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Reviewed for H-Diplo by **Patrick James**, University of Southern California

This book reflects a trend toward increased interest in Canada-U.S. (Can/Am) relations. For many years Charles F. Doran's *Forgotten Partnership* stood as the industry standard; it still does – Charles Doran's book remains a *tour de force* – but new entrants are building upon its substantial contributions and Geoffrey Hale does so very effectively.¹ Hale's book explores four dimensions of Can/Am relations (political-strategic, trade-commercial, cultural-psychological, and institutional-procedural), three of which Doran had identified in the 1980s and the fourth added by Hale (20). The book focuses on “the evolving context of the Canada-U.S. relationship and the ways in which the smaller country attempts to manage that relationship at different levels” (2). The author selected three broad sets of policy issues for assessment in terms of the identified dimensions of the Can/Am relationship: efforts after 9/11 to combine enhanced security measures with facilitation of trade (i.e., border policy); energy and related policies; and management of trade-related disputes in the context of differing economic and regulatory structures (21). These matters are explored through more than 170 semi-structured interviews with government officials and other participants in the policy process conducted from 2005 through 2010 (21). Hale's research thereby brings to life his fourth dimension of Can/Am relations while also confirming the sustained importance of the other three previously identified by Doran.

Hale reinforces some longstanding themes in Can/Am relations. Asymmetry is confirmed once again and across the board. Canada, like Mexico, is much more focused on the U.S. than the other way around and “largely an afterthought of the American political classes” (8, 27, 74). Asymmetrical interdependence is sustained and clear to see in the trade-commercial as

¹ See Charles F. Doran, *Forgotten Partnership: U.S.-Canada Relations Today* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 1984; recent works on Can/Am relations include Brian Bow, *The Politics of Linkage: Power, Interdependence, and Ideas in Canada-U.S. Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press), 2008; and Patrick James, *Canada and Conflict* (Toronto: Oxford University Press), 2012.

well as the cultural-psychological dimension: Post-NAFTA, exports (and mainly south of the border) account for 45% of Canadian GDP and “US trade and commercial policies toward Canada are often treated – particularly by Congress – as subsets of American domestic policies” (53, 55). Beyond the established theme of asymmetry, however, Hale pursues several aspects in greater depth than seen before: U.S. domestic politics in general and Congress in particular. This is where the newly identified dimension, institutional-procedural, comes to the forefront of explanation.

With regard to bilateral economic interdependence, most issues are “dealt with in the context of US *domestic* policy processes and, often, US *domestic* politics” and, as a result, Washington has multiple and segmented Canada “policies” (3, 13, 37). Only in serious crises does the U.S. (or Canada, for that matter) behave as a unitary actor (19). Thus Canadian governments must “engage the American political system as a whole” and accept the reality of “intermestic” (i.e., intertwined domestic and international) relations (124, 127). Probed at length in the context of the U.S. legislature is a previously neglected feature of Can/Am relations that confronts Ottawa: “The greatest challenge to bilateral relations tends to come from changes to administration policies driven largely by domestic political or special interest pressures that might or might not be specifically targeted at Canada” (142). Thus forces from within the U.S. political system can produce challenges to the Can/Am relationship that have a chance to exceed whatever arises from elsewhere.

Consider Congress in particular. One of the major contributions of this volume is to explore the role of this branch of government in more depth than has previously been encountered in studies of Can/Am relations. With its extraordinary degree of decentralization of power – for example, over 100 committees and subcommittees claim control over aspects of the Department of Homeland Security (150, 163) – the U.S. Congress seems *sui generis*. “Congress,” as Hale points out, “can use its power over legislation, appropriation (spending), and regulatory oversight to micromanage just about any form of government operation from which it is not explicitly excluded by the US constitution” (283). Especially difficult, even in comparison to the Senate, is the House of Representatives; its “tighter party discipline and procedural rules designed to limit legislative debate” facilitate special interest group pressures that can promote narrow and notably protectionist positions (167). The long-term experience with softwood lumber, for instance, shows how an industry with funding and persistence can lobby against Canadian interests very effectively in Congress (292).

