the context of the Cold War to protect the pre-existing security community from the threats posed by the West’s dangerous other: the communist bloc” (Gheciu, 2019, p. 33). This should be considered in terms of both hard and soft power. Measured in defence spending, Canada’s contributions to NATO peaked during the Cold War, reaching 4.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1960 (World Bank 2023).

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 shifted security dynamics within Europe and globally (NATO, 2023). This shift also impacted Canadian domestic and foreign policy. With the lack of Soviet counter-power as an imminent threat to NATO member-states, many political figures assumed that the North Atlantic alliance would no longer be a necessary institution (Granatstein, 2013). Rather than losing relevance and becoming obsolete, NATO’s purpose and nature of operations transformed during the post-Cold War period. NATO began to take on ‘out-of-area’ operations in non-member regions such as Afghanistan, where before, the alliance would only operate defensively on member-state territory. They also began to focus more heavily on enlargement, granting membership to former Soviet-run states and promoting liberal democratic values in communist territories. Overall, NATO’s post-cold War evolution can be viewed as a successful one, expanding international socialization programs stretching to the Middle East and Post-Soviet countries and taking steps to tailor its institutional structure to twenty-first-century challenges to remain the primary line of defence and security in a new international political climate (Gheciu, 2019).

NATO has proven itself as an adaptable defence alliance that can remain relevant despite changing political climates and lack of imminent threat; however, recently the alliance’s primary concern is whether they have the resources available to handle any future risks it may face. The allies' commitment to the organization has looked increasingly incoherent and fragmented in the

post-Cold War era (Testoni, 2021), with many states - including Canada - pulling more and more money away from defence contributions. The changing security climate in recent years has prompted a reinvigoration of collective Atlantic defence and deterrence, calling for increased and consistent support from member states. This reinvigoration is seen through agreements made among allies to reverse declining defence spending and meet a minimum contribution of 2 percent of GDP (Wales et al. 2014). It is more important now than ever for Canada to evaluate their role as a historical member of NATO and decide what role they want to play as a new era of international security begins.

Canada as a Good International Citizen

A country that identifies with the role of a good international citizen (GIC) chooses to sacrifice “the pursuit of narrow economic and political advantages in the cause of promoting international standards of human rights” (Dunne & Wheeler, 1998 XXX PAGES???). They seek to promote universal values such as multilateralism, a rules-based international order, and what they view morally as ‘the right thing to do.’ In the Canadian context, the role of a GIC is conceptualized in the liberal internationalist foreign policy strategy adopted by leaders after WW2. Pelletier and Massie (2017) note the key attributes aligning Canada with this role conception, including “a willingness to play a constructive role in the management of conflicts, and to commit national resources to that effect, as well as a preference for multilateralism and international law as principal tools for defusing conflicts in international affairs, dampening unilateralism, and enhancing the stability of the international system.”

NATO was not only created as a regional defence alliance to balance Soviet power but also as a political alliance promoting a shared set of liberal-democratic norms. Canada played a leading role in defining NATO’s fundamental foundational values, such as individual liberal freedoms, the rule of law, and democracy (Gheciu, 2019; McKay, 2021). As a key player in forging the postwar liberal order in the West, Canada claims these achievements as its own. It takes pride in being an invaluable member of the Western alliance (Paquin, 2019). Canada has participated in almost every NATO mission to date, and their support of NATO’s actions in conflicts such as Serbia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan proves its commitment to the evolution of NATO as a promoter of liberal democratic values in the post-Cold War era (Simpson, 2000). Canada wields significant soft power on the international playing field and holds others to a high moral standard. Based on this

perspective, Canada is integral to NATO's framework. It plays an important leadership role in promoting political value-based ties and NATO's rebranding in the post-Cold War era.

Canada as a Faithful Ally

The faithful ally role is described in FPA as “a government which makes a specific commitment to support the actions and politics of another government.” This could involve foreign policy alignment with other states including multinational alliance commitments (Holsti, 1970). The faithful ally NRC can result from a shared perception of threat between countries, insufficient military capabilities to act or defend themselves unilaterally, or ideological compatibility. When considering the faithful ally role in the context of Canadian foreign policy toward NATO, it pertains to the desire to maintain transatlantic ties with their traditional allies – the UK, France, and most notably, the US, also referred to as the “Atlanticist Tradition” (Pelletier & Massie, 2017). It is perhaps the case that Canada's role in the world has less to do with what kind of actions it takes but with whom it is taking them (Boucher, 2019). Canada seeks to portray itself as a reliable, loyal ally within the North Atlantic alliance that will support its allies without hesitation.

The specific role of the faithful US ally is present among all Western allies when examining US-led coalition warfare; Canada is no exception to this (Massie et al., 2023). There is no denying that Canada and the US have a uniquely close relationship, especially when considering regional defence measures. Canada's geography gives it a strategic position for relations with the US that no other ally has (Conant 1991/92). The Canada First Defence Strategy (National Defence, 2008) and Defence Policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (National Defence, 2020), explicitly mention cooperation with the US in shared defence objectives as a significant role of the CAF. Canada has historically supported and contributed to the US's international missions, controversial or not. This is seen through actions in Afghanistan and the Kosovo bombing (Simpson, 2000). Indeed, Canada and the US are so politically intertwined that the media will discuss US current events as though they directly impact Canadians' daily lives.

Scholars have identified a sense of frustration from Canadians because they are bound to the US with a growing number of security requirements that seem to limit their ability to take initiative in global affairs (Conant 1961-62). This tension is exacerbated by Canada and the US having a turbulent relationship in recent years, as the former US president has publicly pressured

Canada to meet the defence spending commitments laid out in the 2014 Wales Summit Declaration (Pugliese, 2016). The tension between the US and Canada highlights a more significant clash among NATO allies between the traditional liberal internationalism bolstered by some allies such as Canada and Norway and the radical conservative ideas and projects which have gained popularity in recent years from members like Turkey and Poland, clashing with critical values in which NATO was ratified on (Gheciu, 2019). Despite this, Canada remains committed to maintaining their historic relationship with NATO and the US and to playing roles within international diplomacy that are only possible with the US as the leader of the rules-based international order (Paltiel, 2019).

Canada as a Free Rider

While the term ‘free rider’ originates in economics and is not commonly used in role theory scholarship to explain a nation's actions (or lack thereof), it is accurately applied in this study to define a common role conception found within Canadian legacy media and beyond. A free rider is “a person who benefits from a good or service without paying for it” (Maisonneuve, 2023). From an FPA perspective, a free rider is a state that reaps the benefits of aligning with another state or coalition without contributing its fair share of the resources. Due to their inability to meet the 2 percent GDP defence spending commitment agreed upon by all NATO members, some argue that Canada fits this definition (McKay, 2021; French, 2016; Saideman, 2013).

