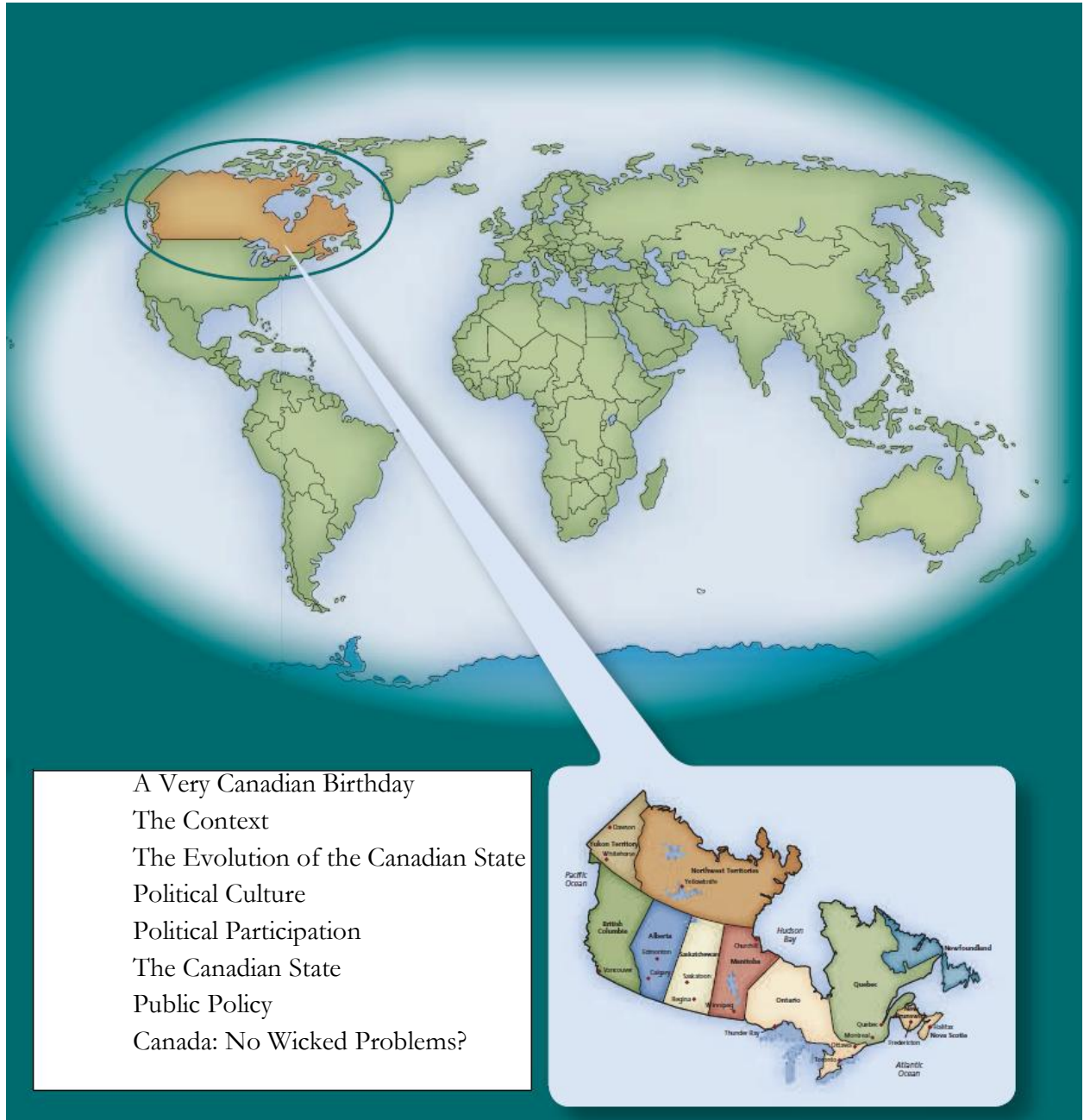


Chapter 18

Canada



If we don't conceive of our story of Canada accurately, we as politicians can't do what we need to do, and we as citizens can't live the life that is in us to live.

Ken Dryden

The Basics

Size	9,984,670 sq. km (slightly larger than the United States)
Population	35.8 million
Religion	Roman Catholic 39%; Protestant 20%; Other Christian 7%; Other 9%; Muslim 2%; None 24%
GDP per capita	\$46,300
Currency	\$1.25 CAD = \$1 U.S.
Capital	Ottawa
Prime Minister	Justin Trudeau (2015-)
Governor General	David Johnston (2010-)

A Very Canadian Birthday

Canada celebrated its one hundred fiftieth birthday on July 1, 2017. I happened to be writing this chapter at the time and thus paid more attention to the day than I might have otherwise. Unlike most readers of this book, I am old enough to remember the celebration when the United States turned 200 in 1976. The patriotic hoopla then was amazing and included everything from solemn remembrances to bicentennial toilet bowls.

The Canadian celebrations I watched over what was also my Independence Day weekend paled in comparison. To say that they were more muted is a vast understatement. As the Canadian journalist Jon Kay put it in an op-ed piece in that morning's *Washington Post*:

Our whole history is so lacking in drama as to defy celebration. On the entire planet, what other country has led such a blandly charmed life as my own? Iceland? New Zealand? Switzerland, perhaps? It's a short list.
(www.washingtonpost.com, accessed July 1, 2017).

Kay was on to something. To see why, take 20 minutes and watch these two videos made by Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** (1971-) to commemorate Canada Day. You will have no trouble seeing that Canada is dramatically different from its neighbor to the south, beginning with the fact that Trudeau gives the speech on Parliament Hill in both of Canada's official languages—French and English—and assumes that his listeners will understand him.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEVLM9Cx7M4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhBBHDQzsZs>

It's not just the language. His main goal was to stress the unity Canadians has achieved by taking advantage of its diversity. Even more than President Barack Obama, Trudeau underscores the fact that Canada is a nation of immigrants and has succeeded in large part because it has welcomed people of all faiths and backgrounds.

