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Review of "Statesmen, Strategists & Diplomats: Canadian Prime Ministers and the Making of Foreign Policy" edited by Patrice Dutil and "Friends and Enemies: Essays in Canada's Foreign Relations" by J.L. Granatstein

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Patrice Dutil, ed. *Statesmen, Strategists & Diplomats: Canadian Prime Ministers and the Making of Foreign Policy*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2023. Pp. 408.

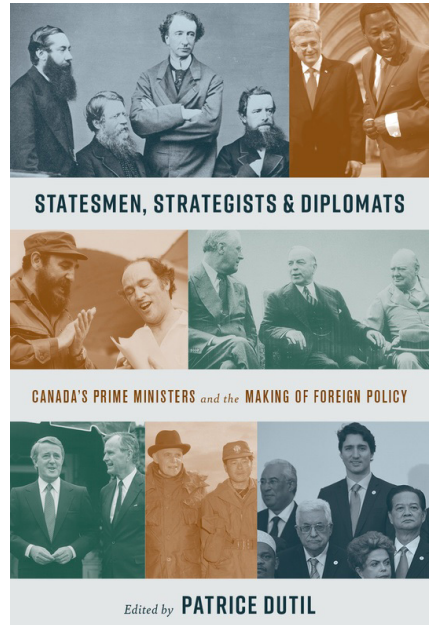
J. L. Granatstein. *Friends and Enemies: Essays in Canada's Foreign Relations*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2024. Pp. 364.

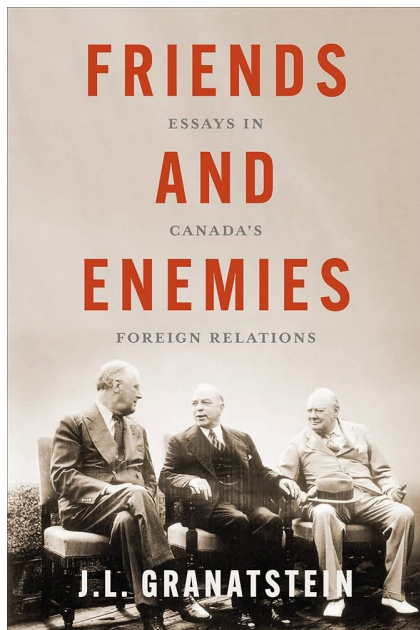
“The role of this country in world affairs will prosper only as we maintain this principle, for a disunited Canada will be a powerless one” (p. 6). Louis St. Laurent identified that key principle as domestic unity as part of his 1947 Gray Lecture when serving as minister of foreign affairs, a year before he became prime minister. He succeeded the longest-serving prime minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, who had carefully guided the country during the Second World War, aware of the need to balance external commitments with internal politics. This balance has been essential for all prime ministers and their cabinets, but there is no single way to lead the country in its alliance commitments and other external interventions. Should prime ministers be reactive or active; set the agenda or follow others; be helpful to curry favour or be obstinate to attract attention; act with purpose behind the scenes or stride forward into the limelight? These and other interrogations of prime ministers, their cabinets, and the government machinery and civil servants that assist them are raised in Dutil’s important book on prime ministers and the making of foreign policy in Canada from Confederation to the present.

Statesmen, Strategists & Diplomats is a much-needed study that has been brought to fruition by Patrice Dutil, professor of politics and public administration at Toronto Metropolitan University. Dutil is that rare combination of fine historian and a connector of scholars, authoring many books on prime ministers and public policy, while also editing key studies of Prime Ministers St. Laurent and Sir John A. Macdonald. In this new offering, Dutil has lined up established and emerging historians. Even though it is not easy to make new connections and reveal unknown stories of the prime ministers, the authors work to analyse their impact, connecting them to their life and times, critically delving into their actions and decisions. To set the stage, Dutil has written a crucial opening chapter on the “Imperial Prime Minister,” exploring the many ways that our leaders have shaped foreign policy and when they have been curbed, blocked or forced to curtail their vision.

Almost all of the prime ministers are treated sympathetically by the authors, although a few receive some hard shots. Sir John A. Macdonald is not one of them, with Barbara J. Messamore providing insight into his actions in pushing Canada westward and his sometimes testy interactions with the Imperials. Lacking a department of external affairs, which would not come until late in Sir Wilfrid Laurier's long career, Macdonald had a network of advisors, but more often he was guided by his own exceptional knowledge, experience, expertise, and "artful pragmatic flexibility" (p. 38). The challenge of dealing with the United States is a theme that every prime minister must confront, with set policies often giving away to improvisation. The greats in the first half of the twentieth century – Laurier, Borden and Mackenzie King – are all treated fairly here, although with the deep scholarship surrounding them, nothing shocking emerges. However, the chapters deliver new ways of understanding their actions in times of war and peace, in prosperity and through economic grief. The Depression years defined R. B. Bennett's time in the highest office, and Damien-Claude Bélanger makes the case for Bennett's under-studied engagement with foreign policy even as Canadians were being swept away in dust storms and crushed by unemployment.