Canadian defence expenditure has not been above the 2 percent GDP benchmark since the end of the Cold War and has consistently declined throughout the 1990s (Zyla, 2016). While increasing again in recent years, defence expenditure only equated to 1.32 percent of GDP in the 2021-2022 fiscal year, with no plan of hitting the 2 percent mark (Canada, 2022). McKay (2021) attributes Canada's decline in defence investment to a combination of threat perception and domestic political demands, creating a ‘capability-commitment gap.’ As international security threats have diminished, political and public priorities have shifted toward domestic concerns and from NATO and national defence. Canada's level of commitment to defence relates directly to the perceived threat level relative to the alliance's capabilities. Canada's persona as a ‘free rider’ has been intensified in recent years by both former US President Donald Trump's public call for Canada to follow through with its commitments and Canada's lack of participation in NATO's current exercise ‘Air Defender’ in Germany - said to be the largest in history (Maisonneuve, 2023).

From this perspective, Canada is no longer holding up its end of the defence bargain (Brewster, 2023).

There are several critiques on the free rider perspective, including the argument that Canada's role in NATO is inaccurately portrayed and that Canada's contributions to NATO are more consistent than many say. Contextual factors, such as measuring contributions, impact the perception of Canada's contributions (Greco, 2018). While assessments of NATO contributions should include data on military capabilities, the literature indicates that hard defence expenditures alone are not valid representations of state commitment (Zyla, 2016). The argument is that Canada invests significant soft power in the organization, which should not be unrecognized. That being said, Canada's failure to meet defence spending commitments is undeniable, and the media, alongside the US, have not been shy about making this known to Canadians.

HYPOTHESIS

The above literature review provides a thorough overview of the connection between the media, public opinion, and political elites and why looking at media coverage is essential to FPA. It also introduces role theory used in FPA before outlining the evolution of NATO as a multinational defence organization and what roles Canada has been said to play within the transatlantic alliance. Just as NATO has had an evolutionary history with changing roles in the international order, so has Canada's role within the alliance. Canada has evidently embodied all three NRCs outlined above at different points throughout its involvement in NATO. It has even had periods where multiple roles have competed for dominance simultaneously (Pelletier & Massie, 2017; Gheciu, 2019; McKay, 2020). The literature has demonstrated how Canada's foreign policy decision-making has embodied these roles. Here, we are asking not what roles Canada has adopted in relations with NATO but what NRCs the media portrayed Canada in most often when covering Canada–NATO relations. The scholarship above allows us to make informed hypotheses on how the media will likely portray Canada's role in NATO and how this might change over time based on international events and NATO's role evolving as defence needs change.

H1: The media will most frequently portray the faithful ally role.

The existing scholarship on role theory in FPA establishes that multiple role conceptions can exist simultaneously, competing for dominance within the state (Libel, 2020; Massie et al., 2023). Leaders have sought to portray Canada as a faithful ally and GIC when discussing their relationship with NATO. While these roles have competed for dominance, it is hypothesized that the media will more frequently portray Canada's role in NATO as a faithful ally overall. The Canadian media frequently covers current events in the US, and often, the lines between American and Canadian foreign policy will get blurred in a way that assumes that decisions made in the US are synonymous with what is happening in Canada. While the GIC role has gained traction over the early 2000s, Canada's historic role as a faithful Western ally will likely remain dominant overall in media coverage of the alliance. At its core, NATO is a defence *alliance* of Atlantic allies, so it makes sense that the Canadian media will highlight Canada's ability to support members and play its part as a faithful ally holding up its end of the agreement.

H2: The way Canada's role in NATO is portrayed in the media will change from predominantly the role of GIC to that of faithful ally after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

After the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, NATO's role on the international front needed to shift to remain relevant as the primary defence alliance for the Western world. While always present to some extent, in the post-Cold War era, NATO's role as a promoter of liberal democratic values - not only throughout Europe but internationally - pushed to the forefront as the alliance took on missions like those in Afghanistan and Syria—the evolution of Canada's role within NATO mirrors that of the larger organization itself. Canada moved from predominantly portraying a traditional faithful ally role throughout the Cold War to that of a GIC, wielding a significant amount of soft power to promote liberal democratic values. With Russia becoming increasingly aggressive in recent years and attempting to expand into previous Soviet-run territories, NATO has begun to revert to its historical role. It is hypothesized that with the onset of Russian aggression in Ukraine, we will see the media reinvigorate Canada's historic role within NATO as a faithful Western ally and move away from the GIC role that is likely to dominate in the early years of this media review. It is also likely that the amount that NATO is covered in the media will increase as the international threat from Russia and China increases in the later years of this study.

METHODOLOGY:

Search Criteria and Results:

A systematic document search was conducted using the ProQuest database to compile a comprehensive dataset of news articles. The search was conducted on January 9, 2023, using the keywords “Canada + NATO.” The results were filtered to include only historical newspapers and newspapers published between January 1, 2014, and January 9, 2023. The results were further narrowed by filtering for specific legacy Canadian news publishers; there are ten publishing outlets included in the results: The National Post, The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star, The Ottawa Citizen, The Chronicle Herald, The London Free Press, The Calgary Herald, The Vancouver Sun, The Montreal Gazette, and The Winnipeg Free Press. The decision was made to include both regional and national publishers to ensure that diverse perspectives across Canada were captured. Based on the above criteria, the initial search returned 5129 articles. The dataset included features such as Title, Full Text of the Articles, Publisher, Publication date, Author, etc.

The initial results were reviewed by title, and any articles focused on or concerning matters of Canada or NATO operations in Afghanistan were removed. This decision was made because this research aims to gain an understanding of how the Canadian media views NATO and Canada’s role within NATO. NATO’s efforts in Afghanistan, beginning in 2001 with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) (NATO, 2023), began well before the scope of this media review. Therefore, any data collected on the Afghanistan missions would not provide a complete story. Media coverage of NATO operations in Afghanistan is out of the scope of this research. After manually eliminating articles that fit these criteria, the final number of articles used for this study was 4786 from January 1, 2014, to January 9, 2023. It should be noted that NATO operations in Afghanistan were widely covered in the media. While the articles mentioning these operations have been removed, sections of the data still discuss this part of NATO’s evolution.

Figure 1: Media Publications by Date: January 2014-2023

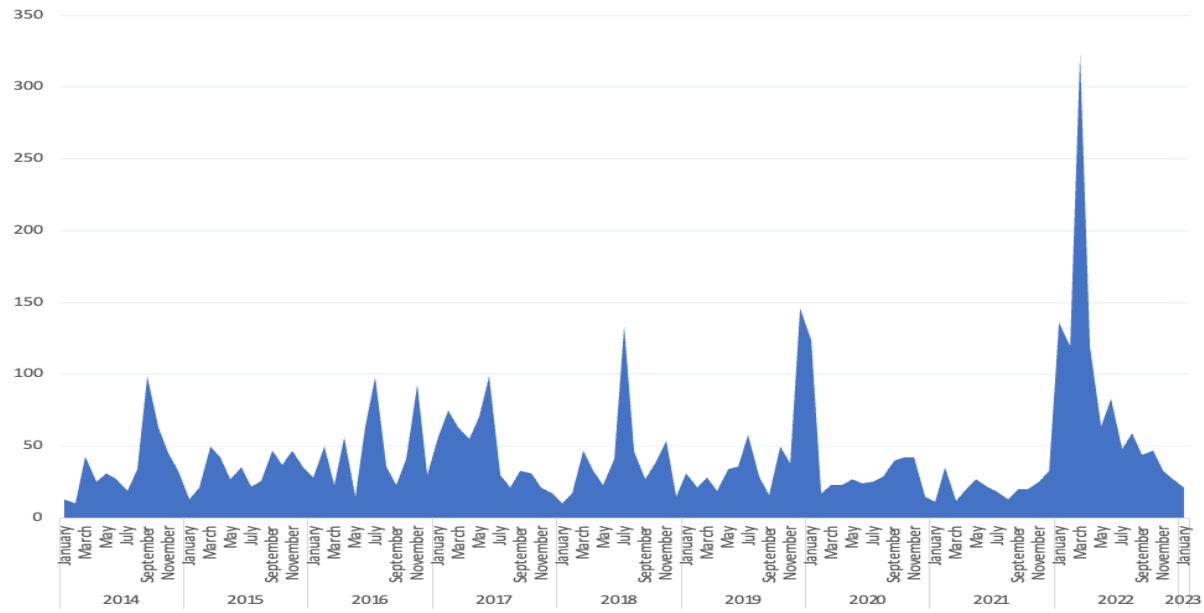


Figure 1 displays the distribution of publications by date, shown at monthly intervals. As seen by a glance at the distribution, there is significant variation in the amount the Canadian media publishes on NATO over time. Since 2014, an average of 43.8 articles have been published per month. The most dramatic increase in publications falls between January 2022 and April 2022, with the highest number of publications by far happening in March of 2022, with 323 articles published. This increase in publications aligns with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 (Walker, 2022). However, publications dropped by July with only 48 publications and fall below average in early 2023 with 21 publications in January despite Canada’s involvement in the ongoing conflict.

The second significant period of increased publications was December 2019, with 146 publications, and January 2020, with 124. This followed the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in London, UK, on December 4, 2019. Former US President Trump called on alliance members that spend less than the benchmark of 2 percent of GDP on defence and warned of consequences for under-contributing. The former President asked Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau how much Canada spent on defence, dubbing the nation ‘slightly delinquent’ in contribution (MacKinnon, 2019). Prime Minister Trudeau was later caught gossiping about the US president, to which former President Trump responded by calling Prime Minister Trudeau “two-faced” in a

press conference (Mills, 2019). This confrontation between the two leaders caused an eruption in Canadian news media. December 5, 2019, had the highest number of publications published in one day, with 35 articles released.

Figure 2: Publications Distributed by Publisher

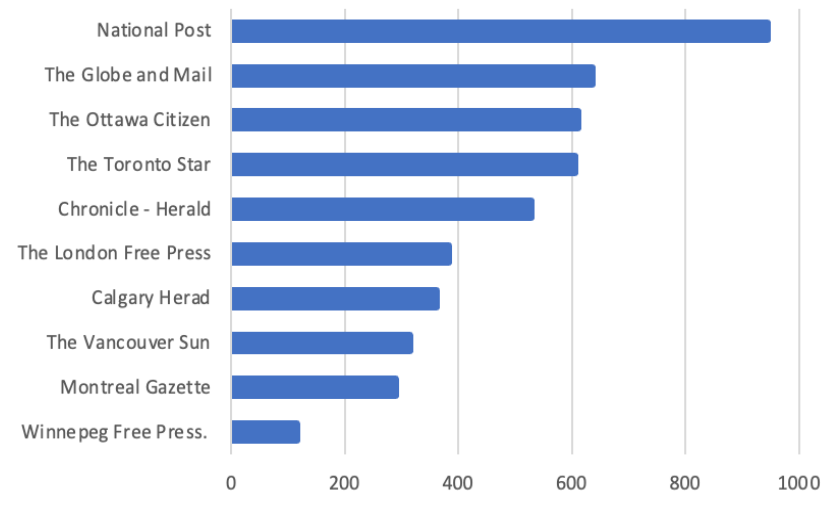


Figure 2 shows the distribution of publications by publishing outlet. Unsurprisingly, the outlets writing about Canada’s role in NATO the most are nationwide news publishers: The National Post, publishing 945 times from 2014 to 2023, and The Globe and Mail, publishing 636 times. While many regional news outlets are publishing on NATO significantly less, the Ottawa Citizen released 611 articles, and the Toronto Star is not far behind at 605 articles.

Support Vector Model (SVM) Text Classification Process:

A supervised machine learning text classification model has been utilized to analyze how the media portrays Canada’s role in NATO over the past decade. A supervised classification model was chosen as it allows the user to create a statistical machine-learning model by pre-labelling documents to capture and categorize further data into complex categories (Grimmer et al., 2022). The training data was manually labelled based on the three specific NRCs outlined above: the ‘faithful ally,’ the ‘free-rider,’ and the ‘good international citizen.’ A Support Vector Model (SVM) was then employed to classify the entire dataset into the roles identified. An individual

model was created for each role, and each was run on the whole dataset, meaning that each paragraph could be classified into multiple role categories so long as it fits the classification criteria.

The initial 4,786 articles were split by paragraph to allow for a more in-depth and precise analysis, totalling 104,084. Two thousand paragraphs were then randomly selected as a training set to be manually labelled into the pre-defined role categories of ‘faithful ally,’ ‘free-rider,’ and ‘good international citizen,’ with ‘1’ indicating it met the role conception and ‘0’ indicating it did not. The three SVM models were trained and validated using an 80/20 split to ensure they accurately captured the role conception they were meant to identify. The performance of each model was measured first by its accuracy – defined as the proportion of correctly classified documents, and second by its level of recall – defined as the number of correctly classified documents divided by the number of documents in the overall dataset (Grimmer et al., 2022).

