



Conference European Foreign Policy

ASSESSING EU'S ROLE IN THE WORLD

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Abstract

Relations between the EU and Canada go back to the beginning of European Integration, when the creation of the European Community's (EC) Customs Union affected trade between the EC and Canada. Similarly the development of common policies within the EC had external effects, especially the EC's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). These economic relations had to be fitted into the international regime of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), but in parallel with GATT mechanisms the EC and Canada developed mechanisms to solve conflicts – or irritants as they tend to be called – bilaterally. There are now regular joint meetings at various levels including summit meetings. Since the creation of the European Union (EU) with the Maastricht Treaty (1993) the regular contacts between the EU and Canada have also included a dialogue on foreign policy issues. Canada and most EU Member States are partners within NATO. Current dialogues also include important issues on the global agenda like climate change, energy policy and the fight against terrorism. The two sides share important values but neither side has put high priority on mutual relations. It is fair to say that the United States is a more important actor for both Canada and the EU. A recurrent proposal for a Free Trade Area (FTA) between the EU and Canada remains unrealized, despite economic analyses suggesting that both sides could benefit from such FTA.