

Canadian Politics and Public Policy

# Policy



## Canada-US Relations

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# Policy

*Canadian Politics and  
Public Policy*

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Prime Minister Harper and President Obama together at the G8 summit in Northern Ireland last June. PMO photo

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From the Editor / L. Ian MacDonald

## Canada-US Relations

Welcome to our issue on Canada-US relations. The bilateral relationship is the most important file on any prime minister's desk. In our lead article, Robin V. Sears considers PMs over the last century and concludes that three—Robert Borden, Mackenzie King and Brian Mulroney were outstanding, and used their proximity to American power to enhance Canada's standing on the world stage. Of the relationship between Stephen Harper and Barack Obama, much will hinge on Obama's decision on whether to approve the Keystone XL pipeline.

For Obama's first term in the White House, his ambassador to Canada was David Jacobson, who has returned to his native Chicago as vice-chair of BMO Financial Group. He offers an American perspective on nurturing the relationship, not only from the American chancery in Ottawa, but his constant travels across Canada. He writes it was the best job of his life, and of his pride in managing the relationship. "We started to think of our border in a totally new way," he writes. "We realized that we do not have to choose between security on the one hand and trade and efficiency on the other."

From Washington, we have former Canadian diplomat Paul Frazer on bilateral relations in the wake of the shutdown of the US government for 16 days in October. "Canada," he writes, "is constantly facing the possibility of being sideswiped because of a whole array of stakeholder interests that have nothing to do with the Canada-US relationship."

Finally, Morgane Richer La Flèche offers the views of a Canadian student

in the US on how our two peoples are different as well as alike. She's a new writing talent of exceptional promise.

Leading off our features section, Mike Coates and Jack Hughes have a strong piece on the Canada-EU trade deal and conclude that it is not only a major win for Canada, but also that "it has given Prime Minister Stephen Harper a clear personal victory." Canada gains access to a market of 28 nations and 500 million, with a GDP of \$17 trillion, with \$2.7 trillion in government procurement alone. They write that CETA "should and will stand as the cornerstone of Harper's legacy."

On the Middle East, our lead foreign affairs writer, Jeremy Kinsman, considers the agony of Syria, and the devastation of a civil war in which 100,000 people have died, with two million refugees living in camps in neighbouring countries, and millions more dislocated within the country. Apart from providing funding for refugee camps, Canada's job, he writes "is to support democracy development—the capacity for pluralistic and inclusive institutions."

From Montreal, Celine Cooper looks at the Marois government's Charter of Quebec Values, and reminds us that "history has taught us that identity politics are most dangerous when they find expression through state apparatus."

It's the time of year when people buy books for the holiday season. This fall's literary season offers a remarkable number of political titles, four of which are reviewed in this issue.

But first we offer an exclusive excerpt from Brad Lavigne's biography of Jack Layton, *Building the Orange Wave*. As campaign director in 2011, Lavigne had an insider's view of what began as a ripple and became a wave. And as principal secretary in Layton's office, Lavigne had an equally close view of the final months of the NDP leader's life. First, the triumph. And then, tragedy. It is a poignant story, beautifully told.

In his review, Robin Sears gives Lavigne two thumbs up. "It is the final third of the book," he writes, "his account of Layton's triumphant campaign and its tragic aftermath, that makes this a compelling must-read."

Patrick Gossage, former press secretary to Pierre Trudeau, has a negative take on Michael Ignatieff's *Fire and Ashes*, his reflections on his sojourn as leader of the Liberals which ended in the biggest electoral disaster in the party's proud history—18.9 per cent of the vote and 34 seats. One thing for sure—he was no Trudeau.

Susan Delacourt's *Shopping for Votes*, is a history of political marketing and strategy over the last half century. It's an important book that, as Geoff Norquay writes: "Not only should it be required reading for political junkies, but for anyone who simply wants to understand how Canadian politics works in the 21<sup>st</sup> century..."

And finally, James Baxter offers a positive appraisal of *As Long as I'm Prime Minister*, Paul Wells' second book on Stephen Harper. In *Right Side Up* in 2006, Wells told how Harper gained power. In this book, he tells how Harper exercises it.

Enjoy, and Happy Holidays! **P**



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Prime Minister Mulroney greets President Reagan off Air Force One in Quebec City for the Shamrock Summit, March 17, 1985. *Montreal Gazette* archives



President Obama and Prime Minister Harper at the Hall of Honour on Parliament Hill in February 2009. It was Obama's first foreign visit. PMO photo

# The Prime Minister and the President: It Begins at the Top

Robin V. Sears

*Canada's most important bilateral relationship has had its ups and downs, largely traceable to the interpersonal rapport between prime ministers and presidents in any era. From the successes of Borden, Mackenzie King and Mulroney to the truculence of Trudeau and independence of Chrétien, Canadian prime ministers have each left their own mark on the partnership, which today seems to ride on a single, unresolved issue.*

Relations between Canada and the United States begin at the top, with the prime minister and the president. As Brian Mulroney, who set the modern standard for excellence in bilateral relations has put it: "When the president engages, the White House engages, and when the White House engages, the system engages."

One of the collateral benefits of that, as Mulroney has also said, is that Canada's influence in the world is measured to some extent by its influence in Washington.

Three Canadian prime ministers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century stand out for conducting outstanding relationships with the US, while enhancing Canada's standing in the international community.

Robert Borden connected with Woodrow Wilson during and after the First World War. William Lyon Mackenzie King had a privileged relationship with Franklin D. Roosevelt before and through the Second World War. In his famous speech at Queen's University in 1938, FDR said America would regard an attack on Canada as an attack on the United States. The world took note.

And Mulroney got two big things done—the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement with Ronald Reagan in 1987 and the Acid Rain Accord with the first George Bush in 1991. As President Bush told his officials at the time: “I want this for Brian.”

Great elected leaders are by definition adept at forging political partnerships—you can't be a great US president without that skill. In the absence of any real party structures, success, even your political survival, will frequently depend on the support of allies deeply loyal to you.

The ability to build alliances and even, at key moments on big issues, to build bridges to political opponents is usually a good indicator of a leader who will be able to do the same across borders as an international statesman.

Politics is always about the ability to win and wield power, but an important corollary is the importance of accepting who has more than you. Only from that sober recognition can you build a stable—if by definition, unequal—relationship. There is no sadder vignette in public life than the pipsqueak politician slashing at the ankles of a power far greater than him, shouting, “You better listen...!” to the sardonic delight of onlookers and opponents.

State-to-state relationships are necessarily unequal, whatever rhetoric of mutual partnership summit communiqués may be larded with. The wisest and most successful statesmen are those who can always spot the finest gradations of power and influence, when the rankings may be shifting, and who is rising and who is on the edge of a humiliating fall.

Margaret Macmillan's brilliant *Paris 1919*, her exhaustive study of the months of peace-brokering in Paris at the end of the First World War, delightfully dissects the rise and fall of

**The wartime partnership gave Canada leverage beyond its economic and military heft for decades: in NATO, in Norad, at the United Nations, in the IMF and the World Bank. Lester Pearson played Canada's relatively weak cards with diplomatic genius in Washington and London and New York. His peacekeeping success post-Suez came not from Canada's clout, but from his keen appreciation of what the angry great powers needed—but could not bring themselves to offer without a third party—to build a path toward reconciliation.**

individual players and battered nations, as dozens of supplicants fought for attention, allies and advantage in the post-war carve-up of Europe. That the victorious imperial powers, Britain and France, represented by diplomatic giants like Talleyrand and Lloyd George, were masters of the manipulation of power in the back rooms and salons was not surprising. That the American academic, President Woodrow Wilson was their peer, was.

Wilson understood that America's role in delivering victory, combined with his commitment to the emerging democracies' hunger for nationhood, gave him dramatic negotiating leverage. Sadly, he was the unusual leader who understood better how to wield power on a global stage than he did in his own national arena.

Canada established here its ability to punch above its weight, not only militarily following its impressive war achievements, but also diplomatically. It did so by carefully sliding between support for the imperial mother country and the rising superpower to its south. Robert Borden played an important role in persuading some hesitant Americans that Britain was their most important ally and preaching the benefits of an English-speaking commonwealth of nations to skeptical British diplomats.

It is a role Canada has played often, and well, using our American geographic advantage and the leverage of our historical British connection. Borden never presented himself as an equivalent power to either side, he always understood his was a game of benefitting—as a dramatically weaker power—from his access to powerful friends. It is a lesson many Canadian prime ministers have failed to learn.

The shoe was on the other foot on the eve of the Second World War, when

a depression-battered and still war-weakened Britain desperately needed the support of the still-rising superpower across the Atlantic. Franklin D. Roosevelt had recognized the need to stop fascism years before many European leaders. He also knew that his voters were deeply unhappy about being drawn into another “European war.”

Britain needed America in order to survive a German sweep of Europe, FDR needed Britain to survive long enough to rally American opinion against Hitler. Out of this reality came the Lend Lease program, whereby American money—but not soldiers—helped buy this crucial historic window. One of Canada's most internationally adroit prime ministers, Mackenzie King, quickly understood like Borden before him that his role was to foster Anglo-American harmony—and he did it assiduously, hosting the Canada-UK-US summits of 1943 and 1944 in Quebec City and playing the enthusiastic matchmaker.

The wartime partnership gave Canada leverage beyond its economic and military heft for decades: in NATO, in Norad, at the United Nations, in the IMF and the World Bank. Lester Pearson played Canada's relatively weak cards with diplomatic genius in Washington and London and New York. His peacekeeping success post-Suez came not from Canada's clout, but from his keen appreciation of what the angry great powers needed—but could not bring themselves to offer without a third party—to build a path toward reconciliation.

**H**e worked the narrow space between Israel, France and the United Kingdom—the humiliated Suez plotters—and the United States, with sufficient skill that the

world's first peacekeeping mission was created and he won the Nobel Peace Prize. It was Pearson as prime minister who understood enough about American presidents and power to persuade the Johnson administration to sign the Auto Pact. This agreement that embedded American auto assembly into the Canadian economy was significantly tilted in Canada's favour, anchored tens of thousands of good manufacturing jobs here, and was the precursor to the more transformational trade agreements of the 1980s.

Now it would be hard to characterize Lester Pearson as a great people politician in the style of Bill Clinton or Jean Chrétien. Ted Sorensen's and Bill Moyers' memoirs hint that the presidents they served, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, had a rather dismissive view of Pearson. But until a serious split over Vietnam, his emotional intelligence, his diplomatic experience and his dogged determination served Canada and the Canada-US relationship well. Like King and Borden before him, he played the intermediary role between far more powerful leaders with skill.

Two of the most successful prime ministers of the past century were standout failures at Washington management. Pierre Trudeau and Jean Chrétien each failed at the management of the most important international political relationships that any Canadian government has, and curiously, they bracket the most successful prime minister we've ever had at soothing and stroking American political leaders.

Trudeau was a product of the pious, mildly anti-American milieu of much of the post-war European, Latin American and Canadian intelligentsia. It was fashionable to dismiss America as either imperialist or inept, or both.

Socially and politically, Trudeau's was a generation weaned on the turmoil of the civil rights years, and revolted by the bloody nightmare of Vietnam and brutal American-backed dictators in Latin America and Africa. It would have been surprising if he had been less dismissive in his views of America's role in the world and its importance to Canada.

From his nose-thumbing youthful adventures in Communist China, to his open adulation for Fidel Castro,

to his embarrassing peace mission at the end of his career, this was not a leader in whom an American president, Democrat or Republican, could find much to like. And they didn't. Through Johnson to Nixon, to Gerald Ford, and Ronald Reagan, it would be hard to find a Canadian prime minister with such an unbroken record of unproductive relations with Washington.

He didn't care, because sadly, this was in no way political damaging to him. From the McCarthyite 1950s to today, a large slice of Canadians respect leaders who poke the American giant in the eye. It was part of Trudeau's cachet with many Canadians that he was more respected in social democratic Europe and dictatorial Africa than in Washington.

Chrétien's reasons for failure were different. He tried but could never really connect with Bill Clinton. According to Clinton insiders it was not often clear to them what Chrétien wanted. The Chrétien administration, like the man himself, was incrementalist and reactive. The idea of a large public engagement was not part of Chrétien's style on any political front.

In any event, he was happy in the early days to make a clear distinction between the enthusiasm of his predecessor for all things American and the more traditional Canadian sanctimony toward the superpower. When the second George Bush, Dubya, arrived the atmosphere grew chilly, especially over Chrétien's deliberate slap at the ill-conceived Iraq invasion.

**I**t was, of course, Brian Mulroney who set the never-since equaled standard for close, engaged, and productive relations with Washington. From the free trade agreements, to managing the collapse of the Soviet Union, to acid rain and apartheid, Mulroney worked his deep relationships with first Ronald Reagan and then George H.W. Bush to deliver considerable benefit to Canada and indeed, the world. There are useful and easily emulated lessons.

Like Mulroney, another politician now 20 years out of the game, who still enjoys discussing and observing it daily, Reagan knew how to use a smile as well as a gentle nudge, and occasionally a very heavy hammer to

achieve what he wanted.

He and Mulroney connected early in their relationship, but it was the Canadian who understood it was his job to nurture and develop the opening. Mulroney, who has touched Canadians by the thousands with a phone call on the eve of a scary surgery, or in the wake of a sudden death, or to congratulate an opponent on an unexpected victory, used the same skills with first Reagan then Bush. He never forgot a birthday, an engagement, a graduation or an anniversary.

Sneered at by many in the media and the opposition for this "cheesy" retail political schmoozing, Mulroney was far wiser than they. He knew well that even the president of the United States—on some bleak nights, especially the president—can be touched by a late night call from a faraway friend, expressing sympathy and support. The years of careful nurturing of that relationship, and parallel ones with Nancy Reagan, and Reagan's senior advisers—especially Jim Baker—lead to the triumph of his career, the Free Trade Agreement.

**Mulroney knew he needed Reagan to take an unprecedented risk for him—agreeing to a non-American controlled dispute resolution mechanism, an impossibility for US politicians to accept for more than a century. That Reagan told his negotiators to do it, "for Brian" was partly self-interest—he won great kudos for the FTA as well—but partly an act of solidarity with an embattled friend.**

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from a Hollywood actor. When the Harper government wonders why they have not had similar success first with their nominal ideological cousin, George W. Bush and more recently with Barack Obama, they would be wise to consult the memoirs of Baker and Mulroney for lessons.

In addition to the need to develop real partnerships built on respect, friendship and an honest acknowledgement of who needs whom, great leaders understand that this round is never the last. Win or lose, don't poison your ability to return to the table in the future by your behaviour at the eleventh hour of a fateful deal.

But perhaps most important of all is the importance of not seeking to flaunt your victory or your advantage, or your opponent's weakness, especially on his turf or in front of his supporters. This is a mark of real statesmanship, one that few have the restraint and discipline to muster, especially under the spotlight glare of a taunting media.

Which brings us to the relationship between the 22<sup>nd</sup> prime minister of Canada and the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States—Stephen Harper and Barack Obama.

The Harper team started off well in their opening to the Obama administration early in 2009. Following tradition, the new president's first foreign visit was to Canada, a whirlwind half-day working visit to Parliament Hill. Obama's brief Ottawa visit was a political success, followed by the promise of a new approach to pushing back on the 'Thickening border' through a high-level summit process with Mexico. The two leaders have also met in Washington, at trilateral summits of the "three amigos" with Mexico, as well as at annual G8, G20 and APEC summits. By all accounts, Harper and Obama have a cordial personal relationship, though they could hardly be called kindred spirits.

**Inevitably, the relationship will be measured by Obama's decision on whether to approve TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline from the Alberta oil sands to refineries on the Gulf Coast of Texas.**



The first President Bush and Prime Minister Mulroney, fishing off the president's summer home at Kennebunkport, Maine, in August, 1990. White House photo

Inevitably, the relationship will be measured by Obama's decision on whether to approve TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline from the Alberta oil sands to refineries on the Gulf Coast of Texas. The signals he has been sending are not encouraging. In an interview with the *New York Times* in July Obama pointedly referred to the "tar sands" adding it would create 2,000 jobs during construction "and after that we're talking about somewhere between 50 and 100 jobs in an economy of 150 million people." His own State Department had a different number in a report last March: "Including direct, indirect and induced effects, the proposed project would potentially support approximately 42,100 annual jobs across the United States over a 1-to 2-year construction period." While Keystone is supported by the trade unions in Obama's Democratic base, it has become the focal

point of opposition by climate activists in the US. As former US ambassador to Canada David Wilkins aptly put it: "Keystone has sort of sucked the air out of the room."

It has certainly become a test of the relationship between this prime minister and this president. Harper probably didn't help the prospects of Obama approving Keystone when, in an interview with CNBC's Maria Bartiromo in New York, he said he wouldn't "take no for an answer." It is impossible to imagine Brian Mulroney ever going to New York and saying anything like that about Ronald Reagan or George Bush. Nor can we imagine Barack Obama saying to his advisers: "I want this for Stephen." **P**

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# The Best of Friends

David Jacobson

The chancery of the US Embassy on Sussex Drive in Ottawa, nerve centre for managing the American side of the Canada-US relationship. *Policy photo*

*From 2009 to 2013, David Jacobson served as the US ambassador to Canada. During that time, progress was made on such bilateral files as the Beyond the Border initiative and the Regulatory Cooperation Council. While significant components of the energy file remain unresolved, Jacobson counsels a recognition of our bi-national interdependence and a good dose of persistence.*

Winston Churchill once said that “the brightest hours flash away the fastest.” So it was with my tenure as the United States Ambassador to Canada. I believe that everyone has a special time in life. The four years I spent in Canada were mine.

During my time as ambassador, I had the opportunity to occupy a front-row seat to the ongoing development of the relationship between Canada and the United States. The friendship between the two countries has long been the strongest in the world, and I’m proud to say that during my tenure we not only maintained the relationship, we enhanced it.

At the top of my list is the Beyond the Border declaration, signed by Prime Minister Harper and President Obama in Washington in 2011. That agreement was the result of a new, shared vision for perimeter security and eco-



Prime Minister Stephen Harper collects his winnings—two cases of beer, from US Ambassador David Jacobson at the front door of 24 Sussex in 2010, after Canada beat the United States in overtime in the gold medal game of the Winter Olympics in Vancouver. They had a friendly bet. US Embassy photo

conomic competitiveness. We started to think of our border in a totally new way. We realized that we do not have to choose between security on the one hand and trade and efficiency on the other. We realized that we can make decisions about people and goods—not at the choke point of the border—but as far away as possible; toward the perimeter of our continent. We made cross-border movement with people and goods more efficient, and at the same time we made North America safer.

**W**e also saw the formation, in 2011, of the Regulatory Cooperation Council in order to better align the regulatory approaches in our two countries. I like to think of this effort as a way of undoing the so-called “tyranny of small differences” in regulation between Canada and the United States. Many of those differences don’t increase public health and safety; they simply increase costs, lower customer satisfaction and diminish competitiveness.

On the ever-important issue of trade,

we laid the foundation for future growth. Our two countries are among the 12 who are negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which—if successful—will be the most ambitious regional trade agreement in history. TPP can create millions of jobs in Canada and the United States.

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Our trade infrastructure is moving forward as well. I was pleased to stand with Prime Minister Harper, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood in 2012 to announce the agreement to build a new, publicly-owned bridge over the Detroit River. The new crossing

will create tens of thousands of jobs on both sides of the border, and many thousands more for future generations as barriers between us continue to diminish.

These, and so many other examples, show the growing strength of our partnership. Beyond these concrete actions, I’m particularly proud of a change in the tone in our discussions. We are all fervent patriots, on both sides of the border. We are always willing to argue our positions and to defend our national interests. Inevitably, our relationship finds bumps in the road. But of late, it’s become clear that we are able—on both sides of the border—to take our problems in stride.

**T**he level of cooperation has not been limited to efforts at the federal level. Cross-border cooperation on regional levels has flourished. Organizations like PENWR, the Council of Great Lakes Governors, the New England Governors and Eastern Premiers, the Council of the Great Lakes Region and many others are

solving cross-border problems and developing a common agenda for Canadian-United States cooperation.

One area where Canada and the United States must continue to strengthen our partnership is in energy. This is particularly important, given the new technologies that have unlocked vast new sources of energy here in North America—both carbon-based and alternative.

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This is a new and exciting reality. Many of us can still remember the 1970s, when we were held hostage by OPEC—when we had to line up for our gas. We became acutely aware of the fragility of our energy policy. It was at that time that we started talking about the goal of energy independence. For someone who lived through the oil shocks of the 1970s, saying that we are about to achieve

North American energy independence is thrilling. But that doesn't make the next steps easy. Working to harness the potential of these vast resources is already testing our relationship. However, if we devote the same positive energy to confronting these issues as we have to the others, we will prevail. We will improve the lot of citizens on both sides of the border.

What we need, most of all, is persistence. We need the persistence to develop those sources of energy in the most environmentally sensitive of ways. We need to figure out how to move energy from where it is, to where we need it. We need to develop the political consensus and the social license to unlock our energy and economic potential. And in turn, unlock our human potential.

President Obama has championed the need for an energy strategy that looks to the future, and develops every source of energy. That strategy is particularly important, now that we are poised to take control of our energy future. Today, the United States produces more oil than we have in 15 years. We import less oil than we have in 20 years. We've doubled the amount of renewable energy we generate from wind and solar. We're producing more natural gas than ever. As a result, we have added hundreds of thousands of good jobs, and we're sending less carbon

into the environment than we have in 20 years.

Canada and the United States have the largest energy relationship between two countries in the world. Canada supplies the U.S with:

- 100% of its imported electricity
- 85% of its imported natural gas
- 28% of its imported oil

If we hope to reach our common goals of energy independence while protecting the environment and our climate, our two countries must work together. We must show the persistence that we need to strike this balance.

Challenges to the Canadian/American relationship still exist and always will. Two sovereign nations probably never could nor should agree on everything. But I suspect that any two neighboring countries anywhere else in the world would be only too happy to trade their sets of problems with those that exist between Canada and the United States.

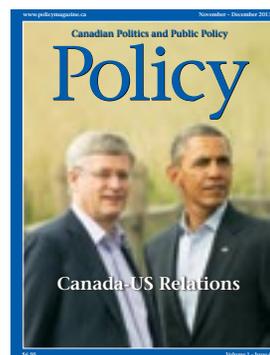
We Americans are lucky to have Canada as our neighbor. And I hope Canadians feel the same way when they look to the south. **P**

*David Jacobson is a Vice-Chair at BMO Financial Group. Prior to joining BMO, Mr. Jacobson served as the 22nd United States Ambassador to Canada, holding the role from 2009 to 2013.*

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# Policy

## Canadian Politics and Public Policy



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The Capitol, centre of the US government shutdown for 16 days in October, including the national parks on its doorstep. Canada-US relations took a collateral hit. Shutterstock photo

## Letter from Washington: After the Shutdown

Paul Frazer

*It can be challenging enough in the best of times to get Washington to focus through the partisan noise on issues of interest to Canada. But when the US government is distracted, that job gets even harder. During the ongoing US partisan political standoff, Canada runs the risk of losing sight of the big picture, especially on major files like Keystone XL, which has become a corrosive factor in the bilateral relationship. How can Canada protect itself from the machinations in Washington? Delve more deeply into America's psyche, its governance, and its system, and keep reminding US politicians of the real economic costs of political brinkmanship.*

There are different perspectives about exactly what occurred during the 16 days in which the US government was shut down. Many in Washington are uncertain what we emerged from when the president and the US Congress reached an agreement to reopen the government. The reader would not be alone in wondering what the whole experience actually accomplished and what it means in the months ahead for the US and internationally, especially for Canada.

In the end, there is no doubt that this agreement is merely a temporary fix: delaying solutions to complex and serious budget problems while temporarily raising the US debt ceiling (or borrowing limit). The 11<sup>th</sup> hour agree-

ment calls for completion of budget talks by December 13, while funding government operations through January 15 and suspending the debt limit through February 7.

The shutdown hit individuals, communities, and federal operations in different ways—large and small—across the country. The media focused more on the closing of national parks and open-air monuments than on the impact on a host of social programs essential to the daily well-being of children, seniors, the military and their families, and Native Americans among others. In many ways, Washington, D.C., was immune from the full punch of the closure with the exception of the white noise created by political attack and counterattack.

A silver lining was that capital markets remained optimistic that the political players would reach a reasoned agreement to forestall the potential economic calamity of a first-ever default on US debt. Markets essentially absorbed the immediate economic impact of the shutdown as a temporary and unsurprising result of the political circumstances. Evidence that markets largely shrugged off the impasse can be found several indicators, including the Dow Jones Industrial Average with its net gain of over 275 points during the 16-day shutdown. To many on Wall Street, the shutdown mostly was an inconvenience and a shabby example of political intransigence.

Preliminary estimates vary in terms of the shutdown's impact on the US economy: from 120,000 to 130,000 jobs lost, reduced fourth quarter growth between 0.25 per cent and 0.6 per cent, and an estimated displacement of \$24 billion to \$55 billion in economic production. The more serious impact for now appears to be depressed consumer confidence and investors lacking any willingness to spur further economic activity. This is rooted in heightened uncertainty about the ability of lawmakers to effectively deal in a timely fashion with the most pressing economic and budgetary decisions facing the US.

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**Too many Americans consider this latest political struggle to be of domestic consequence only. They are unable to relate to currency fluctuations, shifts in the value of Treasury bills, or the international ripple effect of US domestic actions on the global economic front. Americans forget that the rest of the world relies on the US to be sensible and effective.**

front. Americans forget that the rest of the world relies on the US to be sensible and effective. Disarray in US affairs breeds a serious lack of confidence abroad. As an example, the cancellation of President Obama's trip to Asia created a momentary, but worrisome vacuum in a part of the world that the US views as one in which it should be more constructively engaged. It is also that part of the world where the region itself wants such US engagement as a counterweight to overwhelming Chinese presence. The shutdown's impact abroad on American reputation and on respect for the president's power and authority is more abstract, but no less important for the interests of the US.

Canada in some respects "dodged a bullet" with the shutdown. The Canadian equities markets did not go into a tailspin; trade, although delayed at some border points, was inconvenienced, but not damaged. Border travel was in a similar state. But we would be foolish to ignore the potentially drastic fallout of a US failure to reach budget agreement by December 13 or at least see a clear path to resolution and the political will to pursue it.

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Even without the dislocations caused by another major impasse, there are long-standing issues of some importance in the Canada-US relationship that are not addressed effectively when the US government is distracted. In the best of times, it is enough of a challenge for the Canadian and other governments to focus the administra-

tion's attention on key bilateral issues. There is a history of experience in how difficult it is to get the president's time and attention, let alone to knit together the political coalitions so important to obtaining Congressional support or action on an issue. It is a mistake to assign too much power to the office of the president. It is a mistake to overlook the local interests at play in any Congressional office; interests that often cause the lawmaker to respond all too quickly to those narrower forces rather than taking a broader perspective. Canada is constantly facing the possibility of being sideswiped because of a whole array of stakeholder interests that have nothing to do with the Canada-US relationship.

**L**ooking ahead, how does Canada push/pull the US, for example, on all of the undertakings made in the Canada-US Border Security Action Plan and the Regulatory Cooperation Council Joint Action Plan? These two initiatives were designed to speed the implementation of measures to support the cross-border movement of goods and travelers as well as reduce, through regulatory transparency and coordination, barriers to trade between the two countries.

In the midst of a shutdown and during the ongoing US partisan political standoff, Canada runs the risk of losing sight of the big picture. There is a tendency because of the many bilateral issues in play every day to get into the weeds and to be pulled down by that experience.

Keystone XL exemplifies this dilemma. It has become a lightning rod for all stakeholders in both countries and Canada finds itself in a position of "if you win, you lose." It has also become a corrosive factor in the bilateral relationship—one that risks having a longer-term negative impact of poisoning goodwill and constructive relations. Canadians must avoid seeing the final decision as being about

them. There is no doubt that the longer it takes to render a decision the greater the chance that other variables will impact the outcome. Dramatic changes in the US energy sector have turned traditional projections of supply and demand on their head. The vast underground pipeline network knitting Canada and the US is in a dramatic state of flux. The voices for and against Keystone XL are outdone only by the Republican Party with its eagerness to have a prize political football with which to run at every

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opportunity, regardless of whether or not such action could carry Keystone XL over the goal line.

Canadian diplomats have long had an unwritten dimension to their work overseas: explaining the US and its politics to those around the world who presume that Canadians—because of geography and the significant bilateral trading relationship—above all others, know and understand the US better than anyone else. While there is some truth in this, Canadians must resist the inclination to believe it fully. It is critically important to delve more deeply into America's psyche, its governance, and its system. Canadians need to do this first and foremost because it is in Canada's interest to do so.

**B**ut how can Canada protect itself from the machinations in Washington? The last few weeks prompted many to accept that, unlike Wall Street banks, the US may in fact not be too big to fail. This is a chilling thought. For Canada, in particular, there are no buffers that can

be automatically activated. We speak of global connectedness as today's reality, but the greater reality for Canada is the integration of its economy with the US.

If there is anything to be gained for Canadians as a result of the continued gridlock and stalemates in the US, it is the reminder of the need to maintain an effective voice in Washington and in other US influence centres to protect and promote Canadian interests. At the same time, Canadians can use that advocacy to remind US politicians of the real economic costs of continued political brinkmanship that puts the US economy at risk and by extension impacts Canada, to which the US is attached at the hip. **P**

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# What Five Years of Cross-Border Living Have Taught Me About Canada-US Relations

Morgane Richer La Flèche

*The differences between Canada and the United States, and between Canadians and Americans, are the stuff of legend, cliché and stereotype. For one Canadian transfer student, living in America has been an immersion in the truths behind the truisms.*

A few years ago, my family took a road trip from Montreal, Quebec to Cape Lookout, North Carolina. As we made our way south, we drove by an endless procession of idyllic greenery, white-shingled houses, and American flags floating proudly in the summer breeze. Inevitably, however, the highway would lead us through the paved flatlands of Parking Lot, USA, where the only cultural outpost would be a supersized Walmart bunker squashing the landscape. On one such occasion, we were idling at a red light when we noticed the silhouette of a nearby statue. Expecting a landmark, we drove closer. It was a life-sized Jesus Christ, crucifix in hand, bursting from the cockpit of a green army tank. Above it, a neon sign advertised "50% OFF FOR ACTIVE DUTY MEMBERS."

This was America, where capitalism, religion, and militaristic nationalism coalesced without contradiction.

Canada and the United States are two nations in constant intercourse. We are economic partners, political allies, and share the world's longest border. With some variation, our material culture is identical: we wear the same clothes, buy the same stuff, and drive the same cars. Yet our perceptions of each other differ sharply. For Americans, the most prevalent attitude towards their neighbour is one of benign ignorance; for Canadians, it is closer to contemptuous resentment.

A recent survey conducted amongst friends from both countries revealed the following results. When asked to describe Canada, my American connections named happiness, nature,

the maple leaf, hockey, and our French-speaking population. They saw us as an ally, a friend, and an extension of America—“America without guns” was a common response. For New York staters, we’re a place to get a drink on your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. My Canadian friends were less forgiving: obesity, super power, manipulation, domineering, busy, “a nation under siege,” and Obamacare were given as epithets for our southern neighbor. They were annoyed by corn syrup, and the fact that no one realizes that Ryan Gosling is Canadian. They saw a nation of excess. I was struck by how little either understood the other.

Reflecting our respective power, Canadians simply know more about their neighbour than Americans do. We read the *New York Times*, watch CNN, and a Canadian would have to live under a rock not to recognize the Obamas. For all our disdain of Americans, Canadians are uncritical consumers of American culture. Meanwhile, only the most worldly American can speak intelligently about Canadian politics. Following the unveiling of the Affordable Care Act, many of my conservative American friends declared their intention to move to Canada. I felt obliged to inform them that Canada adopted universal healthcare in 1966.

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At 15, I left my French Catholic school in Montreal for the promise of an American prep school education. Although consistently ranked the best high school in the province, the institution that had followed me from infancy to adolescence just couldn’t compete with the opportunities offered by America’s best boarding schools—or their unfathomable endowments. The glossy admission packages sent to each applicant showed pastoral expanses, world-renowned academics edifying eager students, and facilities for the arts and athletics that would make any Canadian university blush. And so, armed with a new comforter and the conviction that I was hereby securing an undeniably bright future, I

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bid Canada adieu and settled in what would become my adoptive country.

Or, as the US Customs and Border Protection agent likes to remind me every time I come home, I became a legal alien in the United States of America. And then he takes my fingerprints.

My first months in the United States were unexpectedly jarring. I didn’t know the slang, the brands, or the literature. As a francophone, I had to learn that pronouncing French words properly was considered pretentious in America: it was kew-ture, nonchal-ohns, mey-ter D. Thanksgiving came too late, politics were exciting, religion was taken seriously, and race was always the elephant in the room. As for Canada, it was an inherently funny concept and anything associated with it was prone to trigger laughter.

I quickly understood that spirit-school spirit, team spirit, national spirit—was a central tenet of the American experience. The cultivated indifference towards our education and our environment that had been displayed by me and so many of my Canadian classmates was no longer cool. Acedia and doubt were less fun than optimism and certainty, and I knew then why Americans smile so much. More than any other people, they believe. They believe in their indomitable resilience, in the unique value of their experience...and yes, sometimes, irritatingly, in their own superiority. I have heard many casual theories to explain the flag-waving behavior of my American peers, and they usually boil down to an unflattering combination of navel-gazing, simplicity, and an aversion towards introspection. Yet one thing is clear: unlike soul-searching Canadians, our southern neighbors do not try to renegotiate what it means to be American. An unwavering belief in the American spirit—a fetish that is often invoked, but rarely defined—seems to unite left and right, Mayflower-descendant or newly arrived immigrant. Whatever it is, the American spirit is good, and it is worth exporting.

Above all, however, I discovered excellence and the relentless pursuit of it. If my Canadian education had given me facts, my American educa-

tion gave me analysis. Knowing the answer, which had made me such a good student back home, was not as interesting as knowing the question. If my Canadian education had taught me humility, my American education taught me assertiveness. I learned how to formulate my own opinions early, and believe steadfastly in their validity—no matter how naïve that confidence might be. And if my Canadian education had encouraged discretion, my American education wanted runaway passion against all odds. In America, I learned the inestimable value of failure.

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My homes in America have been in privileged enclaves, and they cannot fully capture the breadth of the American experience, which after all is one of paradox and extremes. It is the country of Las Vegas and Salt Lake City, of Lady Gaga and the Tea Party. If I have seen the best that America can offer, however, it surpasses anything I have experienced back home. America celebrates exceptionalism, rather than comfort the lowest common denominator. Hindered by a spasmodic economy and burlesque politics, Americans still advance boldly, unwilling to accept the decline predicted by the pundits. Without a doubt, American excellence is harsher, faster, and more individualistic than its Canadian counterpart. Yet when all is said and done, there is no better marketplace for ideas. **P**

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper and EU President José Manuel Barroso at the signing ceremony of the Canada-EU Trade Agreement in Brussels on October 18. It was a “clear personal victory” for Harper, write Mike Coates and Jack Hughes. PMO photo

## Harper and the Canada-EU Trade Deal: An Understated Personal Victory

Mike Coates and Jack Hughes

*The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union is the product of a massive effort by a legion of public servants. And when its conclusion was announced in Brussels in mid-October, Stephen Harper was careful to credit them. But without the personal involvement of Harper himself, through doubts and delays, the deal would never have been done.*

It will take some time to fully realize the economic benefits of the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), but the political benefits should accrue almost immediately. The successful negotiation of the most important trade agreement since NAFTA has not only provided the Conservative government with a clear political victory, it has given Prime Minister Stephen Harper a clear personal victory.

The story of how CETA came to pass has many chapters, each detailing a different aspect of the various forces which crossed the Atlantic and brought Canada closer to Europe. We leave to others the task of analyzing the economics of the deal itself,

and have instead elected to focus on Harper and his role as chief strategist—an important story that risks being ignored amidst the maelstrom of the current parliamentary session.

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When he announced that CETA had been concluded in Brussels in mid-October, the Prime Minister rightly acknowledged the legion of public servants who made the deal possible, including but certainly not limited to our chief negotiator and the minister of international trade. But for their collective Herculean efforts, the deal would never have come to fruition. Yet, in this as in all things, Stephen Harper remains *primus inter pares*.

While he came to office as a strong proponent of expanding the Canada-US trade relationship, the economic meltdown of 2008 proved to be an important catalyst for the government's trade agenda. The PM was among the first to recognize that it was vital for Canada to diversify its trade portfolio in an effort to reduce our overdependence on the United States, particularly at a time when American economic prospects looked bleak.

Harper initiated the EU trade talks, bet heavily on them, and ultimately went all in. The Prime Minister is not one for betting on long shots, or for banking on initiatives that require the approval and cooperation of others, but he felt he had a strong hand and that betting big was the best and surest way to win. While history has proven that he bet wisely, it must be acknowledged that CETA was neither a sure bet nor a safe one.

In the latter half of 2008 and the first half of 2009, the crucial period when the Harper government sought to embark on CETA negotiations, the idea of an ambitious trade agen-

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da was hardly common. The World Trade Organization's Doha Round negotiations had faltered and the global economic downturn was reviving protectionist instincts around the world. Even our most trusted trading partner was tying stimulus funding to "Buy American" conditions.

**A**lthough the question of Canada's openness to trade liberalization had been largely decided 20 years earlier, during the seminal "free trade election" of 1988, the environment and appetite for boldly ambitious trade agendas was poor. Had the CETA negotiations failed, or if the subsequently initiated EU-US talks had concluded before ours, the prime minister would have been personally criticized and a central pillar of his agenda would have crumbled.

For close to five years, Harper put his trade strategy at the heart of his economic plan and CETA at the heart of his trade strategy—and he did not do so timidly. The 2011 Speech from the Throne expressly committed the government to concluding the deal by the end of 2012. Even late last year, when that self-imposed deadline became clearly improbable, Harper never wavered from his personal commitment to concluding the talks as soon as possible.

At the World Economic Forum in New Delhi last November, Harper reiterated that trade—including free trade with Europe—was one of his government's so-called five "T" policy priorities. Yet, as the months passed, the chorus of critics grew. Either emboldened or distressed by the government's perceived inability to conclude a deal, there were many alarmists who began to question whether the government had missed its chance.

Instead, as the events of the past month have proven, the prime min-

ister's patience was rewarded and his credentials as the leader best able to guide Canada's economic recovery have only solidified. With the exception of cheese producers and a handful of half-hearted NDP critics, there are no serious opponents of the deal anymore. There is instead widespread support from a wide array of stakeholders from every region of the country. And the provinces and territories are unanimously onside.

The broad national appeal was by design, not by default. The degree to which various provincial and territorial governments, of all political stripes, were involved in these negotiations was unprecedented. Not only did the federal government have to satisfy the nations of Europe, it had to build a solid consensus among provincial governments here at home—a challenge which added another layer of complexity onto an already complicated deal.

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At the time of writing, the CETA agreement in principle appears to have the support of the Liberal premiers of British Columbia, Ontario, P.E.I., and Nova Scotia; the conservative premiers of Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and Alber-

ta; not to mention the Parti Québécois premier of Quebec and, yes, even the NDP premier of Manitoba. That such a disparate group of leaders could agree on CETA speaks volumes about its merits.

For the West and the Prairies, the government secured significant market access for beef, pork, and wheat producers. For Ontario, the automotive industry and other advanced manufacturers stand to benefit. For Quebec, the aerospace and forestry sectors are poised and positioned to make major inroads. For Atlantic Canada, there is increased market access for fish and seafood products. Overall, the rising tide of economic activity will lift all boats.

Most importantly, it is not simply the politicians and industry stakeholders who approve of CETA. According to an Ipsos Reid poll commissioned for CTV News, 81 per cent of Canadians as a whole are supportive of the deal. In fact, Ipsos concluded that there was strong support for CETA amongst each and every demographic group it studied. That degree of widespread approval for any type of government initiative is both extremely rare and politically invaluable.

Significantly, it has almost gone unreported that this deal can only be improved upon. As Pat Cox, former president of the European Parliament, has made clear, any enhancement that the United States is able to subsequently negotiate will be automatically granted to Canada. This insurance clause guarantees that the Canadian deal will not be rendered obsolete, or insignificant, should our American neighbours swiftly conclude their own EU free trade deal.

Ultimately, the deal validated Stephen Harper's leadership and negotiation style. There were no histrionics about the process, and he resisted the politician's typical attempt to bolster his own reputation by emphasizing personal involvement. While he often spoke about the promise and potential of CETA, the prime minister allowed expectations to rise and fall based on events, and, in the end, was able to bring the deal to fruition at the moment it mattered most.

Lastly, the success of CETA now makes the signing of other trade deals more likely. Just as NAFTA proved to Canadians that free trade strengthens our economy, CETA proves that Canada is serious about liberalizing trade, even in areas, like cheese, which are covered by the blanket of supply management. This was an important signal for us to send to other prospective free trade partners like Korea, India, Japan, and New Zealand.

Those countries, along with the other members of the Trans Pacific Partnership negotiations, are particularly significant because, now that the books on Europe have been closed, Harper will turn his full attention to Asia. No more shuttles from Brussels to Bali—the full resources of Canada's trade negotiators can now be marshalled toward the Pacific Rim. Given enough time, the government might even run the table.

Yet, even without those future deals, Canada now has a distinct competitive advantage over almost every other developed country: it is the only G8 country to have preferential access to both the European Union and the United States. The 28-nation EU is an

economy of 500 million people, with a GDP of \$17 trillion, in which government procurement alone accounts for \$2.7 trillion. For that reason alone, CETA should and will stand as the cornerstone of Harper's legacy—much as the Canada-US FTA and NAFTA are widely and rightly regarded as the cornerstone of Brian Mulroney's.

While NAFTA and CETA are in many ways different, they are symbolic bookends for two Conservative prime ministers and their respective governments. It is in many ways fitting that this fall we celebrate not only the successful conclusion of the CETA negotiations, but also the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formal signing of NAFTA, and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1988 free trade election. One can't help but wonder what new horizons will be celebrated 20 years from now.

In the nearer term, of course, the government's trade agenda serves as an important part of Harper's narrative for the next election. It frames a very favourable ballot question: Do you want a government with a strong, stable economic record or an unknown quantity in uncertain times? By delivering on a deal with Europe, Stephen Harper has secured his status as a global leader and shrewd negotiator—two traits that Canadians value in their prime ministers. **P**

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In the Syrian civil war, millions have displaced like these women in Serekaniye last March, two million have fled to camps in neighbouring countries, and a death toll of 100,000 grows by 5,000 every month. Shutterstock photo

## Syria's Agony amid the Timeless Struggles of the Middle East

Jeremy Kinsman

*In the wake of the first Gulf War, it seemed the Middle East was witnessing the dawn of a new era. The Arab unity that had helped dislodge Saddam Hussein from Kuwait and the Western sense of purpose that launched the Oslo Accords had fostered hope for a generation of peace in what was, notoriously, the least peaceful neighbourhood in the world. Since then, Damascus has gone from cosmopolitan Mediterranean jewel and redoubt of the charming and brutal Hafez Assad to the quaking battlefield of his equally brutal son. What does the future hold for Syria, within a changed and changing region?*

The Arab Awakening that began in Tunisia in late 2010 has roiled a whole region in internal conflicts. Syria's agony has been particularly brutal. Its conflict has drawn in its neighbours, especially Shiite and combative Iran seeking to protect the Alawite regime of the Assads, and to challenge militant Sunni fighters now leading the armed revolt. The outcome of what has become in part a battle of proxies is unsure for Syria, and for the wider upheaval. It is a harsh contrast to expectations of many 20 years ago that the Middle East region stood on the point of a lasting peace among rival states.

Back then, there wasn't much attention being paid to the people within those states. Arab regimes could be counted on to be if not benign, at least predictably placid dictatorships.

Damascus stood out as a secular, cosmopolitan, and lively city. Damascene DNA is rooted in the city's almost incomparable ancient history. Residents are apt to be traveled, well-read and part of a Mediterranean culture. Twenty-five years ago, the retro charm of Damascus bars and neon-lit cabaret marquees made one nostalgic for the lower St. Lawrence Main or the

Esquire Show Bar in 1950s Montreal.

Dress was western; veils rare. Antique and curio hunters might even come across an extended Jewish family of sophisticated merchants and professionals, one of whom was the architect of the senior President Assad's new palace being built on the bluff looking down over the city.

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**B**ack then, at the time of the first Gulf War in 1991, the president's offices were at the end of a narrow downtown *cul-de-sac* of apartments (whose residents must have had a platinum local security clearance.) I was supporting my boss, Foreign Minister Joe Clark, in a tour of key regional capitals, just days after the liberation of Kuwait and the decision by the first President George Bush and US Secretary of State James Baker to halt the slaughter of fleeing Iraqi soldiers, whose armoured columns now smoldered in the desert.

Clark had, four months earlier, done the rounds just before the war, with the blessing of Baker and UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar, to explore whether a negotiated exit of Saddam Hussein from Kuwait was still thinkable—it wasn't. A vast and UN-mandated multi-national coalition poised impatiently and uneasily in conservative Arab lands in the Gulf and in Saudi Arabia was chomping at the bit to expel him militarily.

Joe Clark's standing as a former prime minister and the reputation Canada then wore as a fair-minded internationalist diplomatic operator meant he had significant access to all the key people; before the war, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, King Hussein of Jordan, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of Israel, President Turgut Ozal of Turkey, as well as the foreign minister and King of Saudi Arabia, all of whom, except for King Hussein, predicted that crushing Saddam's armies would be a

piece of cake. Mubarak allowed that he knew something about the fate of armoured columns in the desert without air cover, recalling "the thousands of Egyptian boots still in the desert" left by soldiers dispersing in panic under withering Israeli air assaults.

King Hussein's take was the nervous exception. He had been unique in counseling negotiation with Saddam over his seizure of Kuwait. At a small lunch in his palace, the West's once-favourite "plucky King" explained to Clark that Jordan relied on Iraq for oil. He was worried that the vast number of Palestinian refugees who were an unstable force in Jordan held Saddam to be something of a hero. King Hussein had been shunned by his usual friends and allies for this stance. Indeed, the pain of isolation seemed to have stripped the baby grand piano in the King's sitting room of the usual vanity photos of luminaries such as Reagan, Gorbachev, Mitterrand, Queen Elizabeth and other erstwhile pals of state, and adorned it instead with non-political icons—Marlene Dietrich, and if memory serves, Pope John Paul II and Cary Grant.

**T**he day after the war ended, more or less as decisively as the leaders had predicted, Clark's Canadian Forces Challenger made the rounds again, beginning with a celebratory dinner at the Riyadh home of my Princeton class-mate, the then and still foreign minister of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal.

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Prince Faisal and his wife hosted an impromptu dinner for fellow Foreign Ministers Clark, Baker, Roland Dumas of France, Douglas Hurd of the UK, Hans-Dietrich Genscher of Germany and a few others. A star presence

was chief allied commander Norman Schwarzkopf, who confided that the most difficult victory he was celebrating was ensuring that the more than 100,000 horny and thirsty young American soldiers deployed to the world's most obdurately conservative and insular society had stayed out of local trouble.

Talk that night was of a new dawn for the Middle East as a result of the defeat of regional troublemaker Saddam, but also of how all the Arab world, as well as the USSR, and Iran, had supported the enterprise. The ministers' *quid pro quo* was that to reward Arab solidarity, a real effort would be needed to get a lasting peace between Israel and her neighbours, which meant some sort of a negotiated break for the Palestinians. The path to such a negotiated regional peace was what Joe Clark hoped to discover in his post-war tour.

In a much merrier mood was King Hussein, back in his old friends' good books. Indeed, on our return for a small Sunday lunch, Bush, Margaret Thatcher, Helmut Kohl, Mubarak and other buddies were back on the gleaming piano.

**T**his time, we added Tehran and Damascus. The Iranians, of course, detested their arch-enemy Saddam and were delighted in his defeat but worried he'd survive, that the incipient revolt being waged by Marsh Arabs and Kurds would be crushed and that the Iraqi exile opposition then meeting in London and elsewhere would never agree on anything. They were proven correct on all counts.

Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, once we got past the security muscle in that one-way city street, was pleasant, even quietly charming, but politely disbelieving there could ever be much of a new dawn breaking in that part of the world over the same old folks and their timeless rivalries.

Yet, a massive and potentially significant world conference on the Middle Eastern issues was held that spring of 1991 in Madrid. It led to the Oslo Accords, brokered in secret mediation by Norway, that probably offered the best chance ever for peace, but that went down eventually under resistance from hard-liners on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian issue and the harsh events they sponsored.

Hafez al-Assad stayed on until he died in 2000. Syria remained a seemingly sophisticated and secular outpost in the region but also remained a society in political lockdown.

### **Assad stayed on until he died in 2000. Syria remained a seemingly sophisticated and secular outpost in the region but also remained a society in political lockdown.**

Syria's demographics consist of a large majority of Sunni Muslims, a tribal 15 per cent minority of Alawites, a religiously liberal offshoot of Shia Islam, and something less than 10 per cent Christian. A wily Alawite military officer of great political ambition, Assad had seized power in 1970. To protect his regime from chronic coups, he created an Alawite power structure to run the country under his thumb.

Some Syrian scholars claim it is less a top-down Alawite monopoly on power than it seems. They point to Sunni businessmen with the right connections sharing in privileged deal-making and to Sunni military officers promoted to a point short of top commands.

However, key positions in the military and security apparatus were assigned to Alawite family loyalists who also bulked up on big contracts. Christians liked the arrangement because the secular society had a benign regard for its cultural and sectarian pluralisms that was fairly unique in the Arab world.

Like Tito in the former Yugoslavia, Hafez Assad portrayed himself as a patriot holding the country peacefully together. Assad's patriotic rule with that agenda required a police state and an iron hand. He pointedly suppressed any inroads from Sunni Muslim extremists, and most especially from the Muslim Brotherhood, beginning then to gain traction in the streets of Egypt, and in Algeria.

Syrians came to know the meaning of "Hama rules." In 1982, the Muslim Brotherhood organized protests in Hama in the Sunni heartland. No one knows how many were slaughtered by the regime in a vicious week-long bloodbath, but the lowest authoritative estimate is 10,000 dead. Back then, police states could hide such events from the world. There were

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no cell phone cameras and internet connections to proxy servers that in 2012 enable the world to watch on YouTube graphic evidence of savage killing of a couple of dozen protesters in Hama. Syrians grasped that Assad would play by "Hama rules;" repression of organized protest would be swift and total.

**H**owever, if a population is cosmopolitan, educated and free to travel, as was the case in Syria, voices for political liberalization and democracy will begin to emerge from universities and intellectual circles. When Assad died in 2000, hopes flourished that his London-based ophthalmologist son Bashar (an elder and more plausible dictator brother having perished in a car crash) would introduce something of a thaw; civil society stirred and students openly discussed political options.

The Arab Spring ignited mass demonstrations for true change. Though revolutions turned violent and chaotic in the aftermath of the dictators' demises in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, they showed as false the long-held belief that Arab societies were somehow immune to aspirations for democracy, however difficult the actual transitions have proven to be.

For the first time, Arab youth across the region felt lifted. Al-Jazeera and the Internet, across borders and within authoritarian societies, helped create what communications theorist Clay Shirky calls "shared awareness," when "open secrets become public truths" as finally happened in Tunisia over the Ben Ali family's corruption and domination.

So it began in Syria.

**D**emonstrations were peaceful but potent. By 2011, 400,000 people marched in the streets of Homs. Moreover, their placards (held backwards so that police photographers couldn't stick them to faces) identified marchers as Christians and Alawites, as well as Sunni Mus-

lims. The Syrian protest movement spread across the country in a spirit of more or less classic nonviolent civil resistance in the tradition of Gandhi, King, Walesa, and Mandela, though without their charismatic leadership. Instead, the movement resembled the more recent leaderless groups of successful activists from Belgrade, Kiev, and Tahrir Square.

The regime was rattled and for a year and a half. Security forces and mufti militia gangs used violence, including deadly shootings, but the incredible bravery of demonstrators seemed to hold it to frightful but not decisive levels. "Sniper, sniper, what do you see? Here are our necks, here are our heads," chanted the marchers in Dara'a.

In a seminal study published by Columbia University, scholars Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan show that violent uprising fails in at least 60 per cent of cases. Over the last 100 years, nonviolence has been successful in displacing dictatorships 2 ½ times as often as armed insurrection and on average, in 1/3rd the time required—three years instead of nine.

The regime wanted violence. It would terrify moderates. It would justify massive reprisal.

In the spirit of self-fulfilling prophecy, the conflict drew in jihadists hardened by Chechnya and Afghanistan and the Iraqi Al-Nusra Brigade, an offshoot of Al Qaeda. President Barack Obama's main US critics, from right and left, argue that he didn't arm the "moderate" opposition soon enough, but moderates who had chosen armed violence had been subordinated to the disciplined veterans from other wars.

An important reason that the transition to democracy has been difficult in Egypt and almost invisible in Libya is the absence of a culture of compromise, essential in a pluralist society. The habits of compromise, of give-and-take, are learned in civil society that dictators like Gaddafi and Mubarak abhor and suppressed. Nonviolent resistance is an incubator for



Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, an ophthalmologist by training, replaced his father Hafez Assad when he died in 2000, as an older brother perished in a car crash. Wikipedia photo

civil society and its behavioural training. Its sidelining in Syria after only a year bodes ill for the end game and the ultimate outcome for Syria.

**Today, there is a Syrian stalemate, after more than 100,000 deaths, two million refugees, and millions more Syrians dislocated within their own country. And incalculable damage from a civil war in which 5,000 people are dying every month.**

Today, there is a Syrian stalemate, after more than 100,000 deaths, two million refugees, and millions more Syrians dislocated within their own country. And incalculable damage from a civil war in which 5,000 people are dying every month. The damage is psychological as well as physical. Sectarian hatreds have emerged that will haunt Syria for generations.

In the course of 2013, Assad's regime has been saved by the forceful intervention of Iran, via the elite Quds Force, supported by Hezbollah fighters from Lebanon (see "The Shadow Commander" by Dexter Filkins in *The*

*New Yorker*, September 30, 2013).

The Russians won't protect Assad, not in the long term. Their interests in Syria are overstated. Their game has mostly been to counter the "West's" disposition to interfere within other countries' borders, and to bolster their stature as a global player.

**S**o, what's the outlook for Syria? Could there be a negotiated agreement about the country's future institutions and status of the minorities?

Ideally, a pluralist state needs inclusive institutions to succeed, no sectarian winners or majorities dominating losers or minorities. Old orders retain some privileges in return for accommodating the basic agenda of the new. A modicum of reconciliation applies.

It's hard to say if that will be available in Syria or if it's not too late. Some see the country splitting into three parts: an Alawite homeland along the northern Mediterranean coast, a Kurdish homeland in the very North adjacent to Turkey, and a core of mostly Sunni and Christian lands including Damascus and Aleppo, in a loose federation if that's possible or as autonomous parts.

How a broken-up Syria would play out

on the region is unpredictable. Most neighbours would prefer Syria to be intact, including probably Iran and Shiite Prime Minister al-Maliki of Iraq, who would fear the radicalization and animosity of a Sunni sub-state, and Israel which doesn't need the numbers of its neighbours to increase. But nor would they wish a single state to be under Sunni domination.

The Syrian regime we have known was challenged because it seemed that the imperatives of change could cast dictatorships to dustbins. Now it is a failed state. Ultimately, its future will be determined by Syrians, not by anyone else. But to get there, a web of agreement will have to be spun among an armful of regional and international players. Perhaps the US and Russia, and an Iranian regime that becomes more Rouhani than El Quds can bring it off, but the country's agony is apt to be prolonged.

I wonder if these are thoughts foreseen by Assad the elder more than 20 years ago, that made him a man who seemed not just tough, but very sad. For terribly sad is what Syria has become, incalculably so.

As for the region, the sort of shared purpose that Joe Clark encountered in 1991 is gone. Some will blame the Arab Spring and its chaotic attempts to craft democracy for people unprepared to be tolerant to each other. This is to return to the false binary thinking that plagued analysis of Egypt—that the alternative to a police state is a sharia nightmare or a jihadist takeover. Mohammed Morsi and the Brotherhood almost made it true and now the military is worse.

Canada's job is to support democracy development—the capacity for pluralistic and inclusive institutions. Bizarrely, the country that came to that most naturally in day-to-day affairs was probably Syria. Let's hope its best days still lie ahead. **P**

*Contributing Writer Jeremy Kinsman served on loan from the Foreign Service as Assistant Deputy Minister of Communications for Cultural Affairs and Broadcasting from 1985-89. From 1992-2006 he was back in the Foreign Service as Canada's Head of Mission in Moscow, Rome, London, and Brussels (EU). He now directs a democracy development project for the Community of Democracies and has positions at the University of California, Berkeley, and Ryerson University.*



Demonstrators protest against proposed banning of headgear in Quebec's Charter of Values. Montreal Gazette photo

# The Charter of Quebec Values: Anatomy of a Manufactured Identity Crisis

Celine Cooper

*The Parti Québécois' Charter of Quebec Values has divided citizens, split Montreal from the rest of the province and even pitted PQ stalwarts against each other. It has been railed against, ridiculed and dubbed "radical" by the Quebec Human Rights Commission. The PQ maintains that the Charter is about state neutrality and gender equality, that its goal is to unite Quebecers rather than divide them. Yet subjugation of basic civil liberties to a government-created notion of "national values" puts the PQ into dangerous territory.*

On September 10, Democratic Institutions Minister Bernard Drainville held a press conference in Quebec City to officially introduce the Parti Québécois government's proposed Charter of Quebec Values.

On November 7th, the PQ tabled the legislation in the National Assembly. The name of the charter was changed to a title more obfuscating than a referendum question:

"Charter affirming the values of State secularism and religious neutrality and of equality between women and men, and providing a framework for accommodation requests."

