

Uncle Sam and US: Globalization, Neoconservatism, and the Canadian State

Stephen Clarkson

Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002, pp. 534

There is no doubt now that the United States has gone from super-power to undisputed "hyper-power" status. One would be hard pressed to find, at any other juncture in history, a major power with the kind of omnipotence and pervasive influence that the US has exhibited in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Indeed, as Stephen Clarkson points out in his provocative volume, *Uncle Sam and US: Globalization, Neoconservatism, and the Canadian State*, the military, political, economic and cultural influence of the US on the entire globe should cause all countries to question their ability to survive the homogeneous onslaught of this hegemonic power. Of course, Canada, by virtue of its proximity, is more sensitive than most to every muscular twitch of its giant neighbour to the South. This sensitivity, and some might use the term "paranoia" to describe it, is evident through Clarkson's scholarly work and particularly in his most recent book.

For the author, Canada's survivability as a sovereign state is being undermined, not only by the encroachments of its neighbour, but also by the ideological basis upon which US hegemony has been built, namely, the neoliberal thrust of globalization and of hemispheric regionalism. *Uncle Sam and US* is riveting in its cataloguing of layers of encumbering policies developed in the US and in global governance institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, and through regional arrangements, such as the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement. These policies constrain the Canadian government's ability to deliver on, what Clarkson calls, its social programmes. The problem, however, is compounded by the federal Liberal government's embrace of the philosophy sustaining the neoliberal economic order being built by the US and global governance institutions. This philosophy, as Clarkson sees it, advocates less government, the elimination of budget deficits, the downgrading of federal-provincial authority to provinces, the privatization of crown corporations, deregulation, the downsizing of services, and off-loading the tax burden from corporations to ordinary citizens.

Clarkson does not like this trend one bit. He blames it for everything that is wrong with Canada right now—the increase in homelessness in certain cities, airport taxes, diminishing of institutions like the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the National Film Board, fluctuations and uncertainty in the price of electricity, telephone service and natural gas, and the financial woes of Air Canada and the Canadian National Railway. While the external forces of globalization, globalism and global governance is partly responsible, Clarkson argues that the political decisions made by Canadian governments are also to blame for the peripheral status of the Canadian state. He suggests that Canada's sovereign status came into question once the country was lured into bilateral economic arrangements with the US. Initially these arrangements were informal, but by 1957 with the establishment of the North American Aerospace Defence Command there began a series of "spill-over" activities leading to the slow integration of Canada into the US political economy.

The author argues that economic arrangements like the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement in effect "signaled the end of Canada as we knew it" (14). Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau tried to slow down this economic integration with the US. With the Foreign Investment Review Agency, the Canadian Development Corporation, the National Energy Program, and his "Third Option" strategy of diversification to reduce Canada's dependence on the US, Trudeau did have some success in maintaining a degree of Canadian sovereignty. As Clarkson puts it: "This assertion of authority by the Canadian state over its economic space marked the apogee of its attempt to construct a dominant territorial state and to slow integration—at least at the political level" (25). But anyone who has observed the European integration process knows full well that economic inte-

gration can, sooner or later, spill over into cultural and political integration. And, as far as Clarkson is concerned, this is already happening in Canada.

In fact, according to the author, since 1981 we have been witnessing “a gradual, tortuous, and bumpy slide towards a neoconservative reconfiguration [of the Canadian political economy] along overtly continental lines” (26). Under Brian Mulroney’s Conservatives, Canada’s economic and social policies began to resemble those of the ultra-neoconservatives—Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. This “new thinking” more or less buried Keynesianism in Canada and coincided with the views expressed by the McDonald royal commission, which in turn led to the North American Free Trade Agreement and what Clarkson refers to as US-controlled “continental governance.” When one combines this continental governance with the intrusive global governance of the WTO, one is left with a supra-constitutional set of arrangements that not only limits the Canadian government’s ability to govern and regulate but also seriously erodes the sovereignty of Canada. Thus, as the author laments, “the survival of a recognizable Canada appears to be jeopardized” (426).

Can Canada survive as a distinct, sovereign entity? Clarkson’s empirical evidence in this book points in the direction of a negative answer. Yet, as an idealist, the author cannot bring himself to admit that Canadians are already in many respects Americans. He holds out hope that anti-globalization forces and a post-globalist social agenda can somehow mount a counter-hegemonic challenge to American dominance and preserve the Canadian state’s identity. While this may be wishful thinking, Stephen Clarkson’s book offers a ray of hope for those Canadian nationalists who refuse to embrace uncritically the US-sponsored political and economic ideological agenda.

In spite of the 20 chapters and 534 pages, this book is easily digestible even for the layperson. Although the arguments are decidedly one-sided and normatively driven, the book is well documented and well written. It is certain to become required reading for students studying Canadian politics and Canada-US relations for many years to come.

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La Commission Pepin-Robarts quelque vingt ans après. Le débat qui n’a pas eu lieu

Jean-Pierre Wallot, sous la direction de,

Ottawa : Les presses de l’Université d’Ottawa, 2002, 148 p.

L’histoire des négociations constitutionnelles qui ont eu cours des années 1960 aux années 1990 reste à écrire. Cette période d’effervescence a été marquée par les travaux de plusieurs grandes commissions d’enquête – royales comme la Commission Laurendeau-Dunton ou non royales comme le Comité Spicer – qui ont constitué une véritable thérapie collective visant à trouver une solution au *mal canadien*, pour reprendre l’expression heureuse d’André Burelle, l’un des contributeurs de l’ouvrage collectif qui entend souligner le vingtième anniversaire de la Commission Pépin-Robarts.

Le manuscrit publié sous la direction de Jean-Pierre Wallot a réuni les communications présentées à un colloque organisé par le Centre de recherche en civilisation canadienne-française (CRCCF) de l’Université d’Ottawa. L’ouvrage a réuni une brochette d’intellectuels et de spécialistes bien au fait des questions soulevées. Ils examinent le contenu du rapport Pépin-Robarts avec l’avantage du recul et à la lumière des défis du présent. Il en résulte un ouvrage fort cohérent, bien argumenté et bien écrit.

L’objet de l’ouvrage est toujours d’actualité, bien que le mal canadien n’ait pas ou n’ait plus – du moins dans l’opinion publique – le caractère urgent qu’il avait dans les années 1970, lassitude ou fatigue culturelle obligent. « Le magasin général est fermé » a tranché le premier ministre du Canada, Jean Chrétien. Cela ne veut pas dire