Canadian leaders in Hale’s political universe experience even more encompassing challenges than those from Congress. Federalism on both sides of the border impacts upon and complicates interstate relations (121, 198). It is important to understand the points of difference in how federalism functions in the respective states because they affect Can/Am interactions and resulting policies. Canadian federalism privileges interstate federalism, namely, “the brokerage of regional interests through negotiations between or among federal and provincial governments” (203). The U.S. system, by contrast, entrenches “patterns of intrastate federalism, especially since they are mediated through the constitutional prerogatives and decentralized processes of Congress” (203). While different in these ways, the two governments end up with the same ‘bottom line’ when it comes to policy: “Neither federal government has the political capacity to act unilaterally on issues that involve cross-

cutting pressures from different domestic sectoral and regional interests” and homeland security and public safety provide numerous specific illustrations of that property (222, 229). Thus federalism adds further complexity, over and above the complications created by Congress, along the institutional-procedural dimension.

Among the political-strategic challenges facing Canadian policy makers, the most important is border management. At a maximum in terms of political sensitivity are the “processes for managing traffic on the Canada-US land border” (260). This issue perfectly fits the description for where the institutional-procedural dimension is most difficult for Ottawa, namely, when it deals with “a central US policy goal, enjoying strong domestic support, that applies across a wide range of allies and trading partners and is not contrary to international commitments” (142).

Consider, along the preceding lines, post-9/11 border restrictions and the auto bailout of 2009 (103, 106). Neither Ottawa nor the provinces had genuine room to maneuver during those crisis phases. Major challenges also persist for the provinces in particular regarding cross-border relations: resistance to change at local levels; a lack of electoral alignment for states and provinces which narrows windows of opportunity; and the fact that both states and provinces “usually depend on federal action to deal with significant cross-border issues” (216). All of this is as far from the ideal type of unitary state interactions as ever could be imagined.

What, then, to do, in light of (a) the overwhelming realities of domestic politics in the U.S.; (b) complications raised by federalism on both sides of the border; and (c) a host of other challenges along the institutional procedural dimension? One of the best insights in this book concerns “microstrategies.” To succeed in Can/Am relations, Canada must confront the reality of U.S. policy-related fragmentation. Energy is a key sector and, from a Canadian point of view, the policy process in the U.S. seems particularly chaotic in this highly interdependent area (306, 309). Canada therefore must adopt “effective lobbying strategies on specific issues or clusters of issues”; moreover, this needs to be done in a way that does not appear meddlesome within American domestic politics (144, 149). The most successful lobbying strategies naturally will be those that somehow are able to take advantage of support available in one or more places in the U.S. intergovernmental system – notably the presidential administration itself (171). In sum, microstrategy is the way to go.

Persistence pays, and the goal of all Canadian activities is to “foster a domestic echo for Canadian policy goals and concerns within the American political system” (174, 175). Hale points out, for example, that Canadian Embassy employees are tracking policy positions held by members of Congress (158-159).

These efforts from Ottawa and the provinces are needed to counteract the inevitable setbacks that emerge as a result of *Canadian* domestic politics. Bad outcomes for Canada are “most likely when Canadian governments engage in what Washington views as gratuitous, self-righteous posturing at US expense” (47). Interesting to ponder in that context is the claim from U.S. officials that style at times is more important than substance (93). Examples that come readily to mind are the confrontational ways in which respective Canadian governments

rejected participation in the Iraq War (c. 2003) and Ballistic Missile Defense relatively soon after. The U.S. did not necessarily need Canadian resources to move forward in either case but, importantly, did not want Ottawa to grandstand against Washington's policies in particular.

Hale probes beneath the surface of such setbacks for Canada and produces an assessment that will resonate especially with Canadian expatriates in the U.S., who tend to be better informed and thus more understanding about the full set of constraints on action by Washington. With regard to the U.S., he identifies a "certain strain of moral superiority, mixed with smugness and insecurity" within Canadian culture (78). And U.S. leadership certainly has noticed the difficult sector of anti-American public opinion with which Ottawa must deal; officials understand that it is easier for Canadian governments to cooperate when "actions do not attract significant publicity" (46). This is a somewhat amusing twist on the problem the U.S. had during the Cold War with summit meetings. Washington experienced pressure, under the glare of the cameras, to bring home something substantive from a given summit meeting to its attentive public; by contrast, Moscow did not face such constraints. In the highly asymmetric relationship with Ottawa, once again the public eye is a problem for effective negotiations but because of a very different reason: xenophobic Canadian nationalism.

