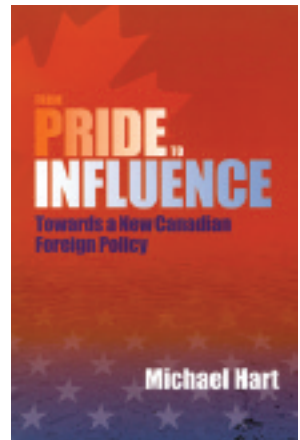


A must-read for students of foreign affairs

Michael Hart. *From Pride to Influence: Towards a New Canadian Foreign Policy*. Vancouver, UBC Press, 2009.

Review by John J. Noble



Michael Hart's latest book is about the politics and practice of Canadian foreign policy, which he believes should be made up of two parts: the management of Canada-US relations and the management of relations with the rest of the world. He suggests that the government owes its citizens three basic foreign policy goals: security, prosperity and such services and programs as those citizens value and can afford. Hart explores how pursuit of these constant goals of Canadian foreign policy has adapted and now needs to adapt again to the ever-changing context in which Canadians find themselves. Hart examines how competing perspectives inform Canadian policy choices and decisions. Hart emphasizes throughout the book that doing foreign policy requires a government prepared to make choices, set priorities and exercise leadership. He challenges Canadians to anchor their foreign policy more confidently in the evolving context of ever-deepening Canada-US integration and new post-Cold War, post-9/11 threats to their security. Hart says that "only in restoring the United States to the centre of Canadian foreign policy can Canadian foreign policy regain its connection to national interests and allow Canada to find a place in the world that reflects those interests, one that projects a less self-conscious emphasis on pride and

pays more attention to gaining and maintaining influence."

Hart structures his book to look first at the intellectual foundations of the two main competing views of Canada's place in the world: the claim that Canada's principal interest lies in ensuring a well-functioning and mutually beneficial relationship with the United States, versus the desire to focus on the rest of the world and differentiate Canada from the United States. He believes that the choice is not one or the other, but rather "a sound foreign policy that involves a deft and mutually complementary blend of realism and liberal internationalism." Hart then looks at the institutional context within which Canadian foreign policy is made and delivered and considers the extent to which changing demographics constrain the room for manoeuvre of any Canadian government. One chapter examines the foreign policy legacy of the past 60 years and its impact on current possibilities and challenges. Two other chapters deal with the complex post-Cold War global geopolitical, security and economic contexts within which Canadian policy-makers must operate, a world dominated by the United States and beset by a range of new transnational and global challenges and the waning importance of traditional multilateralism and military alliances. They underline the extent to which Canadian foreign policy is largely reactive to the decisions

of more powerful players and how it is shaped by circumstances beyond Canada's control, from economic globalization to the emergence of Islamist terrorism. Another chapter outlines the extent of linkages that have developed between Canada and the United States and their impact on Canadian interests and foreign policy choices. Hart then explores how Canadians and Americans view each other and the impact of myths and attitudes on the relationship and the pursuit of Canada's US agenda.

Hart also examines the US political and institutional context for the making of foreign and other policies that may directly affect Canadian interests and describes the current channels for managing bilateral relations. Hart looks at what he calls the "optional" side of Canadian foreign policy, considering the extent of Canadian interests beyond North America and the extent to which a well-ordered and mutually beneficial relationship with the United States can enhance Canadian pursuit of these interests. Finally, he reiterates the principal theme of the book — the central role of the United States in protecting and promoting Canadian security and prosperity — and the steps Canadians will need to take to maximize their influence in the US capital to ensure the benefits of deepening bilateral integration and to regain a role in

world affairs commensurate with Canadian aspirations and capacities.

The title is a play on the title of the 2005 International Policy Statement (IPS) of the Martin government, *A Role of Pride and Influence in the World*. The book itself can be seen as a critique of the IPS, including the difficulties and length of time it took to produce it. Hart is highly critical of the Chrétien and Martin governments in their relationships with the United States but does not differentiate

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between Jean Chrétien's relationship with Bill Clinton, which was excellent and included regular rounds of golf, and Chrétien's relationship with George W. Bush, which was perceived as distant, exactly as Chrétien wanted it to be. Paul Martin was supposed to launch a new relationship with the US, and Hart chronicles how Martin proposed to do this with a split of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (qualified by Martin in his recent memoirs as a mistake for which he blames the PCO bureaucrats); the creation of a cabinet committee on Canada-US relations, chaired by himself; and a PCO secretariat to coordinate a "whole of government" approach to the relationship. Hart also chronicles how Martin's good intentions were stymied by his own indecision and the decision not to participate in ballistic missile defence. Hart observes that Martin's "lack of ambition and leadership forced officials to seek solace in the virtues of incrementalism, a strategy that may be politically safe in Canada but that rarely produces results in the US capital." Hart also notes that Martin reversed his stated intentions in the 2006 election with "repeated incidents of anti-Americanism more reminiscent of the histrionics of the Diefenbaker years than the tactics of a pragmatic centrist politician."

Hart does not examine in any great detail the foreign policy followed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. He believes it is to a large part still stuck in the incrementalist mindset of his policy advisers. Harper's somewhat surprising emphasis on values as well as interests is in a long-standing Canadian tradition first enunciated in the Gray Lecture by Louis St-Laurent in 1947 (undoubtedly vetted by his then deputy minister, Lester B. Pearson). Harper has complained publicly about DFAIT officials

not wanting to follow his lead and suggested the way to overcome this was through "strong direction." DFAIT went through an "alignment" review in 2007 that resulted in three overarching priorities: 1) Afghanistan; 2) North America and the Americas; 3) growing/emerging markets, with a focus on China and India. Such a list does not exactly follow the prescriptions of Hart's book.

Hart's emphasis on Canada-US relations draws on many excellent ideas and proposals from his previous work and that of a wide variety of others with a deep and rich experience in managing the relationship, including former ambassadors in Washington Allan Gotlieb and Derek Burney. Even Mitchell Sharp's Third Option paper started off acknowledging that "the challenge of living distinct from, but in harmony with, the world's most powerful and dynamic nation, the United States, was one of two inescapable realities, both crucial to Canadian policy needs." The other was national unity. Hart believes that too many Canadians emphasize the distinct part when in fact they should emphasize the harmony part.

Hart does not consider the extent to which the departure of President

George W. Bush and the arrival of President Barack Obama could change things, both in the context of Canada-US relations and in the wider world. Canada may have to play catch-up on climate change and other issues. The book was finalized before the economic crash of late 2008, which has yet to fully work its way through North America and the world. The increased role for governments in trying to minimize the economic downturn flies in the face of

one of Hart's points about the declining role of governments in the area of trade and finance, but in that he is in good company. What that means in terms of the ability or willingness of the governments in Ottawa and Washington to contemplate anything beyond incrementalism in the relationship is far from clear. Hart would most certainly argue that the downturn makes his prescription all the more urgent.

Hart's book is a must-read for all those interested in any aspect of Canadian foreign policy. He has laid out in clear and succinct language what he believes the priority should be and how pursuit of that priority will in fact enable Canadian foreign policy objectives in a wider world to be achieved. There are many more useful insights and facts about Canadian foreign policy than can be summarized in this review. Hart's is a perspective that I fully endorse and I found to be borne out on a regular basis throughout my 35 years in DFAIT in terms of both the need to get the Canada-US relationship right and those who would turn our attention elsewhere.

John J. Noble is a retired Canadian ambassador with 35 years service in DFAIT. He is a fellow of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard; at Carleton he is a Senior Distinguished Fellow at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs and a senior associate of the Centre for Trade Policy and Law.