Based on the outcome of the validation measurements, an evaluation loop was completed for each role conception, where each model was refined and refit to ensure the best possible accuracy and recall numbers. A sample of predicted 1s was pulled from the initial models and then manually reviewed and added to the training set. The final training sets that fit the models comprised 1000 ‘0’ and 400-600 ‘1’ results (good international citizen: 544, faithful ally: 455, free rider: 549). The new training sets were then refit and fed through each model, and predictions were made for each role conception. An example of qualifying ‘1’ paragraphs for each role are listed here for reference:

- Good International Citizen:
 - “The situation has been worsening for years. Clearly, it is the moral duty of the world to act to end the brutalities and support a political solution based on respect for human rights, the rule of law and an end to discrimination and persecution.” (Azhar and Khan, 2017)
 - "This is a struggle between democracy and authoritarianism," Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland chimed in. "Ukraine is on the frontlines of that struggle, and that is why Canada is standing with Ukraine." Canada is "resolute," added Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly, "in our support for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence." (Coynes, 2022).

- Faithful Ally:
 - “NATO is also set to expand. On Wednesday, the alliance invited Finland and Sweden to join, after Turkey dropped its objection. Joly said Canada was one of the first countries to publicly support the two joining. (Karadeglija, 2014).
 - “O’Toole said Canada must restore its global reputation as a dependable ally in NATO, NORAD, the G7 and the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance” (Francis, 2020).
- Free-Rider:
 - “Canada should be contributing more to this existential fight for Ukraine,” said Mr. Leslie. (Vanderklippe 2022).
 - “Canada does not meet its commitment to NATO to spend two percent of GDP on defence and is not even close to it. As for the Arctic, the Navy will have six Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships in a few years. These ships are not even classified as warships by the Navy and are not equipped with naval weapon systems... When will there be serious investments in building real warships for the navy?” (Cyr 2022).

RESULTS

This section provides an overview of the results from the three SVM models outlined above.

Figure 3: Overall Results Separated by Role

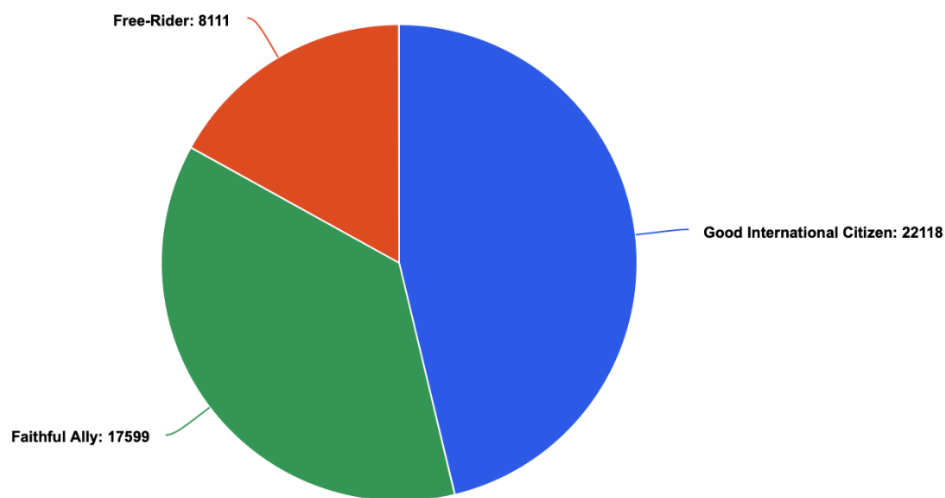


Figure 3 shows a comparison of the results from all three models. The ‘good international citizen’ role has the highest level of recall among all three NRCs, with 22,118 paragraphs identified. The ‘faithful ally’ role was identified 17,599 times, and the ‘free-rider’ role had the lowest amount of recall, identified 8,111 times.

Good International Citizen (GIC)

The GIC SVM model returned an overall accuracy of 73 percent, with a “0” recall at 81 percent and a “1” recall at 63 percent. The GIC model returned with the lowest accuracy and recall scores overall, which may be attributed to it being the most complex role to identify. Playing the role of a GIC involves justifying actions with a moral imperative and, in Canada’s case, promoting the liberal democratic agenda. This can include many different values, terms used, etc. and is potentially the reason for the lower accuracy rate for this role. A review of the predictions was completed to ensure the model was labelling the appropriate articles into this category to a reasonable extent. This is also likely a limitation of using the relatively straightforward SVM model. A more complex classification model could potentially resolve this issue.

Figure 5: Confusion Matrix for Good International Citizen Model

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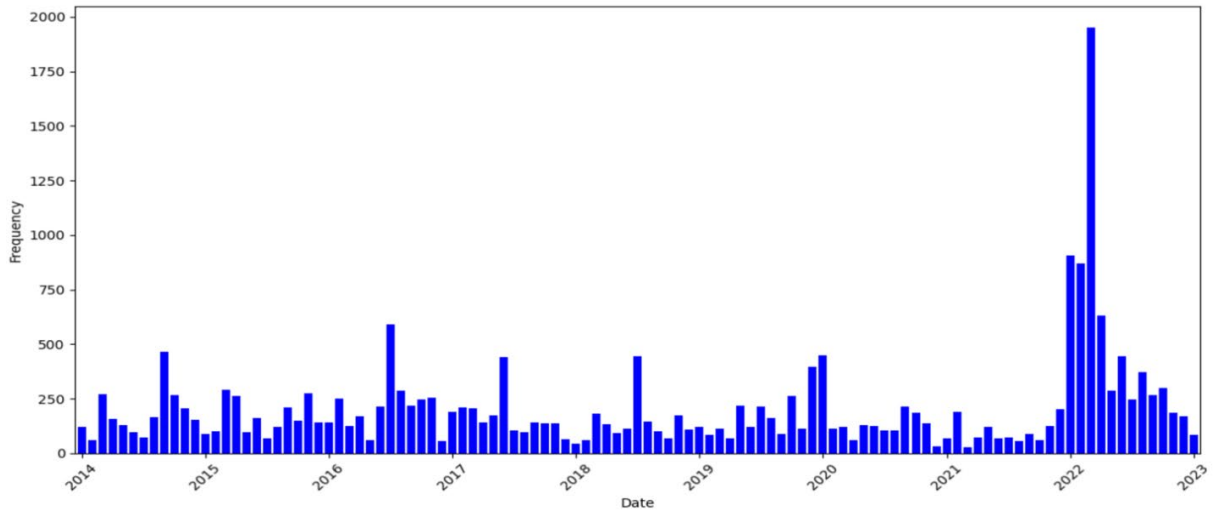
Accuracy: 0.7396825396825397
Confusion Matrix:
[[167  39]
 [ 43  66]]
Classification Report:

```

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
0	0.80	0.81	0.80	206
1	0.63	0.61	0.62	109
accuracy			0.74	315
macro avg	0.71	0.71	0.71	315
weighted avg	0.74	0.74	0.74	315

Figure 6 below displays a timeline for the articles identified with the GIC role published over the past decade. The average number of portrayals of GIC is 202 paragraphs per month. The month with the highest number of portrayals is March 2022, with the GIC role identified 1950 times. The month with the lowest portrayals of the good international citizen role was March 2021, with GIC identified only 26 times.

Figure 6: Good International Citizen Frequency Timeline



Faithful Ally

The faithful ally SVM classification model returned an overall accuracy of 81 percent, with a recall of 0 at 89 percent and a recall of 1 at 65 percent.

Figure 7: Confusion Matrix for Faithful Ally Model

Accuracy: 0.8129251700680272

Confusion Matrix:

```
[[180  23]
```

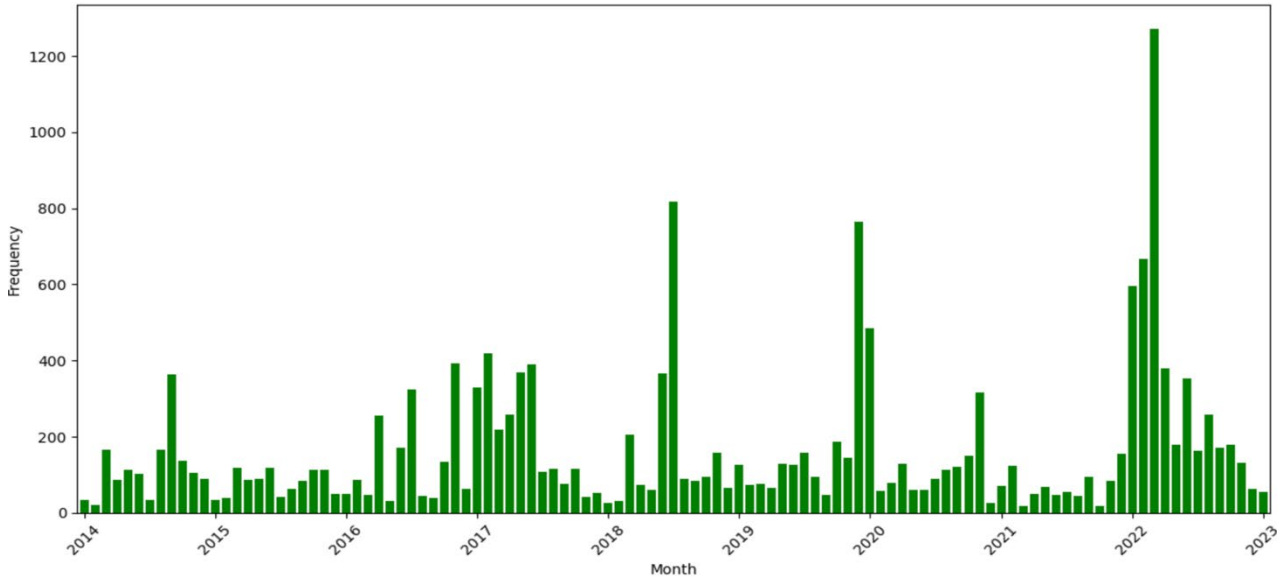
```
[ 32  59]]
```

Classification Report:

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
0	0.85	0.89	0.87	203
1	0.72	0.65	0.68	91
accuracy			0.81	294
macro avg	0.78	0.77	0.77	294
weighted avg	0.81	0.81	0.81	294

Across the dataset, the faithful ally role was portrayed on average 161 times per month. The month with the highest portrayals of the faithful ally role was March 2022, with 1271 paragraphs identified. The months before this also had increased faithful ally portrayal, with 597 identified in January and 668 identified in February 2022. The lowest portrayals of the faithful ally role were during March and October of 2021, with just 18 paragraphs identified. Figure 7 shows a timeline of when faithful ally was portrayed in the Canadian media.

Figure 8: Faithful Ally Frequency Timeline



Free-Rider

The free-rider SVM classification model returned an overall accuracy of 86 percent, with a recall of 0 at 93 percent and a recall of 1 at 75 percent.

Figure 9: Confusion Matrix for Free-Rider Model

Accuracy: 0.8685897435897436

Confusion Matrix:

[[188 14]

[27 83]]

Classification Report:

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
0	0.87	0.93	0.90	202
1	0.86	0.75	0.80	110
accuracy			0.87	312
macro avg	0.87	0.84	0.85	312
weighted avg	0.87	0.87	0.87	312

Figure 10 shows a timeline of when the media portrayed the free-rider role conception in their publications. The free-rider role was identified on average 74.1 times per month. Like the other two NRCs, the month with the highest portrayals of the free-rider role was March 2022, with 548 paragraphs identified. The lowest portrayals of the free-rider role were during March and December of 2021, with just six paragraphs identified for the role.

Figure 10: Free Rider Frequency Timeline

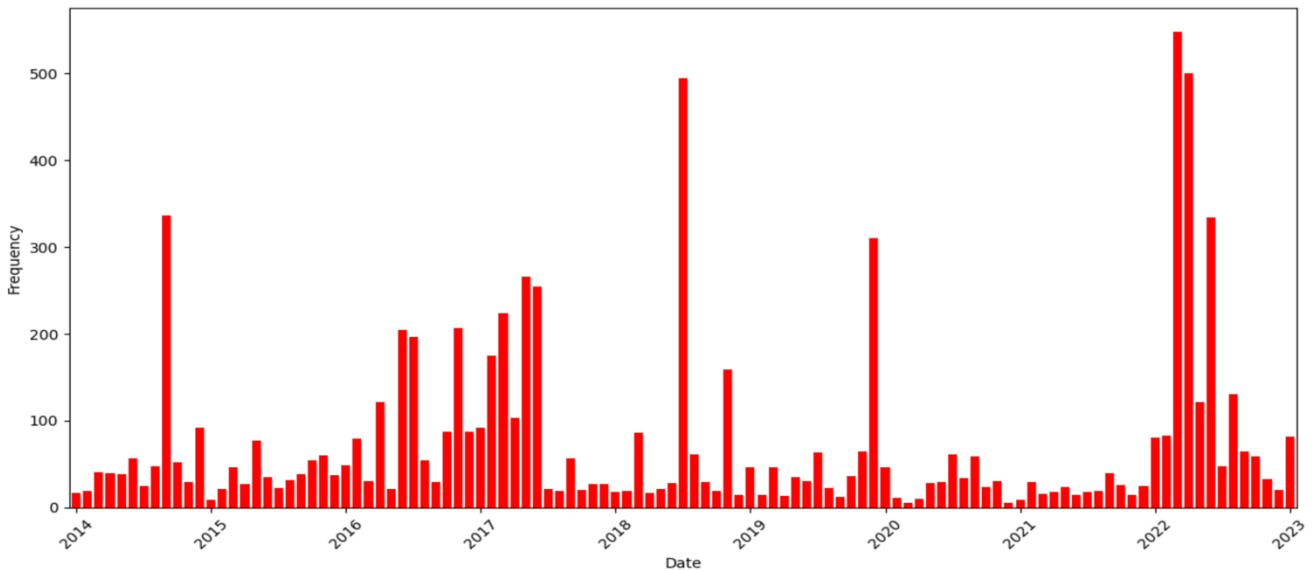
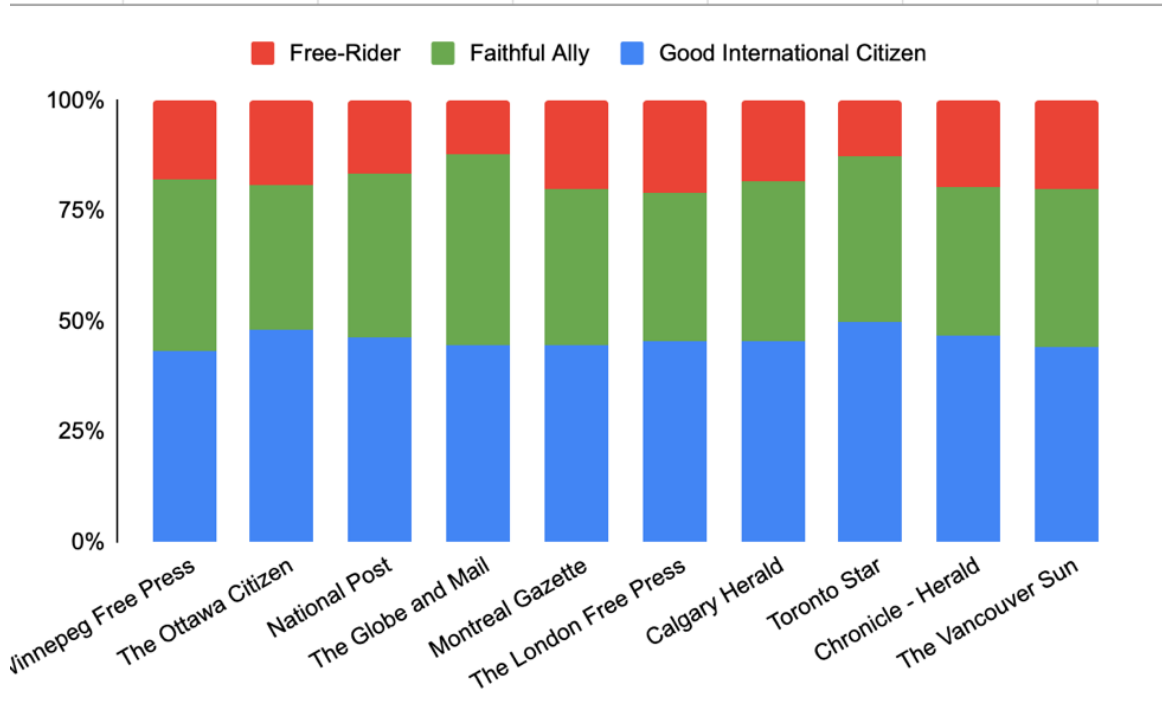


Figure 4: Overall Results Separated by Publisher

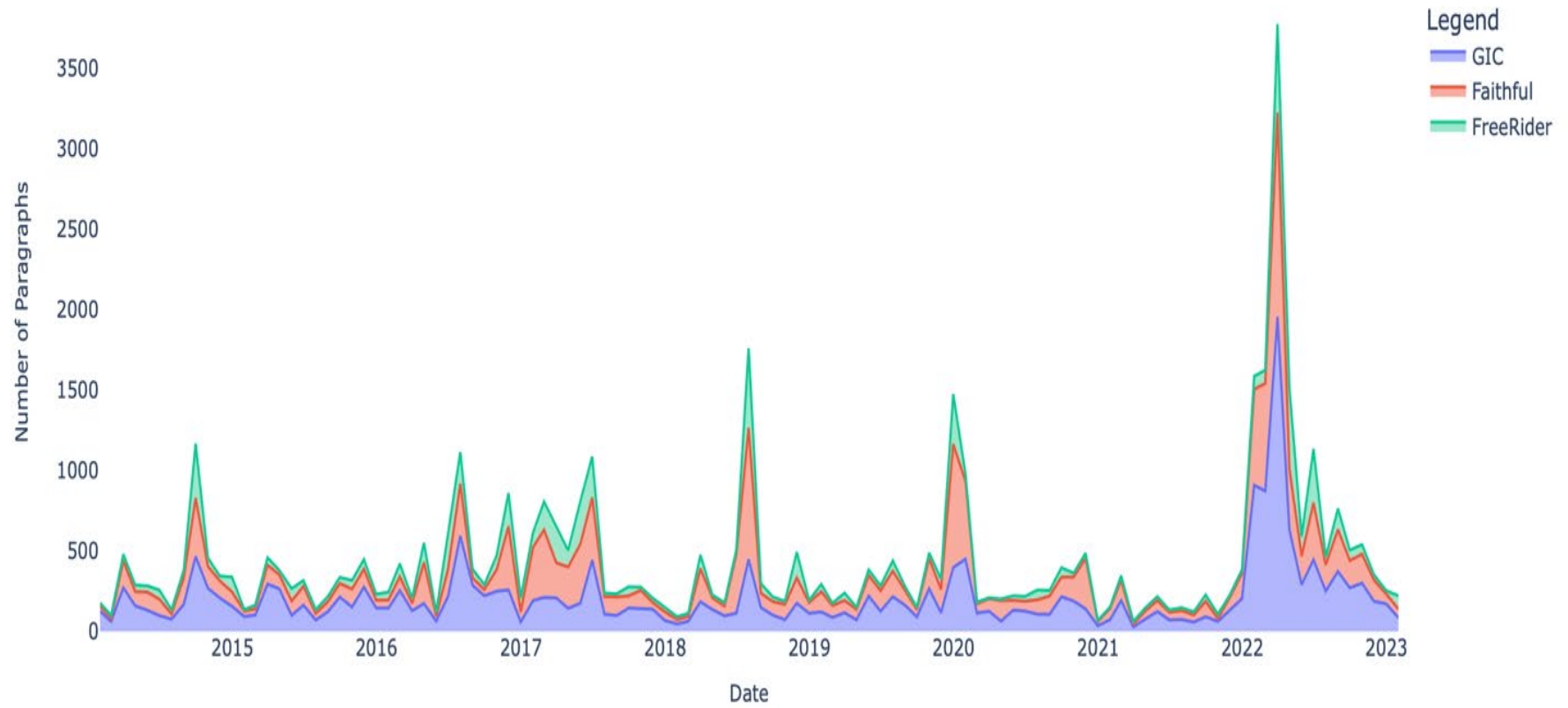


The above figure shows the role distribution across publishers on a proportional basis. Consistently across all publishers, almost half of the paragraphs published portrayed the GIC role conception. The Toronto Star portrayed Canada’s role in NATO in the GIC role the most frequently, with 49.7 percent of their publications showing this role. The Toronto Star is also the only independently owned publishing firm in Canada. With an average of 36.2 percent across publishers, the faithful ally role is the second most portrayed. The Globe and Mail portrayed the faithful ally NRC the most frequently at 43.2 percent. Consistently the least portrayed among all publishers is the free-rider role, portrayed on average 17.8 percent of the time in proportion to other role conceptions. The publisher that portrayed the free-rider role most frequently was the London free-press, with 20.8 percent of overall role conceptions falling into this category.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The above results show significant variation in how each role conception was portrayed in the media over time, with specific roles being more prominent during different periods. Figure 11 directly compares all three role conceptions in the form of a density plot, with each layered over the other. From this, we can identify periods where singular roles had increasing portrayals while others stayed the same and form conclusions based on this. All three role conceptions competed for dominance throughout this study. While the GIC role is portrayed the most frequently overall, there are periods when the faithful ally role was dominant. The first increase in publications for all three role conceptions was seen in September 2014, with all three NRCs being identified relatively consistently during this period. This increase aligns with the 2014 Whales Summit Declaration, in which all NATO members agreed to meet the 2 percent defence spending target by 2024 (NATO, 2014).

Figure 11: Density Plot Comparing GIC, Faithful Ally, and Free-Rider Timelines



The timeframe between July 2016 and August 2017 shows a consistent increase in overall publications on Canada and NATO. In July 2016, most NRC's identified are GIC (GIC: 591, faithful ally: 323, free-rider: 327). Interestingly, in the following months, the Faithful Ally role took dominance, peaking in February of 2017 with 420 paragraphs identified, with less than half of that identified in the GIC role. Massie, Paquin, and Leclair (2023) note that Canadian leaders' self-representations between 2014 and 2017 revealed an evident contestation of Canada's foreign policy role. This could explain the shift in media focus between the GIC's and faithful ally's roles during this period. They also indicate that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau highly promoted the GIC foreign policy role conception before taking office. Shortly after his election, he shifted to a much more balanced approach, promoting Canada's role as a faithful ally as just as necessary as that of a GIC. It is also important to note that during this period, we see the Trudeau administration reinvigorate Canada's role in NATO, releasing Canada's defence policy titled *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (National Defence, 2017), reinvigorating Canada's defence spending commitments, and announcing leadership over a mission in Latvia in the wake of Russia's actions in Crimea in 2014 (Walker, 2023).