With Ottawa aware to some degree of all ongoing features of the Can/Am relationship, it is natural to see segmentation, sectoral tendencies, and incrementalism as characteristics that have evolved in the policy domain. "Since 2001," Hale observes "most bilateral negotiations have been sectoral reactions to American initiatives" (102). Canada's sectoral strategy seeks to limit Canadian vulnerability regarding the need for multiple decision makers in the U.S. to support a preferred policy; energy and manufacturing are the most visible industries in Washington and they pursue precisely this approach in tandem with Ottawa and the provinces (136, 194). Similarly, Canadian governments are engaged with the U.S. on food safety policy at the technical-scientific, administrative, and political levels (279). Omnibus strategies and negotiations are all but unknown.

For example, aside from Afghanistan, Canadian foreign and defence policy goals "have tended to be relatively segmented" while also "poorly coordinated" in recent years (30). Founded on 23 March 2003, the short-lived Security and Prosperity Partnership, which had included Mexico, collapsed precisely because it went too far beyond the more "narrowly focused" Smart Border process between the U.S. and Canada (251). Grand visions are unable to survive the challenges that ensue from domestic politics and related matters as described above. Instead, incrementalism and sectoral management become indispensable to Canada in pursuing policy gains with the U.S.

Hale identifies areas of continuity and change in his authoritative review of Can/Am relations. Among rising issues, the Arctic is foremost. Another point of humor arises here, in light of the points made earlier about domestic politics; the Arctic provides a conservative government like that of Stephen Harper with an opportunity to stand up to the U.S. in a way that is helpful at home across the ideological spectrum (44, 45). Other important changes include a more positive U.S. perception of Canada as an actor along the political-strategic dimension as a result of considerable investment in the Afghan War, yet at the same time a continuing secular

decline in the sense of a “special relationship” which was cultivated through unprecedented cooperation in World War II (34, 33).

Hale turns a phrase quite well; consider this when it comes to summing up Can/Am relations along the dimension of primary interest to Washington: “US political and security relations with Canada are often characterized by a mixture of benign neglect, occasional irritation, and routine cultivation of political and administrative contacts to manage the many bilateral issues that often blur distinctions between foreign and domestic policies” (26). Given the key role of domestic politics and related factors, it is not surprising to find that interactions continue to be “piecemeal and uncoordinated” out of a desire on the part of both governments to maintain “policy discretion” (31). The book as a whole makes an excellent case for the existence and likely continuation of an incremental, sectoral and segmented approach toward Can/Am relations. Toward the end of the book, Hale describes Canadian policies as “defensive” and that makes a great deal of sense in light of the highly asymmetric capabilities of the two states when coupled with the random shocks that are bound to come from domestic politics and intergovernmental relations on both sides of the border, but most notably from inside the Beltway.

Perhaps the best way to finish this review is to pass along Hale’s rationale near the start of his book: “This is a book for people who wish to approach these issues with open minds rather than preconceived political or ideological agendas or a misplaced sense of moral (or cultural) superiority – phenomena that can occur in any cultural setting and across the ideological spectrum” (5). This admonition, of course, is meant to apply most directly to Canadian nationalists who sometimes assume that, because Americans pay little attention to their country, they therefore are superior in their grasp of Can/Am relations. Nothing could be further from the truth. This book provides a valuable cautionary tale for those in Canada who believe that they fully understand the policy process of Washington within Can/Am relations. Can/Am relations have reached a high level of complexity. In sum, domestic politics, federalism, and related processes within each state are ongoing and sometimes confusing challenges that Ottawa must meet in developing and implementing its policies if Canada is to succeed in relations with its colossal neighbor to the south.

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