The reworked legislation includes an amendment to the preamble of the Quebec charter of rights and freedoms giving gender equality, secularism, state neutrality and the French lan-

guage primacy over other rights. In response to the bill, Liberal parliamentary leader Jean-Marc Fournier said “You don’t remove rights to protect rights.”

Following through on their 2012 campaign promise to develop a charter of secularism, the proposed legislation would introduce measures to outlaw Quebec employees in public institutions (including daycare and health care workers, police officers, judges, teachers and employees at the provincially run liquor board) from wearing “ostentatious” religious symbols.

Perhaps anticipating some public confusion over which religious symbols the government had deemed “ostentatious” and therefore unacceptable for employees of the provincial government, Drainville’s announcement was graciously accompanied by an illustrated pictogram. Yes, an actual pictogram with images of faceless, disembodied heads adorned with the sorts of things that would be allowed and those that would be banned: Muslim veils and hijabs, Jewish kippahs, Sikh turbans and large Christian crucifixes worn around the neck—clearly ostentatious and therefore prohibited; Necklaces featuring small crucifixes, small earrings with the Islamic crescent moon and Star of David rings—non-ostentatious and therefore acceptable.

And what of the Crucifix that hangs directly above the Speaker’s chair in the National Assembly? Ah. Drainville insists that this is not an ostentatious religious symbol, but an important part of Quebec’s Catholic history.

In *l’Actualité*, columnist and sometime PQ strategist Josée Légault wrote: “Kafka, meet Monty Python”.

Whatever else it was, Drainville’s press conference was an edifying glimpse into just how far the PQ is prepared to go with its strategy of identity politics to win back the francophone base and move into majority government territory.

**W**hy a Charter of Quebec Values and why now?

The PQ wants to put sovereignty back at the top of the agenda. While the desire for a referendum on independence among the Quebec polity is low, getting the public fired up about nationalism requires a crisis of identity and belonging among the major-

**The Charter has distracted from the real problems that could be a serious liability for the Parti Québécois in an election. Many have speculated that the PQ’s strategy is to drag out the debate so that identity will be the focus of the next election instead of the more pressing issues such as the province’s stagnant economy and lack of jobs.**

ity population. If there is no real crisis, you manufacture one.

Almost as if on cue, the Charter debate over values and identity stepped up to dominate the media landscape. Predictably (because this is Quebec), manifestos, petitions and open letters both for and against the proposed values Charter have poured into *Le Devoir*, *Journal de Montréal*, *La Presse* and the *Montreal Gazette*. Political war-horses, legal experts, the intellectual elite and *vedettes* of the Quebec entertainment star system have all come out to have their say.

The Charter has distracted from the real problems that could be a serious liability for the PQ in an election. Many have speculated that the PQ’s strategy is to drag out the debate so that identity will be the focus of the next election instead of the more pressing issues such as the province’s stagnant economy and lack of jobs, a shortage of doctors, the highest high school drop-out rate in Canada, and decrepit infrastructure.

The Charter debate has also exposed some deep fissures in the sovereignist movement. Many prominent figures, including Jean Dorion—the former president of the Société St. Jean Baptiste and ex-deputy for the Bloc Québécois, former premier Lucien Bouchard and his brother Gerard Bouchard, who together with Charles Taylor co-chaired the province’s commission on Reasonable Accommodation in 2007-08, have all come out with criticisms of the PQ’s plan. Even former PQ leader Jacques Parizeau—who famously dropped the “money and ethnic vote” bomb on the night of the 1995 referendum—has come out against the Charter, saying that it goes too far.

One of the most fiery ruptures was Bloc Québécois MP Maria Mouriani following her debate with former PQ cabinet minister Louise Beaudoin on Radio-Canada. After arguing her belief that the charter would be a slide backward into ethnic nationalism that risked excluding certain minority communities and women, Mouriani

was promptly expelled from the party caucus by Bloc leader Daniel Paillé. The ejection of Mourani—a Catholic of Lebanese origin who is often seen wearing a small cross around her neck—meant that the Bloc let go not only its sole female and visible-minority presence, but also its only representative from Montreal. She quit the party shortly thereafter to sit as an independent, wondering aloud whether the sovereignist movement was truly able to move beyond what she called the “demons of populist intolerance.”

The Charter has also widened the gulf between Montreal—home to the bulk of Quebec’s religious, cultural and linguistic minorities and immigrants—and the rest of Quebec.

The unanimous rejection of the charter by the city’s 15 municipalities means that if the charter becomes law, Montreal intends to opt out. Even the Montreal mayoral race has played out against the backdrop of this debate. All four main candidates—Denis Coderre, Mélanie Joly, Marcel Côté and Richard Bergeron—came out openly against the Charter, which prompted the minister for Montreal, Jean-Francois Lisée, to suggest the candidates should stay out of it.

The message that emerges is this: it is very difficult to shoehorn the diversity of Montreal into the PQ’s nationalist vision of Quebec which, despite all the party’s rhetoric about inclusivity, equality and harmony, is nevertheless a homogenizing one.

Many critics have also argued that the Charter runs counter to international human-rights legal architecture, as well as the Canadian and Quebec charters of rights. On October 17, the *Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec*, the Quebec Human Rights Commission, released a scathing report calling the values charter a “radical” infringement on the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights.

The PQ has maintained its stance that this Charter is about state neutrality and gender equality whose goal is to

unite Quebecers rather than divide them. Yet subjugation of basic civil liberties to a government-created notion of “national values” puts the PQ into dangerous territory.

This political culture of intolerance that the PQ has nurtured with its drawn-out debate over the charter is having real and devastating implications for minority groups and—by extension—for all Quebecers.

In early September, a mosque in the Saguenay region was vandalized with pig’s blood. In late September, the *Centres de femmes du Quebec* reported a rise in intolerance, violence and racist incidents since the introduction of the Charter of Quebec Values, particularly towards women who wear the veil. Videos of hijab-clad women in Montreal being harassed on buses and in the streets have circulated on the Internet. The government has denied any connection between these incidents and the values debate, but choosing not to connect the dots is willful blindness.

**H**istory has taught us that identity politics are most dangerous when they find expression through state apparatus. It remains to be seen whether Quebecers will collectively allow fundamen-

**Videos of hijab-clad women in Montreal being harassed on buses and in the streets have circulated on the Internet. The government has denied any connection between these incidents and the values debate, but choosing not to connect the dots is willful blindness.**

tal individual human rights and liberties to be stripped at the whim of a government.

One of the unexpected outcomes of this debate, as Mouriani, Parizeau and Lucien Bouchard have all predicted, may be that minorities in Quebec will begin turning in greater numbers to the federal government—not the Quebec government—to ensure their rights are upheld. In a society facing a huge demographic shift and in need of immigrants to replenish the workforce, this may not be the outcome the PQ is looking for.

In the end, the Charter is a theoretical piece of legislation. In order for it to pass through the National Assembly in its current form, the PQ needs

the support of at least one other party. Liberal leader Phillippe Couillard has opposed it point blank, and Francois Legault of the Coalition Avenir Quebec has called for significant revisions.

If the legislation is passed, Quebec would become the only jurisdiction in North America to impose such a sweeping ban on religious symbols worn by public sector employees.

But frankly, it doesn’t really matter if it makes it that far or not.

The Charter is little more than an ostentatious signal, if you like, from the PQ to the pur laine francophone majority that they are the political party who will serve as the guardian of their cultural survival—in much the same way that the Roman Catholic Church did before they were overthrown during the Quiet Revolution.

And in case anyone is wondering how that turned out, there’s a cross-like heritage symbol hanging above the Speaker’s Chair in the National Assembly that tells one hell of a story. **P**

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## BOOK EXCERPT

# Jack Layton's Final Days: An Optimist to the End

Brad Lavigne

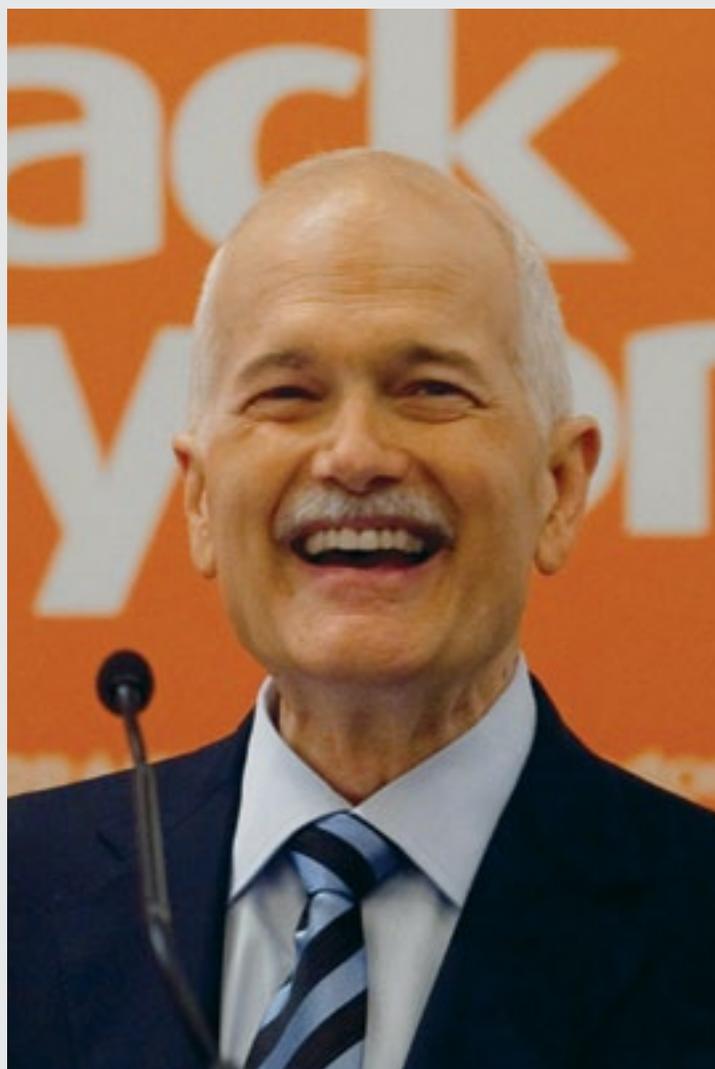
*Jack Layton's story is unrivalled in the history of Canadian politics for its juxtaposition of triumph and tragedy. The minutes, hours and days lived by the people closest to him during those final weeks of his life in 2011 tell the very human story behind the Shakespearean pageant witnessed by the rest of Canada. Here, in an exclusive excerpt from *Building the Orange Wave*, Layton's former campaign director and principal secretary shares the poignant experience of those final weeks of a very public life.*

It had been a whirlwind spring for Jack, and immediately after the election on May 2, he switched gears and turned his mind to building the office of the Leader of the Opposition. He was supported by an eleven-member transition team: MPs Tom Mulcair, Libby Davies, Malcolm Allen, Jean Crowder and David Christopherson; advisers Brian Topp, Matt Hebb and Bob Dewar; and staffers Ray Guardia, appointed Jack's special Quebec adviser; chief of staff Anne McGrath; and me, newly appointed as Jack's principal secretary.

With senior staff and the transition team in place, we next had to put together a strong Shadow Cabinet. New Democrat MPs would be sitting directly across from the government side for the first time in our history. Jack agreed that we should match up Harper's Cabinet picks with people who would make for a strong contrast and shine as NDP counterpoints to Tory cabinet ministers during Question Period.

The Shadow Cabinet took many days to build, since we had to balance region, gender and experience. It wasn't easy, especially with so many new MPs, the majority of whom we did not know much about. Jack also insisted that everyone—all 103 New Democrat MPs—be given a job to do. He had been close to his late father and had learned lessons about caucus management from him. Not long after the May vote, Jack reached out to his dad's old boss, Brian Mulroney, who had appointed Robert Layton to his Cabinet in 1984 and later as his long-time national caucus chair. "He and I worked very closely on areas of caucus relations," Mulroney said of Jack's father, "and he had spoken to Jack about the way I'd handled caucus."

Jack called Mulroney and the two spoke for about an hour and a half. "I have gone from A to B here, and B is the Official Opposition with a large delegation of Quebecers who have never been in Parliament before," Mulroney remembers Jack saying. "They don't know a great deal about the rest of Canada and vice versa, and so caucus management is going to be the



Riding the Orange Wave—Jack Layton, *le bon jack*, radiates confidence at a campaign meeting in Montreal in April 2011. The wave carried the NDP from fourth place in the House to Official Opposition. But in the afterglow of his triumph, tragedy struck and within four months of the election, he died of cancer. Montreal Gazette photo

highest priority for me, as it is for any leader in the British parliamentary system who understands the true nature of political success." Mulroney continued: "Without the caucus, you can't get across the street. Without caucus loyalty, you can't get anywhere, and so Jack said to me, 'Look, everybody knows about your success with caucus, starting with my own father. I'd like to talk to you about it.' All I could tell him is how it had worked for me, and he took it all in."

The party's general convention in Vancouver, set to run from June 17 to 19, 2011, meant Jack couldn't stop to take a break after the election. We were marking the fiftieth anniversary of the party on the heels of our historical breakthrough, and we needed to put on a strong show, with Jack at the centre of it.

Jack was in good form at the convention in Vancouver, where he received an approval vote of 97.9 per cent in his leadership review. He was feeling fatigued when he flew back to Ottawa on the Sunday, but he took solace in the fact that the parliamentary session was almost done. He just had a few more sitting days in the House and one evening event that week at Stornoway, the official residence of the Leader of the Official Opposition. After that, he'd be able to head back home to Toronto for the summer to recharge. Labour Minister Lisa Raitt had thrown a wrinkle into Jack's plan on Monday, June 20, when she tabled provocative legislation to order postal workers back to work; they had been locked out for a week after a few weeks of rotating job action. The NDP weren't going to be doormats, so we opted to filibuster the legislation. This meant the session would drag on past Thursday, but Jack thought it was important to draw attention to the government's attack on collective bargaining and buy time for the two sides to reach a settlement.

Jack felt unwell all week. He was supposed to make a quick detour to Montreal on Friday, June 24, to celebrate Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, but even before it became apparent Jack would be stuck in Ottawa because of the filibuster, he'd told Bélanger he didn't think he would be able to walk the parade route. He was also showing some signs of discomfort on Wednesday evening, just before the filibuster was set to begin. Jack hosted a barbecue dinner that night for NDP caucus and staff and their families at Stornoway. He arrived a bit late because of his duties in the House and mingled before delivering a short speech. He was upbeat, but he seemed to be favouring one hip while relying heavily on his cane. I just figured he was exhausted.