Another increase in role identifications was in July 2018, where the faithful ally role was identified 818 times, GIC was identified 445 times, and free-rider was identified 495 times. Note that the faithful ally role was identified almost double the amount during this month, with GIC identified the least. An increase of the exact nature occurred in December of 2019, with the faithful ally role identified 766 times, GIC identified 395 times, and free rider 310 times. Both timeframes coincide with important NATO summits: the NATO summit in Brussels in July 2018 and the NATO leaders meeting in London in December 2019. During both NATO meetings, Canada and other allies were pressured to increase their defence expenditure to meet the 2 percent defence spending benchmark and reinvigorate their commitment with rising tension between the Allies and Russia (Pugliese, 2016). During this time, the US was increasing public pressure on under-contributing allies, and former US President Trump's unorthodox methods sparked intense media attention. Media coverage of former US President Trump's public pressure toward Canada expresses the media's desire to cover popular headlines rather than political facts. It is evident that when pressure is placed on Canada to meet their global commitments, especially from our southern neighbours, we fall back on our traditional role of faithful US ally to either justify our actions (or

inactions) or condemn our government for their inability to support our transatlantic allies appropriately.

Finally, the most significant increase in paragraphs identifying with all three roles occurs between January 2022 and April 2022. This period coincides with Russia's second invasion of Ukraine. In March of 2022, after the initial invasion, Canada's role as a GIC was identified 1950 times, faithful ally 1271 times, and the free-rider role 548 times. This is the only spike throughout the timeline in which we see more of the GIC role portrayed than the faithful ally role, and even then, the faithful ally role increases dramatically. This comparative timeline shows that the media portrays the GIC role as a baseline and increases faithful ally and free-rider portrayals during conflict or tension, such as those seen at the NATO summits when Canada was pressured to step up contributions or through periods of increased Russian aggression.

H1: The media will most frequently portray the faithful ally role.

Refuted: Overall, the faithful ally role was identified 17,599 times, appearing an average of 161 times a month. The GIC role was identified 22,118 times, appearing an average of 202 times per month. The GIC role was portrayed 4,519 times more than the faithful ally role. This finding contradicts the convention that NATO was set up as the hegemonic instrument of the US (Gheciu, 2019). This conclusion shows that the media seeks to portray Canada's role in NATO more often as the role of a GIC rather than as a faithful ally strongly tied to our northern and Atlantic neighbours. The media would instead portray Canada as a moral leader on the international stage, acting in its interest rather than with its traditional allies. This is not to say the media is against Canada acting as a coherent member of the alliance but would more often prefer to discuss Canada's actions as their own, focusing on soft power and justifying military actions with moral imperatives. The results from this study show that there are times when the faithful ally role takes prominence while the GIC role is portrayed more predominantly as a baseline through times of political rest or low conflict.

H2: The way Canada's role in NATO is portrayed in the media will change from predominantly the role of GIC to that of faithful ally after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Refuted: While the faithful ally role did not take prominence consistently after the 2014 Russian invasion of Crimea or the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, we see increasing portrayals of the faithful ally role as the year's progress. This is especially apparent when Canada is pressured by their NATO allies to meet contributions or placed under any public scrutiny due to current events or policy changes. During these periods, Canada worked to prove their importance as an irreplaceable ally rather than a value-driven leader. We see the role of GIC being portrayed most often as a baseline, with the faithful ally and free-rider roles more prominent during significant events.