There was, of course, more than a little bit of hyperbole in Trudeau's remarks. Not all Canadians could understand everything he said. According to official figures, only about 18 percent of Canadians think of themselves as truly bilingual, and that percentage is much lower among native English speakers.

Even while they were celebrating their independence, Canadians continued wondering who they are in two ways that will be of importance in this chapter. First, they spend a lot of time trying to figure out how they are different from the United States—something Americans rarely even think about when it comes to Canadians. Second, far more than their neighbors to the south, most Canadians are willing to ask themselves tough questions about how they treated what they call their **original peoples** and how to build a unified country that now has such diverse roots.

Still, it is hard not to come away from any encounter with Canada or Canadians without acknowledging that the country is one the most tolerant countries in the world. Whatever its historical blemishes, Canada adds about one percent to its population each year, and very few



Prime Minister Trudeau: Source: Wikimedia Commons

of those immigrants today come from Europe. What's more, its major political parties go out of their way to make it clear that they support immigration to the point that they often try to outdo each other in claiming to be the most pro-immigrant.

Similarly, even though Canada may not have a history of foreign conquests and victories in war to rival those of the United States, it has plenty to celebrate. Most global ranking systems—like the ones I've used in *Comparative Politics*—place Canada in the top ten, invariably ahead of the United States. Tangibly, Canada is about as wealthy as any country in the world. Unlike the United States, it has provided health care for all of its citizens at no out of pocket expense ever since it adopted a single-payer system in the 1960s. The average tuition fee at its predominantly state-run university system is a little more than \$6,000 per year.

The list goes on and on. But, one point is clear. Canada has done a remarkable job of providing public goods while maintaining a predominantly capitalist economy which is dominated by its private sector. In fact, like many European countries, Canada has actually privatized a number of key industries in recent decades.

Last but by no means least, all of this has happened in the looming shadow of the United States—its far more powerful neighbor to the south. Canada does not feel the weight of its neighbor in the same ways Mexico does. In particular, the United States has rarely tried to shape Canadian political life in recent decades. There is so little fear of immigration from Canada that few people I know are even aware of Canadians living in their midst.

That said, the United States has a tremendous influence on Canadian life. At the top of any such list are the cultural similarities. About 75 percent of all Canadians live within 100 miles of the U.S. border. That means that Canadians have been able to watch American television (and listen to American radio before that) for decades. To cite but one example, none of its most popular television programs in 2016 were produced in Canada. While there are cultural differences between the two countries which we will explore later in this chapter, the few Americans who travel across the border will be struck by the similarities rather than the differences between the two countries.

In short, the muted celebrations around the country's 150th birthday open the door to important questions both about that country and comparative politics in general. How has it been able to build a more unified and supportive culture than other countries with similarly diverse populations? How did it end up with a state that provides so many public goods without the kind of populist backlash one finds now in the United States and Europe?

The Context

Being Canada

Most chapters in *Comparative Politics* begin with a statement by a famous politician or political scientist. This one starts with one from a professional athlete turned politician.

Ken Dryden was arguably the greatest goalie in hockey history. At 6'4" he seemed to fill the net when he starred for Cornell University and the Montreal Canadiens. Dryden was also an unusual hockey player. While with Montreal, he earned a law degree from McGill University before he started a long career as an NHL administrator which, in turn, led him to a seven-year stint as a **Liberal** member of Parliament and cabinet minister. After losing his

seat in the 2011 election, he began teaching a course on Canada's future at McGill which draws heavily on his aptly titled book, *Becoming Canada*.

Think About it

Three broad themes that have to structure any discussion of Canadian politics. When authors do not raise them explicitly, they run the risk of missing a central paradox in Canadian politics. On the one hand, the basic parameters of its politics and democracy have been set for a long time, perhaps since **confederation** a century and a half ago. On the other, these three basic questions are left hanging in ways that leave the specific nature of Canadian politics more up for grabs than anything we saw elsewhere in Part 2 of this book.

Federal-Provincial Relations. Canada does not have the kind of vexing problems with federalism that we saw in Russia or India. Still, patterns of power and responsibility between the federal and provincial government remain ambiguous and periodically pose problems for both levels of government.

Language and Identity Politics. We have encountered multiple examples of intractable identity-based conflict in *Comparative Politics*. Despite a flurry of violence in the late 1960s and a history of discrimination against Québécois, there are no signs that ethnic tensions are likely to tear Canada apart at least for the next few decades. However, ethnic tensions have helped shape Canadian politics in unusual ways, including making regional issues and alignments more important than they are in just about any other established democracy.

Foreign Impact. No one would confuse Canada and Mexico. Both, however, have to live with the world's one remaining superpower situated between them. As we will see shortly, the British "gave" Canada most of its political institutions and to the United States many of its cultural values. As Ken Dryden suggests in the statement that begins this chapter, that foreign influence is powerful enough that it begs the question of what truly makes Canada distinctive.

His book includes everything from being an athlete to the responsibility each of us shares for global warming. In many ways, however, it is the title that draws our attention.



Ken Dryden: Source Wikimedia Commons 1

It is hard to imagine a book entitled *Becoming America*. Unlike the United States, Canada is still seeking to define or—as Dryden sees it—become itself. As recently as twenty years ago, the very existence of Canada was open to debate when a referendum that could have led to Québec's independence narrowly failed. After all, Canada is an old country. Depending on how you count, Canada has been around for a long time, at least since the British North America Act was signed in 1867 or the British occupation of all of what would become Canada a century earlier.

As we will see time and again in the pages that follow, Canada lives very much in the shadow of two other English-speaking democracies. The United Kingdom gave it most of its political institutions. The United States has been a lurking presence throughout modern Canada's history, at times seeming to want to take it over, at times simply seeming to dominate its economy and popular culture.

But if Dryden is right, as Canadians try to determine who they are independently of their politically more consequential siblings, they will discover some things to be justifiably proud of. For our purposes, whatever it shares with these two or any other countries, Canada is unique in ways it would behoove us all to understand.

That uniqueness starts with its hybrid political system. Canada's institutions are mostly British in origin but its political culture has more in common with its giant neighbor to the south. In other ways, Canada is not really much like either of them.