**B**y late Saturday, June 25, the 58-hour filibuster in the House of Commons was coming to an end. Jack had kicked off the debate on Thursday evening with an hour-long speech. He pressed forward despite the pain he was feeling and the "Union Jack" jeers from the government side. Over the next two days, he was in and out of the House to support the NDP MPs, including 70 newly elected rookies, who were rotated through Parliament for the around-the-clock debate. The filibuster had the effect of gelling the new team of inexperienced MPs, and Jack had insisted on being in the chamber for the final vote. As the vote neared, he turned to Mulcair, his new House Leader. "Tom, will you be able to give the wrap-up speech? I'm feeling a little discomfort," Jack said.

"Yeah, Jack," Mulcair replied.

"And can you scrum after it's all done?" asked Jack.

Mulcair stood up and gently patted Jack on the back. "Of course," said Mulcair. He was concerned, though, he recalls, because Jack's suit jacket was soaking with sweat.

In the days after the end of the parliamentary session, Jack was back in Toronto, doing a series of medical tests. He either cabbled to the hospital with Olivia or got a lift from his son or son-in-law. Either way, Olivia was usually with Jack. Other patients and personnel recognized Jack, but they didn't snap pictures of him. "People were respectful. I just think that people are not that intrusive in Canada. I think they respect someone's privacy," recalls Jack's son, Mike.

On July 9, their wedding anniversary, Jack and Olivia hosted an engagement party at their home for Mike and his fiancée. "He was in good spirits," recalls Mike.

Mike and Sarah, Jack's daughter, had gone in on a video recorder and a good microphone as a gift for Jack and Olivia's anniversary. The idea was to continue a family tradition that Jack had started with his own parents. Jack would sit down with his old video recorder and ask his mother and father about their parents and grandParents, and about what life had been like for them growing up.

When Mike and Sarah purchased the gift, they didn't know how serious their father's illness was. "I don't think I ever realized that, and neither did my sister," Mike says when asked whether he believed his father could die.

The new video recorder was put to work right away. "Like he had done with his dad and mom, he sat down and we did

*Jack called Mulroney and the two spoke for about an hour and a half. "I have gone from A to B here, and B is the Official Opposition with a large delegation of Quebecers who have never been in Parliament before," Mulroney remembers Jack saying. "They don't know a great deal about the rest of Canada and vice versa, and so caucus management is going to be the highest priority for me, as it is for any leader in the British parliamentary system who understands the true nature of political success."*

these interviews, just me asking questions like, ‘What was it like then?’ We did it for a little bit, not as much as I would have liked, but we did do it for many hours, where it was just him and me shooting the shit... Sometimes other people would be there and they would chime in,” Mike remembers. “So we got that time. Us doing the interviews wasn’t an acknowledgement of an end coming near, just that we may as well try and document some of this, because people do die... He liked to tell stories.”

**J**ack was an optimist at his core, and this perspective had become even more pronounced after his diagnosis with prostate cancer in December 2009. “I often say getting a cancer diagnosis, in terms of your view of the world, it’s a little like switching from watching black-and-white TV to watching colour,” Jack explained in the NDP video shot in January 2011. “I’m old enough to remember what that was like. It’s just such a difference. You look at every moment in your life as a gift, and that’s a wonderful experience. Ironically, you’d think with a bad news diagnosis, if anything, you’d be looking at the greys, you’d be looking at the dark side. But at least for me, and I know for many people who are surviving cancer, it’s the opposite.”

Anne McGrath visited Jack at his home weekly, and she had already begun discussions with Jack and Topp about different options in the event that Jack needed to step aside for health reasons. When Jack received his major test results on Wednesday, July 20, he called McGrath. Olivia was by his side. It was evening, but McGrath was still at the office in Ottawa, she recalls. “The news isn’t good. They found a new cancer. I’m going to fight it, but things aren’t great,” Jack, sounding apologetic, told McGrath. “I need you to present me with some scenarios,” Jack said.

Earlier in July, Jack had asked Brian Topp, newly elected party president at the Vancouver convention, to review the NDP’s constitution concerning the process for interim leadership. “Jack, you asked me about the rules on this matter,” Topp wrote and then cited the relevant section of the constitution: “Should the position of Leader become vacant at any point, the Council may, in consultation with the parliamentary Caucus, appoint a Leader for the interim period until a new Leader has been elected.” The trigger here is the office ‘becoming vacant.’”

During their discussions, McGrath and Topp had decided that if Jack needed to step aside temporarily, they would recommend Nycole Turmel, who had been elected in the Quebec riding of Hull–Aylmer in May and who was caucus chair, to serve as interim leader.

Now McGrath—and Jack—knew the moment had arrived. “He was quite aware that he was going to step aside,” McGrath remembers about their conversation on July 20.

“Walk me through your arguments,” Jack told McGrath about the Turmel recommendation. The interim leader had to be someone bilingual, and it should be someone from Quebec but not someone who might go for the leadership at a later date, McGrath explained. Turmel was a new MP, but her long tenure as president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada meant she had significant experience running a national organization.

“He was in agreement with it. He was worried about it. He was worried about every possibility,” recalls McGrath. Jack, Olivia and Anne agreed on the phone that Jack would make the announcement in Toronto on Monday, July 25.

Jack had received the results five days earlier than expected, and McGrath couldn’t immediately reach Topp, who was on a canoe trip with his family. She enlisted Sue Milling, who contacted a park warden to find Topp. On Thursday, Topp called and got the news. McGrath also called the senior staff, one by one, into her office in Ottawa to inform us of the development.

“Things aren’t good. Jack’s not well. He’s going to step down as leader. He’s fighting a new battle, and he needs to take some time,” McGrath told each of us. “Funny how you can be in shock when you can also expect something,” says McGrath today.

Bélanger had just begun his holidays, so McGrath called him back to the office to speak with him in person, hinting there was an issue with Jack’s health. When Karl arrived, Anne explained that Jack would be taking a leave of absence to focus on a treatment plan. “I let the news sink in, but I was not totally shocked,” he recalled. He had spent a lot of time with Jack in June, and he knew about some new growing pain and discomfort.

**W**hile Karl was there, McGrath was able to get Jack on the phone. “That’s when I was actually shocked for the first time, when I heard the voice. Anne had told me that he had lost a lot of weight and was pale, but she hadn’t mentioned how raspy he sounded,” Karl would later recount. “I quickly composed myself, and Jack started apologizing for interrupting my vacation. He apologized for what was happening.”

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"There is no need to apologize, sir. Anne informed me that this was why I make the big bucks," Bélanger joked.

At the end of their conversation, Jack's voice began to crack just as he started to apologize again for putting them through this. He couldn't complete his sentence. "It is our honour to serve you, sir," Karl said, "and we will see you Monday."

Kathleen Monk and Bélanger were put in charge of the press conference in Toronto, and their job was to organize it while making sure word didn't leak out in advance. They enlisted Rick Devereux from the party office and the production company Project X to produce the event. I was assigned, along with Topp, McGrath and Anderson, to help Jack and Olivia with the statement. It would fall to me to brief the staff on Parliament Hill, which we would do just before Jack's press conference.

McGrath flew to Toronto on Saturday morning. She had arranged with Nycole Turmel's assistant for Turmel to call her at 6:30 that evening, but Turmel did not yet know what the phone meeting with Jack's chief of staff was about.

Turmel called McGrath's cellphone at the designated time. McGrath spoke to her for a few minutes to prepare her a bit. "Jack isn't well, and he has something to ask you," she told Turmel, before passing the phone to Jack. "I felt really horrible for her," recalls McGrath. His voice was starting to get quite weak at that point, and he was emotional."

The call was brief. "Will you step in as interim leader while I work on my health?" Jack asked her. Turmel immediately said yes.

The next day, Jack emailed me a copy of the draft speech he and Olivia had prepared with Topp and McGrath. The statement began like Jack's announcement about his prostate cancer had: it was direct and succinct about his diagnosis. The statement then transitioned to his recommendation for Turmel to serve as interim leader while he underwent treatment. He had also insisted on setting a return date, and the opening of Parliament on September 19 made the most sense.

For Jack, the statement was also deeply personal, and he wanted to weave a political call for building a green, caring Canada into his message of love, hope and optimism. I amended the love stuff, since it seemed a little un-prime ministerial to me, but Jack put it back in. This was who he was, and he was going to lay it all out in his own words.

When Jack woke up on that hot Toronto day, his weakened, raspy voice matched how ill he felt. But he pressed ahead, labouring to put on the suit he would wear to make the most important announcement of his life. At 2 pm, he would go before the cameras to reveal he was stepping aside as leader of the NDP to fight a new cancer. He had insisted from the start on making the announcement himself. "I want to do it. This is something I need to do," he had told Kathleen Monk.

Just before the press event, McGrath alerted the chiefs of staff to the prime minister and interim Liberal leader Bob Rae about Jack's announcement. In Ottawa, fifteen minutes before the news conference was scheduled to begin, I brought together all caucus, MP and party staff as well as any MPs in town to brief them. Jack wanted everybody in the same room to watch the announcement, he had instructed me, to remind us that we were family and that we were going to get through this together. As the staff streamed in, they were relieved of their BlackBerries to make sure word didn't leak out.

The room went silent as Jack appeared on the giant television screen. His physical transformation in just a few weeks had been radical, and the silence was broken by gasps as people reacted to his dramatic weight loss, flushed face and shaky voice. Many of the staffers were looking at me for clues as to how bad his condition really was. I kept a brave face.

Good afternoon. On February 5, 2010, I shared with Canadians that I, like 25,000 thousand other Canadian men every year, had been diagnosed with prostate cancer. I have received overwhelming support from my loving family, my friends, my caucus and party, and thousands of everyday Canadians. Their stories and support have touched me. And I have drawn strength and inspiration from them.

In the closing days of the most recent session of the House of Commons, I suffered from some stiffness and pain. After the House rose, I undertook a series of tests at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto. My battle against prostate cancer is going very well. My psa levels remain virtually undetectable. However, these tests, whose results I received last week, also indicate that I have a new, non-prostate cancer that will require further treatment. So, on the advice of my doctors, I am going to focus on treatment and recovery.

I will therefore be taking a temporary leave of absence as Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada. I'm going to fight this cancer now, so I can be back to fight for families when Parliament resumes....

*For Jack, the statement was also deeply personal, and he wanted to weave a political call for building a green, caring Canada into his message of love, hope and optimism. I amended the love stuff, since it seemed a little un-prime ministerial to me, but Jack put it back in. This was who he was, and he was going to lay it all out in his own words.*

I am as hopeful and optimistic about all of this as I was the day I began my political work, many years ago. I am hopeful and optimistic about the personal battle that lies before me in the weeks to come. And I am very hopeful and optimistic that our party will continue to move forward.

We will replace the Conservative government a few short years from now. And we will work with Canadians to build the country of our hopes

Of our dreams

Of our optimism

Of our determination

Of our values...

Of our love.

Thank you.

Jack stood up slowly after his announcement. With the help of his cane and with Olivia by his side, he walked back to the holding room behind the black curtain. McGrath hugged him; so did his children. Jack thanked everyone for helping him get through it. He was also very proud of himself. “My doctors weren’t sure I’d be able to do it,” he told the others. The group chatted until all the reporters had left the hotel, allowing Jack to avoid flashing cameras.

As Jack got into the car to head home with Olivia, Nigel Wright called McGrath. Harper’s chief of staff had emailed her immediately after the press conference, saying the prime minister would like to speak with Jack, and the two had arranged this time. McGrath handed Jack her phone and the two men chatted briefly.

Not long after he got home, Jack posted a tweet, his last. “Your support and well wishes are so appreciated. Thank you. I will fight this—and beat it.”

Jack’s mother, Doris, sent her son an email that night just after 10 pm. “Am sure you’re tired after your ordeal today—you deserve a good rest. Am going to bed now—hope to talk in the morning. Sleep well my sweet son—you are loved by so many more people than you can imagine.”

Jack tried like hell to push off death. A day after his press conference, he brought together his medical team and informed them he wanted to try whatever he could. “I’m going to challenge them,” he told McGrath. He had always done the same thing with his political team in Ottawa. “He’d say, ‘Assemble the team. Okay, we’re at 20 per cent. How are we going to get to 25 per cent?’” McGrath remembers.

Ultimately, the aggressive new cancer cells took over, and Jack, a details guy and planner to the end, asked McGrath and Topp to work with him on crafting a final message to Canadians. Over the next few weeks, they spoke to Jack about what he wanted to say and worked on various drafts with him. It was important to Jack to keep the party’s work going after his death, but he also wanted to strike an optimistic tone that would motivate people and give them hope.

On Saturday, August 20, Topp and McGrath went to Jack’s house to do more work on the message with Jack and Olivia. By then, Jack found the stairs difficult to manage, so the family had transformed the living room into his bedroom with a hospital bed set up next to the front window. The four of them went through it word by word, using an iPad to take notes. Section by section, they read out loud what they had, and Jack interrupted. “Okay, walk me through our thinking,” he’d say. Or, he’d stop to ask Olivia, “Is that okay with you, love? What about this?”

Periodically, Topp and Olivia would head up to the study on the second floor to input the edits on the desktop computer. McGrath would stay with Jack. He’d rest, and then the two would go through it again. After five hours, the letter was done. The plan was to release it after his death.

“To other Canadians who are on journeys to defeat cancer



On the campaign trail in Montreal, Layton swept 59 seats in Quebec. Managing his caucus was his top priority, and he had a long conversation with Brian Mulroney about just that. His father, Bob Layton, had served as Mulroney’s caucus chair. *Montreal Gazette* photo

and to live their lives, I say this: please don't be discouraged that my own journey hasn't gone as well as I had hoped. You must not lose your own hope... You have every reason to be optimistic, determined, and focused on the future. My only other advice is to cherish every moment with those you love at every stage of your journey, as I have done this summer," Jack wrote.

To the members of the NDP, he wrote in part, "Let's continue to move forward. Let's demonstrate in everything we do in the four years before us that we are ready to serve our beloved Canada as its next government."

"Our caucus meetings were always the highlight of my week," Jack wrote to his caucus colleagues. "It has been my role to ask a great deal from you. And now I am going to do so again."

To his "fellow Quebecers," Jack wrote, "On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, you made an historic decision... You made the right decision then; it is still the right decision today; and it will be the right decision right through to the next election, when we will succeed, together."

"Many of you have placed your trust in our party," he wrote to young Canadians. "As my time in political life draws to a close I want to share with you my belief in your power to change this country and this world... I believe in you. Your energy, your vision, your passion for justice are exactly what this country needs today."

And "finally, to all Canadians," Jack wrote, "Canada is a great country, one of the hopes of the world. We can be a better one—a country of greater equality, justice, and opportunity... We can do all of these things because we finally have a party system at the national level where there are real choices; where your vote matters; where working for change can actually bring about change. My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world."