While at its core, Canada and the Canadian press seek to portray their role in the world very much as that of a value-based GIC, when put under pressure, it will default to the role of a faithful ally, leaning against the power of the US and leveraging common values to support this very intertwined historical relationship (Paltiel, 2019). With former US President Donald Trump's election and the discrepancy in his foreign policy behaviour, the Canadian media's defence is to pull on the traditional ties between the two North American neighbours. Even within the changing global order, Canada remains committed to playing a liberal-internationalist middle-power strategy that is only possible under the protection of the US umbrella (Paltiel, 2019). From this analysis, we see that the Canadian media portrays Canada's role in NATO predominantly in the role of GIC; however, when put under pressure, this value-based NRC takes a back seat to the media highlighting our historical ties to the Allies, notably the US, and justifying actions based on this. Therefore, the Canadian media's portrayal of Canada's role in NATO has less to do with international threats or accurate political media coverage and more to do with reacting to external pressures and acting in a defensive, reactionary manner to avoid public backlash and justify policy decisions.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to answer the research question: "How do international role perceptions mould the narrative surrounding Canada's participation in NATO within the Canadian media landscape?". Thus, a comprehensive analysis of media coverage surrounding Canada's role in NATO was completed. By applying an SVM-supervised machine learning model, we successfully identified the roles the Canadian media portrayed in their publications over a ten-year timeframe. This approach identified critical themes surrounding NRCs portrayed in the Canadian media and gain valuable insight into how the media depicts Canada's role in international relations across different events.

While the findings challenge the initial hypotheses, they provide insight into how the media portrays Canada's foreign policy role within NATO. Contrary to expectations, the portrayal of Canada as a GIC prevailed in media coverage, surpassing the more traditional image of Canada as a faithful ally. The analysis also revealed shifts in dominant NRC portrayals during significant international events or domestic political pressure. The conclusion was that the Canadian media tends to emphasize the GIC role during relatively quiet periods as a baseline while emphasizing the faithful ally role during periods of external pressure on Canada. This conclusion speaks to the reactionary nature of national defence media coverage in Canada. Rather than acting in a manner that holds the government accountable for their actions, in times of increased scrutiny, the media attempts to justify federal government actions by reinforcing that Canada is deeply intertwined and reliant on our allies and not accountable for our actions. Alternatively, during times of calm when the GIC role is dominant, the media is trying to portray Canadian military actions abroad in an idealistic and popular manner to the public rather than what would be considered the most balanced or accurate. This cyclical nature of national defence media coverage speaks to Canada's changing media quality, as outlined previously, where content is increasingly chosen based on what will attract viewership rather than balanced political coverage that contributes to the democratic process.

The fluctuating pattern identified in Canadian media NRC portrayals surrounding NATO highlights both the media's power to frame events in certain lights to push the narrative of Canada playing a specific role in the world, as well as political elites' - particularly the federal government's - ability to influence media coverage in order to maintain popularity and avoid intense public backlash when Canada is placed under external pressure. The reactionary cycle of

NRC portrayals in the media ultimately seeks to deflect Canada's accountability regarding its leadership in foreign policy decision-making. This is done to maintain the government's popularity of the day and avoid media backlash while pushing the overall narrative of Canada as a GIC. When there is no external pressure, it is easier to push the GIC role through media coverage and cover Canadian actions abroad in a manner that speaks to Canadian leadership and ownership over their actions. Focusing on the moral imperative becomes much more difficult when external pressure comes from allied states, or Canada is scrutinized for a foreign policy decision. The media's reactionary narrative that favours the faithful ally NRC seeks to deflect responsibility away from Canada during times of increased pressure while justifying policy decisions with the idea that Canada is bound to act in conjunction with its allies. This narrative aligns with the idea of media as a product of elite influence. The Canadian media's inability to portray consistent NRCs when discussing Canada's role in NATO leaves the public questioning our country's role in the world and reinforces leaders' ability to justify poor policy decisions and focus on what will maintain votes rather than promoting strong and consistent foreign policy.