For example, John Ibbitson wrote a book on Canadian and American politics in 2009 shortly after he was named Washington correspondent for Toronto's *Globe and Mail*. *Open and Shut* contrasts what he saw as the innovative openness of American politics of the new Obama presidency with the hide-bound and risk-averse politics in an Ottawa led by the anything but charismatic **Stephen Harper** (1959-). Today, those roles are reversed. Justin Trudeau is arguably today's most visible and charismatic political leader in the democratic world today while Donald Trump seems to want to turn the clock backwards with his notion of making America great again.

American: A Misleading Term

As discussed in Chapter 14 on Mexico, the word American is often incorrectly used in referring to the United States.

Canadians, Mexicans, and many others are Americans, too. Many Canadians resent the fact that people from the United States think that the term applies to themselves alone, and as such, many Canadians view it as a sign of what they think of as American arrogance.

But because we lack a better term to use in academic prose, let alone everyday conversation, American will refer to residents of the United States in the rest of this chapter.

Similarly, Canada is arguably the most successful federal, multilingual, multiethnic democracy in the world. It is one of the few countries that has built itself around three distinct populations (indigenous, English, and French) and is, arguably, the industrialized democracy that is most welcoming of immigrants today.

Canada's unique features do not end there. In 2012 (the last year for which comparable data are available), 8,813 Americans were murdered by killers using handguns; by contrast, there were only 172 such deaths in Canada. And as already noted, the United States is still

struggling to provide health care for all of its citizens. Canada has offered more than basic health care for everyone for decades.

Add to that the fact that Canada is rarely included in courses in comparative politics because it is not one of the most powerful countries on the planet. Yet, if this introduction is any indication, we have a lot to learn from its experience.

Geography

To begin with, Canada is huge. It is about 5 percent larger than the United States. Only Indonesia and Russia are bigger.

But with only 34 million residents or ten per cent of the population of the United States, Canada is not a huge country other than its physical size. Its geography also helps explain why three quarters of all Canadians live within 100 miles (160 km) of the U.S. border for the simple reason that its northern climate makes the rest of the country a less than appealing place to live.

Much of Canada lies above the Arctic Circle. In June 2005, the town of Cambridge Bay in Nunavut only broke 50 degrees Fahrenheit one day per week. Canada's equivalent of the Super Bowl, the Gray Cup, is played in November. Outdoor football games after that date are unimaginable. Many Canadians enjoy ice skating on the Rideau Canal separating the national capital, Ottawa, from its sibling city, Hull. In all of the time I've lived in Washington, D.C., no one has been able to skate on the Potomac.

Language Again

Almost all countries in the Americas have to deal with another linguistic dilemma.

What should they call descendants of people who lived there before the Europeans arrived.

Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, and the other early explorers settled on the term Indian because they thought they had found the westward passage to the Indies. They, of course, were wrong both about where they were and about the identity of the people they met.

Terms like Indian and Eskimo are rarely used in Canada today because both are seen as pejorative. Most scholars prefer aboriginal to describe this group of more than a million people who make up about four percent of the population. Even that can be confusing. Many of those once called Eskimos are today Inuits, but not all. Some reject that name, too. Non-Inuit aboriginals are often referred to as first nation and are ethnically closest to what Americans mean by Indians (in fact, many groups live in both countries). That does not end the confusion. About four hundred thousand people are known as *métis*, which describes people with both white and first nation ancestry.

Think about the territory of Nunavut, which was created in 1999 to be a homeland for many of Canada's aboriginal peoples. It is a vast territory, taking up one-fifth of Canada, but it has only about 29,000 residents. The largest town, Iqaluit, has a population of 6,000.

Canada has five unofficial regions whose geography parallels the country's expansion. The first two are made up of Ontario and Québec, which still form Canada's core and whose populations dwarf those of the other eight provinces, not to mention the territories. Together, they are home to fourteen and eight million people respectively or about two-thirds of the total population. By contrast, none of the Atlantic provinces have even a million people, while the four western ones have between one and five million residents. The three territories barely top 100,000 people. Ontario and Québec are still the economic heartland, although industrial and commercial centers are developing elsewhere, especially in western cities. The Atlantic provinces were the historical heart of Canada's maritime industries. The West has been heavily agricultural, but its future will depend far more on its extensive petroleum reserves. How Canada should deal with the territories and their largely First People population has been an important and troubling issue, but with a single MP each, they have not been a major political force in and of themselves.

Diversity

More than anything else, the country's diversity shapes Canadian politics. Modern Canadian history began with the amalgamation of two colonies: one English, the other French. Even more than the effect of race in the United States, their different languages and cultures are at the heart of politics in Canada to this day.

Twenty-two percent of all Canadians use French as their native tongue. Most of the rest are native English speakers. That means that more than one Canadian in five grew up speaking another language—a number that has grown with the recent waves of immigration.

Almost all francophone Canadians live in Québec, which was known as New France, before the British took it over in 1763. A smaller but still significant number of French speakers live in the Maritime provinces (home of the Acadians, most of whom were forced to move to Louisiana), and a few others live in the West.

Most Francophones do speak English, but nowhere near as many Anglophones speak French. Although the number of bilingual Canadians is growing, only about one fifth of the overall population is comfortable holding a conversation in both languages.¹

A generation ago, conflict over language came close to tearing Canada apart. In the 1960s, many Québécois started to agitate for sovereignty if not outright independence. Referenda that could have led to an independent Quebec were defeated in 1980 and 1995, the second time by less than one percent of the vote.

¹ Bilingualism is no small matter in Canada. All senior civil servants must speak both. All courses at the Royal Military College are conducted in both languages, and upon graduation, all cadets must be bilingual. Debates among candidates for the prime ministry are held in both languages, usually on successive nights. Not all Anglophone candidates speak French well, but it is all but impossible to get elected these days without a reasonable command of it.

The referenda did not tell the entire story nor did their defeat remove the language issue from politics. In 1977, the Québec government passed Bill 101, which made French the province's official language and paved the way for national legislation on bilingualism. More recent legislation requires new immigrants to Quebec who were not native English speakers to attend French language schools.

