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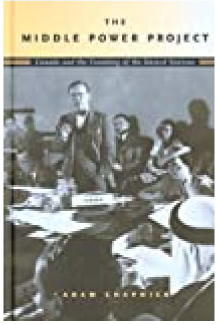
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Adam Chapnick. *The Middle Power Project: Canada and the Founding of the United Nations.* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005. 224 pp. $85.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7748-1247-4.



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Published on H-Canada (November, 2006)

Present at the Creation of Canada's Internationalist Identity

"The world needs more Canada." Spoken by Irish musician and activist Bono in November 2003, these words resonate with most Canadians. They point to the belief that Canada has generally played a very positive role and exercised more than its share of influence in world affairs. This belief, however, is accompanied by a sense that Canada no longer does as much good in the world as it once did, that recent generations and governments have faltered on the world stage where previous ones shined.[1] With the 1940s and 1950s as a particular point of reference, Canada's recent accomplishments often seem slight in comparison. Yet as Adam Chapnick ably demonstrates, the extent of Canada's international influence during this golden era of Canadian foreign policy has been greatly exaggerated. This is not a new argument but Chapnick's focus on Canada's role in the founding of the United Nations (UN) in the final years of the Second World War is both unique and extremely valuable.

In contrast to more positive portrayals of Canada's involvement in the creation of the UN prior to and during the San Francisco Conference in the spring of 1945, Chapnick argues that missed opportunities, poor planning, and internal divisions, among other factors, prevented the Canadian government and its officials from exerting as much influence on the shape of the postwar world as they might have done. Instead of emerging from San Francisco as the leader of a group of Middle Powers committed to ensuring that the interests of the smaller countries were adequately represented in the UN, Canada instead helped entrench and even extend the degree to which the Great Powers–the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, China, and France–dominated the new international organization.

In eleven crisp chapters, Chapnick details how the Canadian government, led by a prime minister leery of international commitments and preoccupied with domestic political conditions, only slowly began giving thought to the postwar world in 1942, well after its counterparts in Washington and London. Nonetheless, prodded by the Canadian public, which increasingly expected Canada to contribute to postwar reconstruction the way it was contributing to the war effort, William Lyon Mackenzie King and his government gradually embraced the functional principle as initially articulated by Hume Wrong. This principle of international representation held that a state's influence in international affairs should be commensurate with its interests, its capabilities, and its contributions. Drawing on the functional principle, a country like Canada, though not a great power, could still expect to play an active and constructive role in international organizations as the most important of a new group of countries, the Middle Powers.

Reasonable, simple, even elegant in conception, the functional principle was inherently difficult to adapt to specific proposals for the organization of international agencies. Nonetheless, according to Chapnick, the Canadian government missed its best chance to establish a precedent for functional representation in 1942-43 when it accepted a smaller role than it deserved on the new United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Despite some sympathy for the Canadian position in Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union in particular insisted that only the four Great Powers belonged on the UNRRA's policymaking committee. As one of the major donors of relief, Canada enjoyed great leverage on this issue but rather than insisting on membership in the executive Central Committee of the UNRRA, the Canadian government accepted the chair of its Supply Committee instead. Subsequently, though the Canadian government did have language emphasizing the role of smaller powers in world affairs inserted into the statement issued at the end of the Moscow Conference in October 1943, it was unable to alter the determination of the Great Powers to maintain control of the principal agencies of the emerging international order, including the Security Council of the United Nations. In fact, at the San Francisco Conference in mid-1945, the help of the Canadian delegation was instrumental in extending the veto power enjoyed by the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and China beyond what many other smaller powers were willing to accept. By then, Mackenzie King's government had come to accept the inevitability, even the desirability of Great Power dominance in issues of security in particular. At the same time, its concerns about the growing risk of conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union outweighed its desire for a more democratic Security Council.

This book enhances our understanding of Canada's foreign relations in this formative period in several respects. It details the debate over Canada's role in the British Commonwealth that preoccupied many in Canada and its government while the British and American governments were finalizing initial drafts for the Charter of the United Nations. It also provides a wealth of insight into the workings of Canada's Department of External Affairs where personal problems and differences of opinion between aggressive internationalists like Lester Pearson and Escott Reid and their more pragmatic colleagues Norman Robertson and Hume Wrong adversely affected Canada's ability to influence the course of events leading to the creation of the UN. Pearson in particular emerges from this account in a less than flattering light as an ambitious schemer who ignored instructions and undermined the pursuit of his government's interests, notably during the discussions of Canada's role in the UNRRA. Moreover, the inability of Pearson and Reid to follow instructions eventually led Robertson and Wrong to deny them access to information from Ottawa, leaving Canada's representatives in Washington unable to represent their government's positions accurately and effectively during the Dumbarton Oaks Conference. Lester Pearson is still generally lauded as Canada's greatest diplomat and while this book will not change that assessment–many scholars will already be familiar with the complexity of Pearson's personality and the personal dynamics at work within the Department of External Affairs–it will contribute to a fuller understanding of his place within the history of Canada's foreign relations.

Perhaps most importantly, the book closes with a discussion of how Canada came to be assigned an importance regarding the creation of the United Nations that it had not earned since Australia had been the more forceful advocate for the interests of the smaller powers. Unlike their Australian counterparts, however, many Canadian officials, politicians, journalists, and academics enthusiastically trumpeted Canada's role at the San Francisco Conference. Their triumphal views reflected the eagerness with which many Canadians, particularly among the elite, embraced internationalism and a sense of Canada's enhanced importance at the end of the Second World War but it also led to an exaggerated sense of Canada's accomplishments. The long-term effects of this sense can still be felt in contemporary Canadians' often unrealistically high expectations about what their government can do and should be doing on the international stage. Arguably, therefore, the United Nations has had a much greater effect on Canada since 1945 than vice versa.

This is an impressive book, exhaustively researched and convincingly argued. It significantly revises our understanding of Canada's role in the creation of the United

Nations and it should be an indispensable resource for anyone interested in Canadian history.

Note

[1]. See Andrew Cohen, *While Canada Slept: How We Lost Our Place in the World* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2003).

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Citation: Robin S. Gendron. Review of Chapnick, Adam, *The Middle Power Project: Canada and the Founding of the United Nations.* H-Canada, H-Net Reviews. November, 2006.

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