As French (2016) recalls, "A century on from when Canadian forces played a pivotal role in the freedom of Europe, then the epicentre of 20th century 'globalization,' Canada must prepare for an equally strategic and pivotal role in stabilizing and securing the world of the 21st century." Now more than ever, with increasing pressure from the US and other allied members, Canada needs to determine what role it wishes to play on the international field and remain consistent through times of struggle and times of relative peace. The media plays a pivotal role in guiding the narrative for the Canadian public and assisting in the democratic process. Suppose the media will assist in forging a path forward for Canadian NRCs in this changing world order. In that case, it must break the reactionary cycle seen in national defence media coverage throughout recent years. Suppose Canada wishes to be known both by their citizens and the world as a GIC. In that case, the media can begin to hold the government of the day accountable for this during times of increased pressure rather than acting in a reactionary fashion and falling back to the traditional faithful ally role to avoid scrutiny. While returning to national defence media coverage that is centred around accountability, balance, and assisting the democratic process will not be an easy task, it is a necessary shift that Canada must make if it wishes to portray a consistent and robust role in NATO in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above analysis highlights that when covering foreign policy matters like NATO, the Canadian media acts in a reactionary manner aimed at deflecting responsibility away from the federal government during times of scrutiny while pushing the popular narrative of Canada as a GIC during times of low tension. Suppose the media will remain an integral part of the democratic process in Canada, in this context, when discussing foreign policy matters such as NATO. In that case, it must provide a more balanced and consistent approach to covering political events. The following recommendations encourage Canadian foreign policy media coverage to become more consistent to help inform the public and set expectations for national defence policymakers.

1. It is recommended that the Department of National Defence (DND) take a more open and proactive approach to public and media relations. As it currently stands, DND views the media in a negative light with the potential to jeopardize missions and hide critical details about operations under the veil of ‘operational security.’ There is little being done proactively on DND’s side to work with the media to paint national defence more positively and gain civilians' trust. DND should begin working with the media to consistently and truthfully inform the public on international security efforts and Canada's role to avoid the narrative taking such a dramatic turn when scrutinizing the department.
2. As the primary regulatory body for media ownership and the state of the media in Canada, it is recommended that the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) revisit and strengthen regulations regarding the monopolization of media publishing companies to avoid oversaturation of elite influence on foreign policy media narratives. Enforcing greater regulation in this area would allow for more diversity of opinion in the media and promote debate among publishers.
3. As we enter a new era of international security, defined by a resurgence of Russian aggression and increasing pressure from Canada’s traditional allies, foreign policy decision-makers must reach a consensus on what role Canada intends to play in this new world order. Canadian defence policy has been defined by contradicting actions and competing role conceptions as it tries to find its place within NATO. If Canada wishes to portray the role of GIC in the media consistently, its actions need to support this role in times of pressure. For this to happen, they must meet their prior NATO commitments,

particularly in defence expenditure. It would also be worthwhile to refine Canadian defence policy to consistently portray the role they wish to be portrayed in the media.

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