

BOOK REVIEW/RECENSION

Statesmen, Strategists and Diplomats: Canada's Prime Ministers and the Making of Foreign Policy

Patrice Dutil, ed. 2024. Vancouver: UBC Press, pp. 408.

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To date, only a modest volume of scholarship has explored the managerial skills and political acumen that Canada's prime ministers must harness in order to develop and implement an external agenda successfully. *Statesmen, Strategists and Diplomats* endeavours to fill a long-standing void in the existing literature on Canadian foreign policy by intimately reacquainting its readers with the prime minister as a protagonist who exercises their agency to shape Canada's engagement with its external environment. The book's editor, Patrice Dutil, acknowledges that prime ministers must operate under the constraints generated by domestic public opinion, finite resource endowments and exogenous geopolitical forces. His core argument is that prime ministers are nonetheless uniquely positioned to leave their mark on Canadian foreign policy by virtue of their authority to construct and fund the state structures that create and effect foreign policy, their leading role in making strategic decisions about the substance of Canada's foreign policy, as well as their idiosyncratic diplomatic styles. Canada's foreign policy can hence be "summarized" by its prime ministers.

Authors from a diverse array of disciplinary backgrounds have joined Dutil in contributing an individual chapter devoted to taking stock of the foreign policy behaviour and accomplishments of an assigned prime minister (or two). Starting with John A. Macdonald, the book is neatly divided into a series of concise analytical vignettes that probe the respective foreign policy records of nearly every prime minister since the dawn of confederation. Employing a variety of metrics to gauge their performance, the book concludes by ranking each prime minister's management of Canada's foreign policy using survey data collected from its contributors. The novelty of the book inheres in its ambitious scope: by encompassing the tenures of 16 different occupants of 24 Sussex Drive, the book heralds a departure from existing edited works that are exclusively devoted to deconstructing the foreign policy of a single prime minister.

However, beyond the short presentation of the survey findings in the final chapter, the contributors' distinctive insights are seldom brought into direct conversation with one another. The onus thus falls on the readers themselves to complete the comparative turn briefly initiated by the editor, a task somewhat complicated by the free rein that Dutil has given his contributors to utilize diverging methods. These methods have generated observations that, at times, defy direct comparison. Nevertheless, granting the contributors the discretion to apply their own methods to their respective case studies has also invigorated the book, enabling it to marshal insights from a deep reservoir of assorted academic talents. Stephen Azzi's analytically rich, multi-dimensional portrait of Paul Martin's managerial style stands out for its striking attention to detail. Multiple contributors have notably taken the opportunity to make the case that a scholarly reappraisal of a particular prime minister's approach to foreign policy is overdue. Among them are Jennifer Tunncliffe's dissection of the limitations of Lester Pearson's world view and Damien-Claude Bélanger's elucidation of R.B. Bennett's long overlooked global engagement and pragmatism.


The summaries featured at the end of each case study attempt to corral the contributors' insights into the established parameters of Dutil's typology of consequential executive decisions that shape the structures, policies and styles constituting Canada's external agenda. However, these recapitulations are, at times, noticeably misaligned with the actual focus of the corresponding case study. For example, the Colombo Plan is mentioned as a structure in the summary of Robert Bothwell's excellent chapter on Louis St. Laurent, despite not making an appearance at any point in his analysis. The typological boundaries between policy and style also shift across case studies, thus generating some additional ambiguity.

Without exception, each of the contributors has authored a meticulously researched and lucid account of how each prime minister sought to navigate the international milieu that enveloped Canada during their time in office. None of the contributors regard the prime minister as omnipotent, as evidenced by their sober and candid reflections on their subject's frustrated or unfulfilled foreign policy ambitions. At no point is prime ministerial agency suggested to be boundless. However, by structuring the book around the prime ministers themselves, the book's central premise that the prime minister constitutes a salient independent variable is readily accepted as the default point of departure in most of the case studies' accounts of foreign policy change. Without testing alternative falsifiable hypotheses that may offer more compelling explanations for cases of dynamism in Canadian foreign policy, the book invites the risk of potentially overstating the foreign policy influence of some of the prime ministers under consideration. While the book does offer a superb introduction to successive historical eras in Canadian foreign policy, the decision to set the temporal boundaries of most of its chapters to coincide with the term of office of a single prime minister has the effect of focalizing the incumbent prime minister's activities and obscuring the ongoing impact of their predecessors' legacies.

Exceedingly informative and intuitively organized, *Statesmen, Strategists and Diplomats* is particularly well suited as an introductory text for intellectually curious students who are venturing into the field of Canadian foreign policy for the first time.

Security. Cooperation. Governance: The Canada-United States Open Border Paradox

Leuprecht, Christian and Todd Hataley, eds. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2023, pp. 232.

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Leuprecht, Hataley and 17 other contributors to this edited volume demonstrate that the Canada-US border is dynamic—not static; that border policy, particularly since 9/11, reflects significantly different realities and priorities region-by-region; and that a pragmatic “will-to-make-the-border-work” has created space for experimentation and for non-federal government actors to make significant contributions to the development and implementation of border policy.

The editors challenge:

- 1) the proposition that central governments dominate in making border security policy;
- 2) the “monolithic conception of borders”—asserting that, in fact, there are “several Canada-US borders” and “not a single international dyad”;
- 3) the ongoing applicability of “much of the Canada-US border literature.”