The easing of tensions over Québec has not brought ethnic politics to an end because Canada became home to many nonwhite immigrants, many of whom were actively welcomed and even recruited to move there. Until the second half of the twentieth century, most immigrants came from France or the UK.

For the first twenty years after World War II, many were political or economic refugees from eastern and central Europe. Since then, most immigrants have come from other parts of the world and have added to the number of what are officially known as **visible minorities** or "persons, other than aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." Today, they make up 19 percent of the total population. Greater Toronto and Vancouver are majority minority cities (using the U.S. term). Even Québec's main cities are about a third non-white.

Little Mosque on the Prairie

Like people south of the border, Canadians are struggling to deal with their newfound cultural diversity.

One of the most innovative attempts to do so is the wonderfully funny sitcom, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, which ran on the state-owned Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) from 2007 until 2012.

The show was set in a small town that somehow has a small, multiracial community of Muslims and a significant number of long-term residents who oppose further immigration. The series begins with the arrival of a new imam from Toronto who has been asked to help the Muslim community grow. As befits all sitcoms, the very handsome lawyer-turned-imam falls in love with the beautiful daughter of the leader of the local Muslim community. They were married in the third season.

The series poked fun not only at Canadian political culture, but at the Muslim community as well. Some scholars think that the show masked considerable racism despite the fact that its creators and most of its writers are Muslims.

Its first episode had more viewers than the debut of any other Canadian series. Fox bought the rights to create an American version, but it has not produced it yet.

The show never ran on American television, though the entire run is available on Hulu and Pivot and, perhaps, a few other streaming services.

You can see the way Canada's population is changing in its immigration statistics. In 2015, more than 270,000 people became permanent residents. Fully 60 percent of these new Canadians, then, came from six countries—the Philippines, India, China, Iran, Pakistan, and

Syria. By contrast, the U.S., France, and UK came in seventh through ninth place adding less than 25,000 people to the national population.

So far, the new face of Canada has not become a political issue despite some attempts by nationalists in the Conservative Party to limit immigration. Still, the fact that most new immigrants outside of Québec have chosen to become English speakers, the shift in the balance of the population might further alienate francophone Canadians.

More generally, unlike many European countries, the Canadian state never tried to impose a common identity. As a result, many Canadians blend several different definitions of who they are. Many French-speaking Canadians in Québec define themselves as both Québécois and Canadians. Many people from first nations often focus on their ethnic heritage. Many English-speaking Canadians, although they may define themselves simply as Canadian, have strong loyalties to their regions and to the countries their families emigrated from.

Given the diversity of present-day Canada and its history, which we are about to consider, it should come as no surprise that it is a federation and not a unitary state. It is not the only one covered in this book, but the Canadians have gone to greater lengths to define the power of the national or federal government vis-à-vis those of the ten provinces and three territories.

Big Brothers are Watching

In Chapter 16, I used the phrase big brother is watching to describe the relationship between the United States and Mexico. Big brothers matter here, too, but in this case the use of the plural is not a typo. Canada has had two sets of big brothers.

The first ones were European. Today's Canada began as British and French colonies until France lost Québec in what Americans call the French and Indian war. After that, Canadian political institutions were explicitly patterned after those in London. They have evolved some since the **British North America Act** was approved in London but the procedural differences are largely in the details. In fact, although Canada gained all but total control of its internal and external affairs more than a century ago, London was still the ultimate legal source of authority until Canada **patriated** its constitution in 1982. Even today, the lower house of Parliament is still known as the House of Commons, whose sessions officially begin with a speech from the throne, albeit one not read by a reigning monarch. The UK no longer has any real impact on Canada's politics or its public policy. However, its cultural legacy is strong as reflected in the fact that next to no one objects to Canada's membership in the Commonwealth of Nations or that its leaders officially rule in the name of the Crown.

The United States has far more influence over Canada today. It is not as overwhelming or as one-sided as the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico. Nonetheless, it is inescapable, as the few visitors who venture north of the border soon discover. Canadians watch the same television shows and buy the same products at many of the same stores as Americans. And perhaps more telling for our purposes, the possibility of an American annexation of Canada was openly discussed as recently as the 1980s.

The last hint of hostilities between Canada and the United States occurred thirty years before Canada was formally created in a series of skirmishes exaggeratedly known as the Aroostook War, over what is still the least-populated and least-developed county in the state

of Maine. The two countries have been at peace ever since, the longest such period between two large powers in recorded history.

They also share one of the most peaceful borders in the world. Americans and Canadians always needed some form of identification to cross the border. However, it was only in 2007, in the aftermath of 9/11, that each began requiring visitors from the other country to carry a valid passport. Still, no one would confuse the U.S. border with Canada with the one it shares with Mexico which was already one of the most closely guarded in the world long before Donald Trump began talking about building a wall.

For political scientists, the most puzzling aspect of the relationship lies in how one-sided the relationship is. Canadians have no choice but to pay attention to the U.S. It can safely be said that most Americans blithely ignore their neighbors to the north.

The leading cable company, carries all of the major channels one finds on cable services in the United States, along with Canadian and a handful of European networks. News about the United States is a fixture in all Canadian mass media except for a handful of Internet sites that only feature Canadian content. Many Canadians travel frequently to the United States, if nothing else to shop for consumer goods because prices have historically been much cheaper south of the border. Hockey is Canada's national sport, but all but seven of the thirty National Hockey League teams play in the United States.

But very few Americans know much or care much about Canada. Few of us travel there. Almost none of us have access to Canadian media. When I moved to Waterville, Maine, in 1975, I was delighted to learn that the local cable company carried a French language station that showed *La soirée du hockey au Canada* each Saturday. But within a few years, the French-speaking population in central Maine had declined precipitously, and that station disappeared from the local cable lineup. I now have several hundred channels on my cable system; none are Canadian. The local NPR station carries *As It Happens*, the CBC newsmagazine that was the inspiration for *All Things Considered*. The program was not available in thirty states, including seven that border Canada.

Comparative Emphasis: Empathy

I am always amazed at how little Americans (not to mention others in the English-speaking world) know about Canada. The best way to get a feel for what life there is like—and not just politically—is to watch a few episodes of the CBC's series, [*Absolutely Canada*](#), which is available on its web site or on many streaming services.