One of the deans of political history, Robert Bothwell, writes on Louis St. Laurent, with all his challenges in taking Canada through the early Cold War, the Korean War and the pivot towards the US away from Britain – although not so rapidly as to alienate voters and reduce Canada to a colony. He was defeated by John Diefenbaker, who receives credit for his strengthening of the Commonwealth, engagement with peacekeeping, and condemning South Africa for its human rights abuses, but author Michael D. Stevenson should have more roundly condemned Diefenbaker for many failures in matters of defence, security and relations with the US. That said, Stevenson allows us to see some of Diefenbaker's victories, which are sometimes obscured





in general texts. Prime Ministers Lester B. Pearson and Pierre Trudeau continued the Liberal domination from 1963 to 1984. They both come off well at the hands of Jennifer Tunnicliffe and Susan Colbourn. Pearson's many contradictions are examined – from man of peace to Cold War warrior – and, ultimately, he was guided by experience and pragmatism. “A pint of milk a day for everyone,” wrote Pearson, “may in the long run prove a greater help to international cooperation and provide a surer basis for international organization than thunderous declarations about the rights of man” (p. 228). Trudeau succeeded Pearson and set about radically changing Canadian foreign

policy, only to find that he was often blocked by senior civil servants and service personnel, as well as the country's influential allies. Both Trudeau and Brian Mulroney watched Canadian influence erode among the Americans and other foreign actors, although they found ways to make a difference, with Mulroney having more triumphs by aligning Canada with the US. That too came at a cost. Many of the successful prime ministers – Mackenzie King at the forefront and Bennett at the very end of the line – had created effective teams of rivals, and Matthew Hayday focuses his chapter on the complex interaction of Mulroney and his Minister of External Affairs Joe Clark. The Liberal return to power under the remarkable Jean Chrétien is dissected by P.E. Bryden, with the prime minister's value of speaking truthfully to Canadians contributing to his success (as well as the divided opposition he faced). Wrestling down the debt involved starving the military of proper funding, but leading always requires difficult choices. Both Chrétien and his successor, Paul Martin, were forced to confront the 9/11 wars, and the little-studied Martin is treated firmly by Stephen Azzi, including his perception as a dithering leader on security files. The only significant misstep in the book is the attempt to cover Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau in the same chapter. While some interesting comparisons are made,

as well as Trudeau's unwinding of many of the Conservative leader's programs, they are important enough prime ministers to have their own chapters (even if Trudeau continues to lead).

Canada's most consequential historian, living or dead, in any field of study, is J.L. Granatstein. Having worked as an historian for over sixty years and produced over sixty books and countless articles in a staggering contribution to multiple fields of scholarship, Granatstein has written about most of the subjects covered in *Statesmen, Strategists & Diplomats*. In his newest book, *Friends and Enemies* is a collection of some of Granatstein's most important articles related to Canada's foreign relations. There is some overlap with Dutil's book, although the two books complement rather than compete.

For decades Jack Granatstein has delved deeply into the official archives, unofficial papers of leading statesmen, and to interview participants. In these chapters that are drawn from past published work, University of Toronto Press has made them accessible to a new generation of readers. His personal introductory essay lays forth some of his intellectual journey, with key projects and books advancing his thinking in the field of foreign relations. The twenty chapters are arranged into three sections: Canada and the United States, Canada and Britain, and Canada and the World. The first section contains studies of Canada's changing perception of the US, with a strong anti-American theme running through our history; Granatstein tells us why that has been the case and how it has suited the political elites in Canada. But the American "enemies" have also been "friends," and Canada, as he notes in free-standing chapters, benefitted from the Marshall Plan and North American free trade in the early postwar period. Other chapters examine the delicate dance with the US, and how we have at times leaned in to achieve security goals or defence pacts. Occasionally Granatstein draws on his own personal history, such as the period in the late 1950s when he remembers newsreels of the Soviet Union's victory in launching the Sputnik satellite and other missiles, and the "startling response" of fellow movie watchers in Toronto, who "clapped, laughed, and cheered, revelling in the Americans' humiliation and failure" (p. 79). The chippy Canadians of that period, while firmly within the North American alliance, were happy to see the US taken down a peg.

The second section on Britain explores Canadian diplomacy, the impact of the Second World War that led Canada to more closely

align with the US, and ongoing Canadian-British military relations since 1945. The Canada and the World section has some penetrating chapters on the department of external affairs, Canada's role in alliances, relations with the Soviet Union, and whether Canada has a grand strategy. The last chapter alone should be required reading for all service personnel and diplomats. There are also four excellent chapters on peacekeeping that question the role of the armed forces in these missions, why Canada chose peacekeeping as a symbol, and some of the challenges in conducting operations. Granatstein never gets caught up on the peacekeeping myth, aware that Canadian governments and the voting public were drawn to it because it was cheap, sometimes impactful, and a way to distinguish Canada from the US. "The Yanks fought wars, Canadians said, pointing at Vietnam, Granada, and Panama, while Johnny Canuck kept the peace" (p. 278).

These two books give us new ways to understand Canada's political leaders and their supporting machinery as they grappled with complex issues on the world stage, seeking to advance Canadian priorities and affecting compromise, sometimes hewing to principles and party platforms, other times drifting and changing with external circumstances. It is not useful to apply political-science terms such as realists, idealists or internationalists to individual leaders: almost every prime minister displayed these characteristics at one time or another. Perhaps it is more fair to say that most leaders struggled to do good, although the challenge was in carrying out some actions when they might buck trends, break promises, or hurt re-election chances. On the whole, Canada has been lucky to have strong leaders, who were smart, gutsy, charismatic and wilful; they, in turn, usually had skilled and experienced advisors in the supporting machinery of governance. These two books reveal much for academics, civil servants, and the historically minded. I wish Canadians would read them and learn more about their country; I suspect, also, that they would not rashly condemn those who we elect to lead us when they better appreciate the complexity of the political environment. In matters of foreign affairs, as Granatstein, Dutil and his fifteen authors have written, there are few easy choices, but charting a path forward can be easier if we know where we have come from in the past.

TIM COOK, *CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM*