**Support for Israel Costs Canada Seat on U.N. Security Council**

America All But Disappeared in Maneuvering by Portugal, Brazil, and Cuba

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UNITED NATIONS — Canada’s increasing ties with Israel and its defense of Jerusalem have cost it a seat on the United Nations Security Council, diplomats here are saying after days of maneuvering by Arab countries, Brazil, and Cuba in which the United States had nearly disappeared.

Canada’s failure to capture a seat on next year’s Security Council will break a tradition in which America’s northern neighbor has been elected to the most prestigious United Nations body in every decade since 1948. Diplomats here say Brazil was instrumental in handing defeat to Prime Minister Harper in an international contest that pitted Canada, a traditional U.N. power house, against one of the European Union’s least powerful countries – Portugal.

Canada withdrew its candidacy in today’s election for five available council slots after it realized that Portugal had sewn up enough General Assembly votes in the secret ballot to win the only contested seat. Several sources told me that members of a powerful voting bloc in the 192-member assembly – the 57 countries of the Organizations of Islamic Conference – were united in voting for Portugal over Canada, mostly because of Mr. Harper’s record of supporting Israel.

In addition to the OIC, anti-Western countries like Cuba and Venezuela have been active in opposing Canada’s candidacy. Mr. Harper’s right-of-center government, which had originally tried to stay above the fray, increased its efforts in the final weeks, mounting a world-wide campaign to capture the council seat.

But a diplomat familiar with the behind-the-scenes horse trading that marks the annual General Assembly vote tells me that top diplomats from Portuguese-speaking Brazil became particularly active in the last few weeks, convincing Muslim countries that “Canada’s vote on Israel-related issues will be no different than that of the United States, while Portugal would be more balanced.”

The U.N.-based correspondent of Canada’s National Post, Steven Edwards, reported yesterday that foreign ministry officials in Ottawa criticized the timing of a Tel Aviv visit by the country’s international trade minister, Peter Van Loan, in which he announced Sunday – on the eve of the U.N. vote – his intention to tighten Canada’s trade relations with Israel even further.

“That’s no way to win friends and influence people at the U.N.,” one diplomat here said today. While blocs that included the African and Latin American countries were largely thought to have split their vote on the contested seat, the Arab countries and the OIC were largely believed to have voted en-bloc to bar Canada entry to the council.

Mr. Harper’s government has become one of Israel’s more forthright defenders in organizations like the Geneva-based U.N. Human Rights Council, where members like Cuba and Libya often single Israel out and garner enough votes to condemn its human rights record.

Only a few years ago, the American ambassador here would have made a public issue in defense of Canada. But in the maneuvering leading to today’s vote, American diplomats were all but absent.

Conversely, Israeli diplomats who habitually count heads before the votes at international bodies do not see Portugal as a reliable ally among the members of the European Union, which often joins the majorities or abstains after attempting to “soften” anti-Israel votes.

Portugal ended up winning 122 votes in the first round of today’s General Assembly ballot – just short of the 127 needed. Canada got only 114 votes in the first round, and eventually withdrew in the second round, after which Portugal received 150 votes. The balloting is often marked by small bribery in the form of trinkets. Vials of Canadian Maple syrup — an ambrosia unequaled on the planet for its deliciousness — were found by ambassadors as they arrived at their seats before the vote.

There are 10 elected seats at the Security Council, of which five new members are chosen once a year for a 2-year stint according to regional affiliation. The group of democracies known as the Western European and Others Group fielded three candidates this year for the two available seats that were vacated by Turkey and Austria. Germany won easily, which left Canada and Portugal.

Three other regional groups sent one candidate for each available council seat. Colombia replaced Mexico, India replaced Japan, and South Africa – which has amassed a remarkable anti-Western and anti-Israel voting record in its last council stint – replaced Uganda.

On January 1, the five new members will be seated at the famous horseshoe-shaped table alongside the five countries that were elected last year – Bosnia, Brazil, Gabon, Nigeria, and Lebanon – as well as the five permanent council members, Communist China, Russia, Britain, France, and America.