The Evolution of the Canadian State

The history of most countries is filled with myths. Canada is no exception.

That starts with one that Dryden raises and quickly dismisses. Many casual observers think that Canadians are too boring—and polite—to be interesting. In fact, their history is filled with the kind of turmoil we see in most other countries. As a result, Canadians had to make choices that, in turn, went a long way toward shaping the relative calm of its political life today. As the historian Desmond Morton put it early in his history of the country:

Canadians believe that their history is short, boring, and irrelevant. They are wrong on all counts.²

In countering that misconception, American readers will encounter yet another paradox—if not another myth. The United States needed a revolution to free itself from colonial rule and then had to fight a civil war to keep itself together. Canada gained its independence peacefully and never had to fight a civil war. Nonetheless, in its history as an independent country, Canada has faced more “big questions” about its regime than has the United States. The United States also broke cleanly and all but completely with Britain. Canada did not. The Queen of England is officially the head of state in Canada. That said, London has no impact on day-to-day politics in Ottawa. Nonetheless, the queen’s portrait is still on Canadian stamps and currency.

Colonialism and its Antecedents

The second myth is that Columbus discovered America. That misconception has never been taken seriously in Canada because everyone *knows* that Columbus and his crew were *not* the first Europeans to put their feet on American soil.

The Vikings arrived no later than Leif Ericson’s first voyage in 1000. At least some of the people who sailed with him established settlements in what is now Canada. For reasons that historians still do not fully understand and which do not concern us here, those settlements were abandoned in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The permanent history of Europeans in Canada began with the arrival of the English and the French, although both got to North America as a result of expeditions led by Italians. The English arrived first when John Cabot (really Giovanni Caboto), landed in Newfoundland in 1497. (See Table 18.1) Less than thirty years later, the French began to lay claim to what became their part of the future Canada when another Italian in their employ, Giovanni de Verazzano (for whom one of New York City’s bridges is named), mapped much of the eastern coastline of North America and audaciously claimed it all for France (www.linksnorth.com/canada-history).

The settlers who followed in their wake encountered lands inhabited by as many as two million people. Unlike the rest of the Americas, the First Nations of Canada had arrived in two waves whose descendants maintained separate identities—the Algonquin speakers in the south and the Athapaskan groups in the north. The word Canada was apparently first used early in the sixteenth century and is derived from the Iroquois word for settlement or land. Unlike the aboriginals to their south, they welcomed the first Europeans—to their peril as it later turned out.

The French created their first settlements in what is now New Brunswick before moving on to Québec following Jean Cartier’s expeditions up the St. Lawrence River. Samuel de Champlain officially gave New France its name in 1608 with the establishment of what became Québec City and Montréal.

² Desmond Morton, *A Short History of Canada*. 6th ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2006). Preface.

The French colony had two economic mainstays. In the east, most settlers became farmers and were informally led by the Catholic Church and what amounted to feudal lords known as *seigneurs*. Meanwhile, trappers headed west and set up the lucrative fur trade along the St. Lawrence and the banks of the Great Lakes. Eventually, France would claim the entire Mississippi River and all the land whose waters drained into it, which, of course, included most of the western half of the continent.

The British were not far behind. They founded their first permanent settlement in 1610 in Cuper's Bay (now known as Cupids Bay) in Newfoundland. They then laid claim to most of Canada from what is now Ontario westward.

The Iroquois, Huron, and other tribes who lived near the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes bore the brunt of colonization. As in the thirteen colonies to the south, the British and French decided they had to destroy the culture of the people they "discovered" upon their arrival, in particular, to bolster the fur trade and spread Christianity.

Their rival claims to some of the same territory would have eventually led France and England into conflict for purely North American reasons. For good or ill, however the competition between them was actually touched off by their rivalry in Europe. In the early eighteenth century, the two fought each other in the War of Spanish Succession for reasons that had little or nothing to do North America. That war ended with the Treaty of Utrecht in which France ceded Nova Scotia and Newfoundland to the British.

Next came the French and Indian War, which started in North America and eventually spread to Europe, where it became known as the Seven Years' War. By then, the British had realized that a strong French presence in North America endangered their more valuable colonies in the south. The deciding part of the war took place on Canadian soil, culminating in the **Battle of the Plains of Abraham** in Québec City in 1759. The commanding generals—the French Louis Montcalm and the British James Wolfe—were killed in the British victory. France's more important loss came at the negotiating table, not on the battlefield. The Treaty of Paris handed Québec to the English, although France continued to own some of its western territories until the United States completed the Louisiana Purchase forty years later. To give a sense of how little Québec mattered to the French, the eminent philosopher Voltaire called it "a few acres of snow."

Although they could not have realized it at the time, the British laid the foundation for the creation of two Canadian cultures and most subsequent demands for the independence or sovereignty of Québec. In 1774, the British passed the **Quebec Act**. Rather than brutally deporting the residents of their new possession as they had done with the Acadians twenty years earlier, the British granted a degree of local autonomy to Québec by recognizing its civil legal code, the seigneurial or feudal system, and the privileged position of the Roman Catholic Church. It wasn't that they were magnanimous. The British also assumed that there would be massive immigration to Québec and that English speakers would soon overwhelm the French. That did not happen.

Confederation

The American Revolution deepened the hostility between English and French Canadians when many Loyalists fled north and settled in Nova Scotia, Québec, and Ontario. Not only

did they tilt the population balance toward English-speakers, these new immigrants also demanded the creation of strong local assemblies like those the British had allowed in the colonies they had left.

Year	Event
1497	John Cabot discovers Newfoundland
1534	Jean Cartier begins exploration of St. Lawrence River region
1598	Creation of New France
1670	Formation of the Hudson's Bay Company
1759	Battle of the Plains of Abraham
1867	British North America Act

Table 18.1
The Early History of Canada

In 1791, the British divided what was then a single colony into Upper and Lower Canada and granted each an assembly, while the sparsely Maritimes remained under direct English rule. None were democratic. The governor of each colony dominated the assembly, a situation that was complicated in Lower Canada by conflict between French and English and in Upper Canada by the arrival of new immigrants who were reluctant to accept being led by the established elites.