"Jack was relieved," recalls McGrath. "He really wanted to make sure we were happy with it. He was always checking to make sure it was okay. Everything he did was as a team. He always said his two key words were 'team' and 'respect.'"

I had travelled to Toronto with McGrath a week earlier to visit Jack. We sat in the living room, next to his bed. He was in his usual chair with his bathrobe on. We all thought we had a few more weeks with Jack, so this wasn't goodbye but a check-in.

Throughout this period, Jack received dozens of emails from people expressing their love and concern. On August 8, he received a touching note from Lauren Harper. Under the subject line "A big juicy steak..." she wrote: "Good afternoon Jack and Olivia, I am sorry I didn't email you earlier to offer our best wishes (I know you talked to my husband). I was away hiking in the Yukon and lived days without any media. Just wanted to offer up a nice steak when you get back to Ottawa cooked by me. You are in our hearts and prayers (my heart, Stephen's prayers)."

The day after Jack completed his letter to Canadians, Kathleen Monk spent the day at the house. She was there to begin the conversation with Olivia about Jack's funeral, something he and Olivia had talked about in the preceding weeks. He had emailed some of his ideas for Olivia, which would later be incorporated into the service. It was the last email Jack ever sent.

When Monk left to catch her flight back to Ottawa on August 21, she knew she wasn't going to see Jack again. "You could just tell," Monk remembers. She called McGrath when she landed to tell her. "We do not have three weeks."

Shortly after 11 pm, Jack's mother, Doris, called her son to say goodbye one last time. "Hi mom," Jack said softly. "You've had a great life, Jack. It's time to close your eyes and sleep now, son."

Just after midnight, Monk and McGrath received a quick note from Olivia, saying that this was it.

By then, family members and close friends had assembled at the house. Jack, the consummate planner, had made sure that his personal affairs were taken care of, party affairs were in order and his letter to Canadians was complete. He had checked off all of the boxes on his task list. He could let go.

Just before sunrise at 4:45 am on Monday, August 22, 113 days after being elected leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, John Gilbert Layton—husband, grampa and sixth leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada—died. **P**

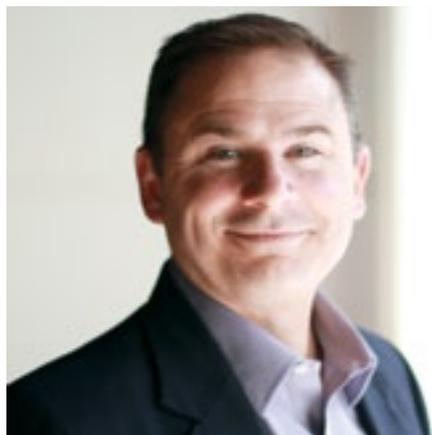
*From the book Building the Orange Wave: the Inside Story Behind the Historic Rise of Jack Layton and the NDP, © 2013, by Brad Lavigne. Published in 2013 by Douglas & McIntyre. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.*

*"We finally have a party system at the national level where there are real choices; where your vote matters; where working for change can actually bring about change. My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world."*

# The Life and Death of a Canadian Political Icon

Brad Lavigne

*Building the Orange Wave: The Inside Story Behind the Historic Rise of Jack Layton and the NDP.* Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2013.

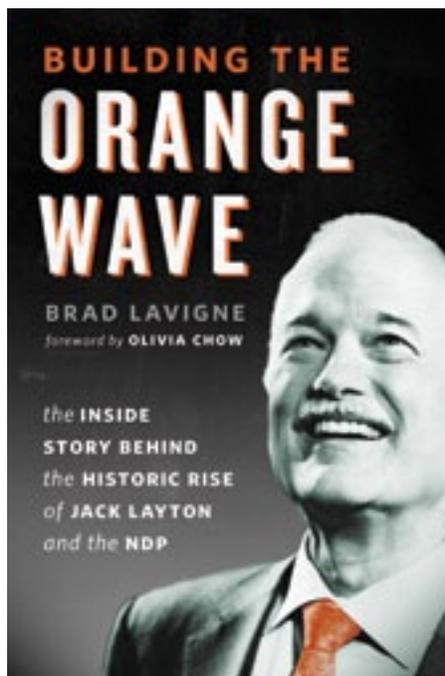


Review by Robin V. Sears

American political junkies can feed their habit with a book a month quite reliably all year long. Canadians interested in more than the Twitterverse's view of our politics go hungry for long periods at a time. This year, however, Canadian authors and publishers have produced half a dozen new books for politics-starved readers.

Of those that will stand the test of time, Brad Lavigne, who rode alongside Jack Layton on his path from becalmed Toronto city politician to beloved national leader over the course of a decade, has provided a great insider's account of that improbable journey.

Lavigne's recounting of the near death and spectacular rebirth of the NDP, "Building the Orange Wave," is far from an even-handed account of national politics. He remains



a committed partisan. He delivers and defends a strong social democratic vision for Canada. He is, at the same time, often brutally critical of his and Layton's gaffes, demonstrating a candor and self-awareness notably absent from some of season's other political offerings.

Lavigne is brutal about how amateurish was Layton's first national campaign as leader, and how painful were the post-mortems of such a gaffe-filled fiasco. He is hard, as well, on Layton's slowly acquired discipline in national politics, and how he eventually learned that every microphone is not your friend. He cites the many examples of the hair-pulling risks and over-reaching that were a mark of Layton's style until the very end.

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He slowly and gracefully builds his arc of the narrative of Layton's career from over-eager Toronto municipal activist, to energetic but fre-

quently undisciplined national party leader, to transformative political icon. Lavigne offers two essential lessons for students of politics, as it is lived, not taught. The first is that over-reach and risk-taking are essential for underdogs. The second is that the disasters that will flow from such a strategy offer the important lessons to build on.

Lavigne describes Layton's masterful courtship of Thomas Mulcair, over nearly two years, for example. Using carefully chosen restaurants and Olivia Chow's outreach to Mulcair's smart psychologist wife, Catherine, and with a recurring cycle of pressure and promises, Layton achieved what no other CCF/NDP leader had done since the recruitment of Robert Clibbe half a century earlier. He landed a powerful Quebec figure as the face of the party in the province that was perennially its political wasteland, excepting only the brief beachhead established in 1991 when Phil Edmiston won a byelection on the South Shore of Montreal. The recruitment of Mulcair, and his victory in the 2007 Outremont by election, set the stage for all that followed in the 2011 campaign in Quebec.

Lavigne is insightful and admiring at the same time about his former boss and political hero. He acknowledges the disastrous bungling of Layton's claim that Paul Martin was responsible for homeless deaths, laying the blame squarely at Layton's feet. He recounts his painful role in executing a humiliating flip-flop on allowing Stéphane Dion's Green ally, Elizabeth May, to be given equal status in the 2008 leaders' debates. He makes clear he thought it was a mistake, but one he loyally defended on TV panels for days afterward.

But it is the final third of the book, his account of Layton's triumphant 2011 campaign and its tragic aftermath, that makes this a compelling must-read. Lavigne has an advantage in that every reader knows how unfair, almost Shakespearean was Layton's end. So, as with Kennedy, or Martin Luther King, or any political figure cut down at a moment of triumph, their weaknesses fade, and the power of their legacy is forever buttressed by the tragedy of their death. We don't remember Kennedy's failure to have achieved

a single important piece of civil rights legislation, we remember his “Ask not...” inauguration eloquence. We will always celebrate King’s magnificent dream, and not his sagging fortunes at the time of his passing.

Similarly, Jack Layton’s majestic dying message to the Canadian people and the courage of his final days have already caused memories of his early failures to fade. Lavigne describes in painful detail the role that he, Anne McGrath, Kathleen Monk and Brian Topp played in those days. That exceptional and powerful team of advisers and loyalists that Jack had drawn to him supported Olivia Chow and their leader as they chose an interim leader, polished his final message into a powerful rhetorical legacy, and produced his elegant and uplifting funeral.

Partisans of other political tribes may complain that Lavigne is too *partipris* to offer useful insights into one of Canada’s most tragic political stories—leader cut down only weeks after his greatest political success. Lavigne is especially eloquent on the pain of those months in the spring and summer of 2011 among those who had been with Layton on his quest to rebuild social democracy in Canada. Many Liberals will be unhappy with his characterization of their role in the collapse of the Martin government in November 2005. Others will quibble about the rights and wrongs of the failed 2008 parliamentary coup and coalition campaign.

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Lavigne makes no pretense of neutrality, but his harsh judgments of the tactical and strategic failures of several key chapters in that fascinating decade, from planning Layton’s

improbable capture of the NDP leadership to planning his funeral only nine years later, will make some New Democrats squirm. He also conveys a respect for the professionalism and discipline of the Harper team’s approach to political street fighting, nesting several delightful anecdotes in his tale about secret exchanges between he and a series of Harper operatives on campaign craft.

The inevitable temptation for political journalists and the punditocracy is to declare, post-facto, every political fate, every election result, as predictable, even inevitable. That they survive such silly claims despite having argued something completely different only weeks before is the product of what my journalist father—longtime *Toronto Star* reporter Val Sears—describes as “the secret of journalistic and political success: short memories.”

It was not inevitable that Jack Layton would become the leader of the NDP; he was an outsider held in considerable contempt by many important party elders. Nor was it inevitable that he would succeed in rebuilding the party that had sunk to single digits in the polls. Minority parties that slide that far are literally one election from extinction, viz. Progressives, Social Credit, the Saskatchewan Liberal Party.

Not only was it not inevitable, it is still astonishing that Layton was able to wipe the Bloc Québécois from the political map in one fell swoop, to seize the Official Opposition and propel the NDP from a distant fourth party to government-in-waiting in less than 10 years.

Lavigne does not yet have the craft of great political journalists. But he does share their keen eye for the hinge moments in politics, those rare occasions when luck and strategy combine to generate a political wave, and the mastery and guts required to successfully ride it to victory. He does future political activists, and all Canadian political junkies, great service in describing with passion and in clinical detail how the Layton team turned the improbable into the “inevitable” Orange Wave. **P**

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## Framed and Forsaken: Michael Ignatieff’s Take on Life and Death in Politics

Michael Ignatieff

*Fire and Ashes: Success and Failure in Politics.* Toronto: Random House Canada, 2013.

Review by Patrick Gossage

During the early days of Michael Ignatieff’s putative run to be leader of the Liberal Party in 2006 I was summoned by two of the three “men in black” who had journeyed to Cambridge to persuade him to enter Canadian politics. They were Ian Davy, a handsome young filmmaker and advertising guy, the son of the famous



Michael Ignatieff campaigning with Liberal candidates in Montreal in 2011. He never made the transformation from public intellectual to politician. He seemed to lack a sense of the country, which played to the Conservative attack ad that he was “Just Visiting”. Montreal *Gazette* photo

Liberal “Rainmaker”, Keith Davey, and Alf Apps, a veteran Liberal who would become president of the party. They were upset that I wasn’t being “fair” to their candidate in weekly appearances on Don Newman’s CBC-TV show *Politics*.

Over drinks in the plush library bar of the Royal York Hotel in Toronto, they compared their candidate to Pierre Trudeau, and allowed as he would revive the party and beat Stephen Harper. I had, rightly, as it turned out, been bemoaning his lack of political experience and his extended absence from Canada. I ridiculed the Trudeau comparison, pointing out the long years of Trudeau’s involvement in the transformation of Quebec society, and his tireless work as a civil rights lawyer. Ignatieff had no such previous political involvement. Trudeau was a committed, engaged public intellectual. Ignatieff was a public intellectual. They were not impressed, so convinced were they he could learn grassroots politics and ultimately connect with the electorate.

In Ignatieff’s brief tome on his life and death in politics, aptly named *Fire and Ashes: Success and Failure in Politics*, we are treated to a ponderous and heavily intellectualized desiderata on those years, and discover that he also truly believed he could connect with

Canadians. “Framed” and “denied standing,” as he argues, by persistent negative advertising attacks (“Michael Ignatieff—Just Visiting”), and hit by the unexpected orange wave that the cane-wielding Jack Layton spread over Quebec, he was tragically thwarted from what he felt was his calling to be prime minister.

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The book starts with his sense of mission, in his oft-told tale of a long line of ancestral commitment to public service in Russia, then in Canada. Pages of “to the manor born” and the family’s public leadership, his admission, at 18, that he wanted to be prime min-

ister, his deep admiration for Trudeau working in his 1968 leadership campaign—this background and the almost genetic belief that good government could do great things fueled his ambition. Ignatieff succumbed to the blandishments of the “men in black”, despite their warnings about “the great [Liberal] franchise reaching the end of the road”. He saw it as a prodigal son’s “homecoming”; positioning that never sold.

In re-living Ignatieff’s campaign to win a seat in Etobicoke in the January 2006 election, we get the impression that he was beginning to think he was a populist. Common vignettes of canvassing are, like much else in the book, summarized in the most exaggerated prose: his campaign, he claims, “broke down the barriers of race, ethnicity and class that kept us separate.”

Ignatieff over-intellectualizes simple political concepts. Having made the glaringly obvious discovery of Canada’s immense division and diversity, he writes that in the 2006 leadership campaign, “I talked about the ‘spine’ of citizenship that ought to tie us together through all our differences.” Hardly a rallying cry like Trudeau’s “just society”. But he stuck to this unappealing trope. Later, learning the ropes as an MP, he gives a long lesson in how Parliament works, bemoaning its lack of real debate.

He is embarrassingly candid about learning what anyone who has ever been elected to public office knows—that you can’t be candid or spontaneous with journalists; that you have to look people directly in the eye when you talk to them. Seriously. He recounts what he felt was a winning speech at the convention with his repetition of “tous ensemble”—a tepid rallying cry in either official language that made up for in meaninglessness what it lacked in boldness.

This qualifies for the all-time list of ineffective political oratory, along with his 2011 election campaign slogan “rise up”!, which would follow a lecture on Harper’s undemocratic ways, or a protracted list of his platform’s promises to do just about everything for everyone. “For a moment,” he writes. “We thought we had caught a wave”. Later, he admits that all the noise and rapture of carefully stacked

campaign rallies were no more than “talking to ourselves...” A rare moment of simple candour in this self-serving book. Given the state of the party and his inability to focus the campaign, defeat was inevitable.

Packing up at Stornaway, Ignatieff comforts himself with a long Who’s Who of famous losers, (including Machievelli and Edmund Burke), just as he makes sure we know he comes from a long line of famous winners at the beginning of the book.

He does catalogue characteristics of winning politicians—including adaptability and cunning, qualities his own fortuitous life experience had denied him. Late in the game, he finally realized that politics is war, but he failed to hit Harper where it hurt. While the Conservative ad artillery trained on Ignatieff’s critical weakness—“He didn’t come back for you”, he failed to nail what swing voters did not like about Harper. He never took the gloves off. Calling Harper undemocratic flew over the heads of the average voter.