Somewhat surprisingly, the next conflict between England and France in Europe did not have much of an impact on Canada because French Canadians did not flock to Napoleon's side. That did not mean that Canada was secure. Many people in the United States assumed that their revolution would spread to the north. When and if that happened, they assumed the new U.S. would annex Canada.

Canada was drawn into the War of 1812, which was itself part of the final phase of the global Napoleonic wars. U.S. forces invaded what is now Ontario shortly after hostilities began in what Washington expected would be a short and victorious campaign. In fact, British and Canadian troops did not crumble, and the two sides fought to a standoff that lasted until the war was over.

Political life for Canadians did not get any easier in the years after Napoleon was finally and definitively defeated in 1815. Québec lost access to most of its overseas markets, touching off a deep and lasting recession. The English-speaking regions quickly became overpopulated because they had to assimilate not only more Tory Loyalists from the United States but residents of the British Isles who were trying to escape poverty there. British-

appointed governors and local elites dominated executive councils at a time when only property-owning men could vote. The ensuing conflicts culminated in the failed rebellions of 1837–38 in both Upper and Lower Canada.

The British sent Lord Durham to investigate the rebellions which led to passage of the **Act of Union** in 1841 which merged Upper and Lower Canada into a single colony in the hope that French Canadians would assimilate once they got used to being part of a larger political unit dominated by Anglophones. To smooth their integration, the new Canadian assembly had an equal number of representatives from what were called Canada East and Canada West.

Comparative Emphasis: Democratization

Democratization in Canada occurred in many of the same ways that it did in Great Britain and the United States. It happened gradually, both in terms of incorporating more and more of the electorate and handing more and more power to institutions directly elected by the people. As in the United States, Canada's democracy grew as the country expanded westward, adding new provinces. Unlike the United States, the country's divisions never came close to producing either a break with British parliamentary traditions or a bloody conflict like the Civil War.

Those hopes for a unified colony dominated by the English did not come to pass. Nonetheless, politicians did find ways of sharing power, which was an important stepping stone toward the establishment of federalism because each of the old provinces maintained its own administration. Cabinets routinely had ministers from the East and the West, sometimes as what amounted to de facto co-prime ministers.

By then, the first antecedents of today's party system had begun to emerge—at least among the propertied men who could vote. On one side were reformers known as *rouges* in Québec and Whigs or True Grits elsewhere. Opposing them were conservatives who called themselves *bleus* among the Francophones and Tories elsewhere.

However, by the 1850s, many in Canada West had become frustrated with the power sharing arrangement(s). The number of westerners was growing much faster while immigration to Québec slowed to a trickle. As a result, the newly formed Reform Party led by George Brown called for an end to the equal representation of the two provinces in the assembly which they felt was tantamount to French domination. In fact, the Francophones rarely got their way, because the legislature routinely found itself deadlocked, which made the passage of laws and the formation of a stable government difficult.

The political logjam broke toward the end of that decade. It had always been in the United Kingdom's interest to keep Canada unified so it could defend itself against a potential American invasion. They had good reason to do so, because a number of leading Canadian politicians were in favor of unification with the United States.

During the 1850s and 1860s, pressures to break out of the stalemate grew. The planned transcontinental railroad would open the West to settlement and commerce and add new settlements that would undercut the existing balance of power. Meanwhile, the American Civil War drove Canadians and the British closer together.

Taken together, these pressures helped convince politicians from the United Provinces of Canada and three other British colonies—Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick—to begin negotiating confederation at the 1864 Charlottetown Conference. Three years later, most of them and the British Parliament agreed to the **British North America Act (BNA)** which involved two major steps forward.

First, the Ontario-based Conservatives, led by Sir **John A. Macdonald** (1815-1891) who later became Canada's first prime minister, agreed to a federal system as demanded by reformers led by George-Étienne Cartier and George Brown. Second, the negotiators found a way around the feature of the Act of Union that had given Canada East and West the same number of representatives and left gridlock in its wake. Adding the Maritimes and opening the door to westward expansion broke the deadlock because now neither Ontario nor Québec could hope to dominate on its own. Resolving these concerns also eased the fears reformers in Canada West about French domination because they created a larger decision-making body in which power was more dispersed.

At first, Prince Edward Island decided not to join the new Canada, but its leaders changed their mind six years later. By that time, Manitoba (1870) and British Columbia (1871) had become members of the Confederation. Alberta and Saskatchewan were separated from the Northwest Territory to form provinces in 1905. The last original colony to join the confederation was Newfoundland in 1949.

As we will see shortly, Canada has had two constitutions because the BNA left plenty of unanswered and unanswerable questions. And since 1982, it has been officially known as the Constitution Act of 1867. Still, its basic institutions and provisions remain at the heart of Canadian politics in at least five main ways.

First, the Act put the main levers of economic and political power in federal hands. The Federal government was given the authority to levy most taxes and initiative most public policy in such areas as trade, banking, and the currency. Only education, culture, health and local matters were left to the provinces in large part because these were not considered major issues areas at the time.

Second, it also retained many of the colonial practices that reinforced the federal government's upper hand. For example, the prime minister replaced the Queen in appointing each province's chief executive. The federal government also retained the power to "reserve" or delay the implementation of provincial legislation for up to a year, during which time parliament could "disallow" or reject it. That power is still on the books, although disallowance and reservation have not been used since 1943 and 1961 respectively.

Third, the BNA contained important protections for the English minority in Québec and for the French minority in Ontario. Overall minority rights were guaranteed in all provinces. In most cases, primary education was to be conducted in schools run by each religion's clergy that de facto reinforced the power of the Catholic hierarchy in Québec, which, in turn, ensured the survival of the French language and culture.

Fourth, the BNA was conspicuously silent on how it could be amended. In some ways that makes sense because it was actually enacted by the *British* Parliament which retained legal sovereignty over Canada. In practice, London rarely exerted any such influence. Nonetheless, this anomaly kept Canadians from even trying to amend their constitution until the 1982 Act, which we will consider shortly.



Prime Minister McDonald.
Courtesy Wikimedia
Commons

Fifth, the BNA also did not include any details about how Canada's parliamentary government should operate. It simply stated that Canada was to have a system of government that was "similar in principle to that of the United Kingdom."

Officially, the Crown named a governor general who to serve as its representative in Canada. He (they were all men until this century), named the prime minister and dissolved the Parliament.

As in the UK at the time, that was not how things actually worked. In practice, only the House of Commons determined who became prime minister, and only it could remove a government when and if it lost a vote of confidence. At first, the provinces determined who could vote until the federal government asserted its power over the course of the next few decades. Until then, only men who owned property worth a certain amount or earned a decent salary could vote.

Members of the upper house of Parliament, the **Senate**, were appointed by the federal government to ensure representation from each province. By requiring senators to hold \$4,000 of real property in the province from which they were appointed, the BNA's authors also wanted to ensure that it would act as a check on what they feared would be the democratic excesses of the popularly elected House of Commons.

Senate seats were apportioned in a way that became increasingly anachronistic as the country grew. Ontario and Québec have had the same number of Senate seats--24 each. As new provinces were added, representation became ever more unequal. Newfoundland, which joined the confederation much later, had six Senate seats, giving the Maritimes a total of thirty while Western Canada had only twenty-four, split among its four provinces.

There were also holes in the BNA, two of which are worth mentioning here because they became key issues a century later. First, it has no equivalent of the American bill of rights. Second and more important on a day to day basis was the absence of any provision for the various aboriginal peoples or the *métis* who were not consulted about the creation of this new country on their traditional territory. That blindness to diversity other than that between French and English speakers led to horrific discrimination against First Peoples and, more generally, made it difficult for Canadians to even begin creating a truly multicultural society until quite recently.

Consolidating the Federal System: Dynasties and Interludes

During its first century as an independent country within the British Commonwealth, Canadian politicians solidified their decentralized parliamentary regime. In so doing, they faced few of the major crises that disrupted political life in other democracies. Rather, it makes more sense to think of its history during those years as a succession of what a group of

Canadian political scientists called dynasties and interludes that went a long way toward shaping the way Canadian politics is conducted today (see Table 18.2).³

Years	Prime Minister	Party	Number of Elections Won
1867–1896	John A. Macdonald	Conservative	7
1896–1911	Wilfred Laurier	Liberal	4
1921–1954	Mackenzie King and Louis St. Laurent	Liberal	8
1968–1980	Pierre Elliot Trudeau	Liberal	4
1993–2004	Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin	Liberal	4

Source: Adapted from LeDuc, et al., *Dynasties and Elections: Past and Present in Canadian Electoral Politics*. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2011), p. 27.

Table 18.2
Political Dynasties

Other countries have had long periods in which a single party, and often a single ruler, was in control, such as the governments led by Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain or the Social Democrats in Sweden and the LDP in Japan.

No country, however, had five of them as Canada did between Confederation and the election of 2004. As Table 18.2 shows, the dynasties span a period of four to nine elections in which a single party, and often a single leader, kept winning. These victories were not always consecutive—Macdonald, Laurier, and Trudeau all lost at least once and then were returned to office. These interludes did little to alter the long-term balance of power between the two main parties.

Before we consider the dynasties and interludes in chronological, keep four things in mind that apply to them all.

First, the succession of dynasties began to unfold at the same time that Canadian governments gradually expanded suffrage during the sixty years after confederation. At the

³ Lawrence LeDuc, John Pammett, Judith McKenzie, and André Turcotte. *Dynasties and Interludes: Past and Present in Canadian Electoral Politics*. (Toronto: Dundurn Press,, 2010).

time, no women or First Peoples were eligible to vote. Also excluded were men who did not meet wealth or income standards that were set by the provinces. Because the provinces controlled elections, voting did not take place on the same day nationwide. Gradually, restrictions on the eligibility to vote were lifted. During World War I, two unusual policies were enacted which led to the removal of all restrictions shortly after Armistice Day. Wives and other female relatives of soldiers serving at the front were allowed to vote. Meanwhile, the votes of deployed soldiers were counted separately and the government could apply the results wherever it saw fit. Needless to say, most of those votes were used to enhance the likelihood that whoever wrote the law would win! Perhaps as a result, all of the remaining restrictions quickly disappeared after the war. In 1920, the first woman MP was elected. The only other major change was the lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18 in 1972.

Second, although one of the two major parties ever created a dynasty, Canada has never had a two-party system. Formal coalition governments were only formed in the 1870s and in wartime, but there were minority governments in which the leader could only stay in power because of the *de facto* support of one or more of the smaller parties even in the middle of a dynasty. That makes Canada quite different from the UK which almost always ends up with a single party winning a majority of the MPs (see Chapter 5). That's the case because Canada's smaller parties have used regional or ideological bases of support to avoid the majoritarian implications of the British-style first past the post electoral system. Indeed, unlike American third parties, many of them have proven to be lasting fixtures in Canadian politics, such as today's left-leaning **New Democratic Party** and regional parties like the **Bloc Québécois**.

Third, the Liberals led four of the five dynasties, which led some observers to think of them as the natural party of government as the British often refer to their Tories. That may or may not be the case, and their preponderance may simply be an historical coincidence. What seems beyond doubt is that the first or **critical election** in the string produced a lasting realignment in voter preferences that, in turn, led to new departures in public policy that lasted for a generation or more.

Fourth, the Liberals and Conservatives had to become **brokerage** parties in order to be successful. In other chapters, I used the term **catch all party** to describe organizations that sought support in all parts of the electorate. Canadian brokerage parties are not quite the same as those discussed in other chapters in Part 2. The Liberals and today's Conservatives have always been brokerage parties, whereas the catch all ones discussed in other chapters were largely a product of the media age. They also had origins that were specific to Canada. Given its linguistic and regional differences, parties seeking a majority had to directly appeal to a number of the groups they spawned. Quite early, then, the major parties abandoned or at least watered down their enduring ideological commitments, instead, regional interests and the appeal of their candidates for prime minister had equal footing with their positions on issues of the day at the heart of their campaigns.