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The lamb was bleeding, but didn’t know it. Where Pierre Trudeau had been able to connect with voters because of, not despite, his intellectual abilities, Ignatieff had magnified the distance of 30 years away with a tin political ear and a manifest discomfort with retail politics, even as a means to an end. Where Trudeau had a visceral, instinctive sense of Canada in all its beautiful and confounding complications, Ignatieff conveyed opinions as the product of pondering from afar, which, under the circumstances, is all they could have been.

I attended his last campaign rally in a large restaurant in North York.

Peter Donolo, Jean Chrétien’s effective press secretary and Iggy’s second chief of staff, was lounging disconsolately outside on the sidewalk of the strip mall. “I don’t understand,” he said sadly. “We did everything right.” The problem with the campaign and the book is that from the time the men in black persuaded this Oxford and Harvard intellectual to come back and play politician, hubris took over, and he actually believed he was doing everything right for Canada—in a “noblesse oblige” kind of way. That fatally skewed perspective took him abruptly back to teaching, a profession he clearly should never have left. **P**

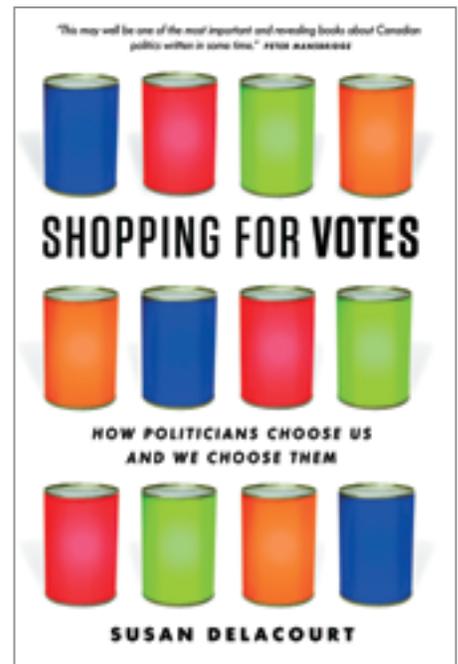
*Contributing Writer Patrick Gossage is the founder and chairman of Media Profile, a Toronto-based communications consulting firm. He is the author of the 1987 best seller, Close to the Charisma, about his years as press secretary to Pierre Elliott Trudeau. patrick.gossage@mediaprofile.com*

## Required Reading for the Political Class

Susan Delacourt



*Shopping for Votes: How Politicians Choose Us and How We Choose Them. Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 2013.*



Review by Geoff Norquay

Most political parties in the western world have embraced all the tools of modern advertising and marketing. They expend significant resources in building a brand around their leader and party, and they rigorously devise and market policies to micro-target segments of the population. They aggressively invite the comparison of brands through what has become known as “negative advertising.” In Canada, the result is that our “demographic culture has become enmeshed with consumer culture—as you shop and eat, so shall you vote.”

That’s the central thesis of Susan Delacourt’s latest book *Shopping for Votes: How Politicians Choose Us and We Choose Them*. And a very important book it is. Not only should it be required reading for political junkies, but also for those who simply want to understand how politics works in Canada in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and what is played out every day in both question period and in the media.

For Delacourt, the starting point is the rise of universal consumerism that began in the immediate post-war period. As advertisers learned how to communicate effectively with consumers, it was inevitable that the understanding and skills they devel-

oped would migrate to the civic side of the street and to public policy.

She charts the growing links between advertising and politics through the contributions of the early Canadian pioneers: Conservatives Dalton Camp, Allister Grosart and Allan Gregg, and Liberals Keith Davey, Jerry Grafstein and Martin Goldfarb. Ultimately, the understanding of consumer and citizen markets merged and led to the development of typologies, essentially “brands” of people, defined by their beliefs, attributes and values as both consumers and voters.

It was only a short step from there for political strategists to begin probing what people wanted from their politics as well as their supermarkets. As Delacourt puts it, “The 1990s would see a stampede toward these notions of people, politics and products as brands, and a rush by political and private marketers to set up “niche” markets to suit this fragmented population.”

The genius who refined this approach for Stephen Harper was Patrick Muttart, who had learned the lessons of Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair and “New Labour,” the Republicans under Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, as well as Australia’s John Howard. He developed the archetypes that helped to elect the Conservatives in 2006:

- “Dougie,” along with his house, his car and the Canadian Tire where he worked;
- “Rick and Brenda,” a common-law couple with working class jobs, who could probably be persuaded to swing to the Conservatives, if the party pressed the right buttons with their bread-and-butter concerns about taxes or the costs of keeping up their homes;
- “Fiona and Marcus” ...were a high-income, childless couple who lived in an expensive condominium, who didn’t mind paying high taxes and would probably always vote Liberal;
- “Zoe,” a single, urban female, fond of yoga and organic food, living in a high rise in Toronto, who was probably a lost cause—nothing was likely to lure her away from Liberals or New Democrats.”

Not only did Muttart bring the en-

tire market intelligence operation in-house within the party, but he also played a key role in crafting the “overall ‘campaign narrative’—a combination of polling intelligence, policy, image and advertising, all in one linked package.” Advances in technology enabled the Conservatives to move from a focus on “winnable geographic regions to winnable individuals.” And it worked. Harper won the 2006 election and has not looked back.

To be sure, the ultimate outcome of the hyper slicing and dicing of the electorate is not without consequences. In the final chapter, Delacourt begins to unpack some of the implications, and suggests we may be beginning to see “the true democratic price of seeing civic life in the same terms as consumer culture.”

There is the constant campaign, fuelled by the constant repetition of clear and concise messages. There is politics and governance reduced to a series of transactions with voters—“deep discounts on their taxes, snappy slogans on their legislation, image over policy discussions. And there is the call to honour and revere the icons of nationhood—the military, the War of 1812, hockey and Tim Horton’s.

As Delacourt notes, perhaps the biggest risk here is that citizens may reach the check-out counter of the new consumer politics and check out altogether. On the other hand, if you only need 200,000 more votes to win, and you know where they are, and how to get them.... **P**

*Contributing Writer Geoff Norquay, a former communications director for Stephen Harper in opposition, is a principal of the Earncliffe Strategy Group.*

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# He’s Prime Minister: Get Used to It

Paul Wells

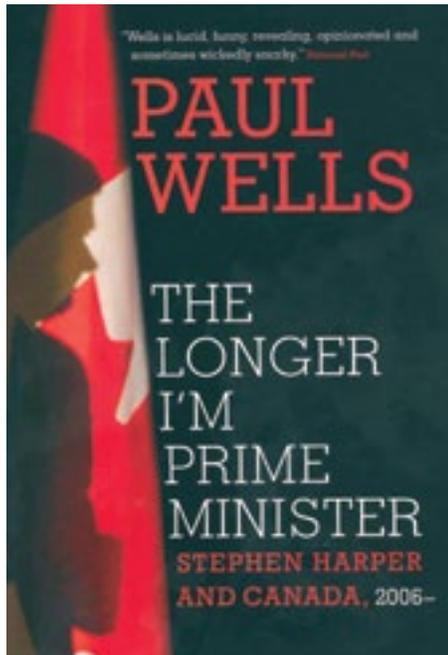


*The Longer I’m Prime Minister: Stephen Harper and Canada 2006.* Toronto: Random House Canada 2013

## Review by James Baxter

It is hard to determine whether Paul Wells wrote *The Longer I am Prime Minister: Stephen Harper and Canada 2006*—from a standpoint of admiration for Canada’s arch incrementalist or with an acute case of Stockholm Syndrome. What is clear is that Wells has written one of the most readable and thorough accounts of a man on a mission to change Canada forever.

Wells readily admits that he set out to write a book that he knew would appeal to conservatives, particularly the impatient ones, while at the same time rub the noses of liberals and progressives in the fact that, despite making up at least 60 per cent of the voting public, they are impotent, that resistance is futile. In large measure, he is successful in both missions. As an author, Wells has created a political book that should be read by every Canadian with a shred of political awareness. Harper’s supporters will enjoy a glimpse into the planning behind the tactics. Harper’s detractors will be forced to look beyond the caricature of the robotic control freak and confront their greatest fear;



that divided, they are powerless to stop the slow-moving devolutionary juggernaut.

Indeed, Wells suggests that, even united, the time for stopping Harper's plans have long past, that it went with the Dion-Layton-Duceppe failed coalition, a moment in history into which Wells goes in impressive detail. It's a Kool-Aid many Ottawa-based columnists have taken to guzzling by the bucket: that Harper is now somehow immune to the kinds of pressures that have eventually ended the tenures of all of his predecessors.

But Wells goes well beyond the dime-a-dozen political theories that line the nation's bookshelves and offers rare glimpses of the man behind the myths to the point of (gasp) humanizing him.

"If Harper can be imperious with the mostly faceless strangers of the public service, he is surprisingly collaborative with his partisan political staff," Wells writes in one of his brilliant "Remedial Reading" chapters, which break from the chronology of Harper's time in office to offer useful insights and anecdotes about the man. "Several people who have worked for Harper say hierarchies tend to flatten in his presence.... This helps explain how Ray Novak, who began life as a go-pher for Harper, wound up his chief of staff. He was in almost all the meetings. Nobody told him not to talk."

That openness doesn't only extend to like-minded staffers. Wells also shows that on those rare occasions when Harper ventures out from behind the protective screen of his partisan PMO staffers, he is a remarkable listener and pretty fair conversationalist.

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His prime minister—get used to it.

ister..." as a way of pointing out that it's another day that the Liberals are not in charge.

But Harper is clearly more than a cold, calculating tactician. "As I have been trying to tell you, at intervals throughout: Harper has more than a conservative analysis or a Conservative label: he has a conservative gut and he pays it some attention," Wells said in explaining the decision to burn considerable political capital on eliminating the long-form census.

Indeed, the book offers many similar examples where Harper, who detractors believe is not a natural politician but instead a product of the US Republican Party war rooms, shows uncanny ability to read a situation and follow his instincts.

But it is Wells' countless examples of how Harper defines success differently from virtually all those who have occupied 24 Sussex before him that make the book a genuinely useful examination of this political force.

"To what purpose (all the political gamesmanship)? What has he accomplished?" Wells asks in his conclusion. "It is in the nature of Harper's project that he would have less to show for his time in office than some of his predecessors. They saw themselves as builders. He is a skeptic and, to use the gentlest word available, an editor."

While readable by any audience with a modicum of interest in politics, Wells' excellent book seems primarily aimed at the bubble-dwelling audience that resides within a few miles of Parliament Hill.

In his conclusion, he writes: "In eighteen years in Ottawa, I have wound up covering two winners, Jean Chrétien and Stephen Harper, plus some other people. For a city that is forever falling in love with the Next Big Thing, Ottawa has never been very good at understanding actual winners."

Which is to say the working title of the book could have been *Stephen Harper: Here to Stay, Now Get Over It*.

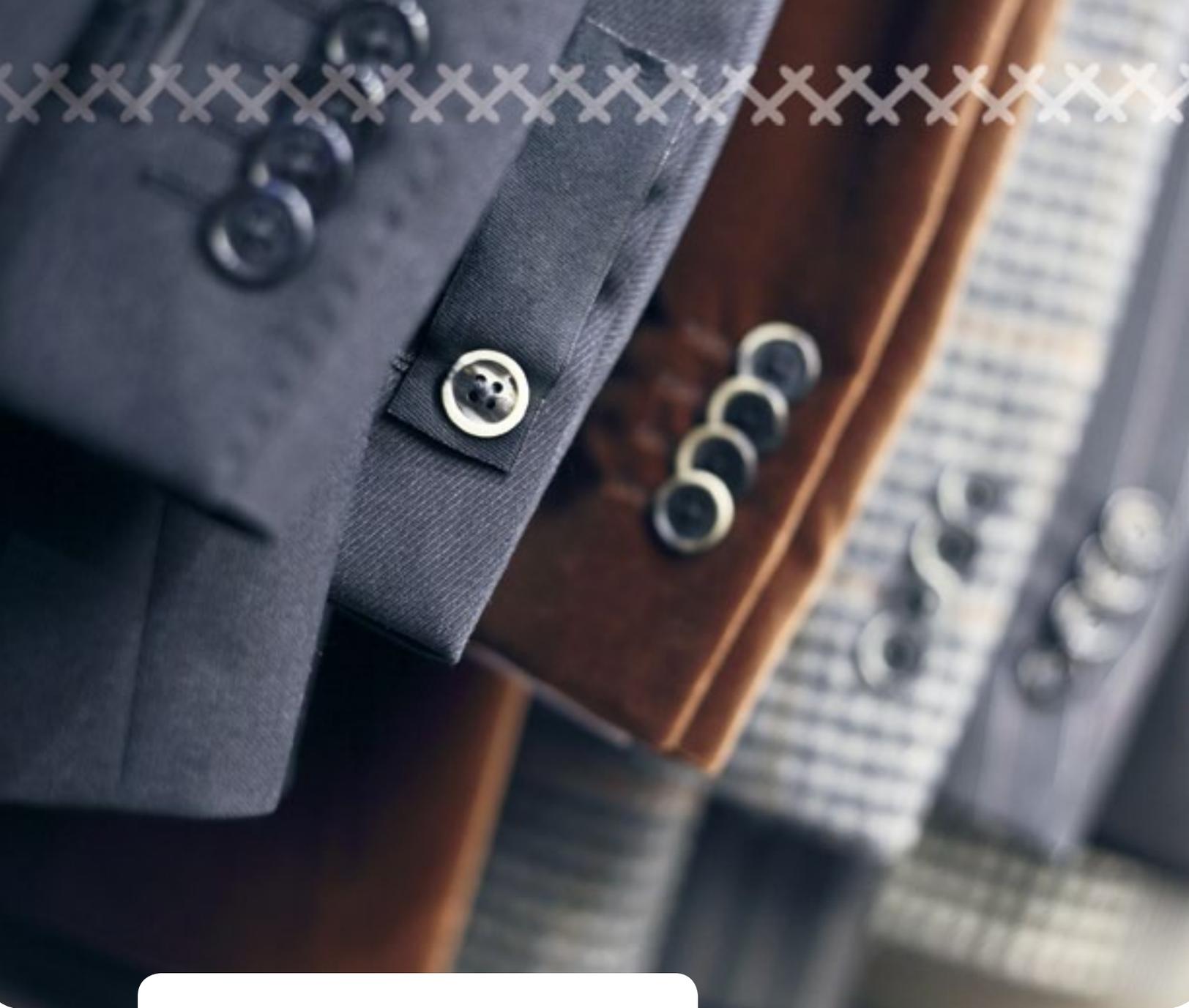
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