It was only natural that the most important architect of confederation became Canada's first prime minister and leader of its first dynasty. A number of issues dominated politics for the thirty years in which he was in office, all of which served to bolster Conservative rule. Like the United States, Canadian political and business elites saw the need to build a transcontinental railroad. Macdonald also helped enact a series of restrictive tariffs and other programs known as the National Policy that were designed to protect Canadian firms from competition from imported goods and ease export sales for the goods their farms and

factories produced. The only issue where Conservatives lagged behind the Liberals was honesty, because Macdonald seemed more than willing to enact policies that worked to his colleagues' political and financial benefit.

Macdonald died in 1891. As is often the case following the death of a long-established ruler, the Conservatives lacked both new ideas and a strong candidate to take his place. That was one of the reasons why voters opted for their first Liberal and Francophone prime minister. Sir Wilfrid Laurier (1841-1919), who rose to power from his base in Québec's Liberal organization. Laurier was never known as a principled politician. However, he led Canada in two new directions. First, he relaxed trade restrictions with the United States which turned out to be the first step toward the free trade agreements of the late twentieth century. Second, his government took the first important steps toward enhancing minority rights by guaranteeing that French speaking students could be taught educated in their own language in Manitoba. But most of all, Laurier was known as a conciliator who was able to keep his distance from the Catholic hierarchy while expanding the Liberal base of support in Québec.

Laurier was defeated in 1911 and probably would not have been a particularly effective wartime prime minister. The conservative prime ministers who followed him presided over the war but did little else--other than manipulate the electorate as noted above.

It was therefore no surprise that the Liberals won the first post-war election in 1921 and begin their second dynasty under. William Lyons Mackenzie King (1874-1950) who went on to serve as prime minister for twenty-three of the next twenty-eight years in office. He built his dynasty in large part using support for free trade to build support in the West, where his party had previously been unable to find much support. In the 1920s, the Liberals did begin to appeal to poor workers and farmers but were not very successful at first, losing the 1930 election which ushered in a Conservative interlude.

The Great Depression shook Canadian politics as it did in Europe and North America. The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (precursor of today's NDP) and the Progressives did well in the West as the first significant new parties since Confederation. On balance, however, Canada moved to the left and elected Mackenzie King's Liberals handily in 1935 and 1940.

Mackenzie King also handled the debate over conscription in World War II far more skillfully than his Conservative predecessors had during twenty years earlier. In essence, a referendum gave the government the power to draft men. It did conscript young men for work in domestic industry but did not send draftees overseas to fight. The Liberals won the first three post-war elections largely because their policies during and after the war enjoyed widespread support. That held even though Louis St. Laurent replaced the then seventy-four year old Mackenzie King in 1948.

As was the case at the end of the Laurier dynasty, the Liberals had run out of good leaders and fresh ideas. The brash John Diefenbaker (1895-1979) led the newly renamed Progressive Conservatives to victories in 1957 and 1958. In the end, Diefenbaker ruffled too many feathers and had too few compelling proposals for dealing with the pressing issues of the day to give rise to a new dynasty.

Year	Event
1870–1949	Expansion to present-day boundaries
1930s	Federal responsibility for social policy
1960s	Quiet Revolution in Québec
1968	Pierre Trudeau becomes prime minister
1969	Official Languages Act Passed
1976	PQ wins first election
1980	Referendum in Québec fails
1982	Patriation of the constitution
1987–90	Negotiation and collapse of Meech Lake Accord
1992	Failure of Charlottetown Accord and second Québec referendum
1994	PQ wins provincial election
2005	Harper becomes Prime Minister
2015	Justin Trudeau becomes Prime Minister

Table 18.3
Events and Trends in Canada since Confederation

The fifth and final dynasty was begun by Lester Pearson, a soft spoken Liberal who had won the Nobel Peace Prize for helping to create a United Nations peacekeeping force to police the agreement that ended the British and French invasion of Suez in 1956. Pearson was not a particularly effective campaigner and gave way to **Pierre Elliott Trudeau** (1919-2000), who proved to be the most enigmatic, influential, and controversial politician in Canadian history.

If there ever was a period in which Canada came close to living up to its stereotype for being boring, Pierre Trudeau's dynasty put an end to it.

Although he was in office mostly during the 1970s, Trudeau reflected the values and styles associated with the discontent of the 1960s. Trudeau had an atypical background and led an unusual personal life even by 1960s norms. His father was French Canadian, while his mother was of Scottish and British origin. Unlike many bilingual children of his generation, Trudeau was raised in French and became a lawyer, scholar, and Québec nationalist early in his career. He was in his mid-forties when he first became an MP in 1965 and was chosen to replace Pearson as leader of the Liberal Party and prime minister three years later. With the exception of a few months in 1979 and 1980, he was in office and cast a huge shadow over Canadian politics until 1984. As we are about to see, it was during this time that the political center of gravity shifted from an alternation between dynasties to an era when the very existence of Canada was thrown in doubt.

Unlike most countries covered in Part 2 of *Comparative Politics* but like many of the countries covered in Parts 3 and 4, Canada saw an upsurge of identity-based politics in the last decades of the twentieth century that made its politics anything but boring and its regime anything but stable. In fact, identity political divisions threatened to undermine the entire Canadian federal system. Although Canada survived, Québec separatism and the issues that eddied around it ended up shaping politics in Canada for the rest of the century and beyond.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, no well-informed observer would have predicted that Québec separatism would soon become the most important issue facing Canada. Everyone knew that the province was changing. Its economy was growing. People were moving into its cities. More and more Québécois were going to university and getting drawn into the youth movements that were sweeping Europe and North America. Of particular relevance to Canada, the Catholic Church lost much of its influence.

It did not come as a surprise that Trudeau's generation of urban, well-educated, and middle class Québécois grew frustrated with the continued political, social, and economic discrimination against Francophone Canadians in general and their province in particular. The provincial economy was still doing well, but the French proportion of the population of Québec as a whole and of Montréal, in particular, was shrinking. More and more residents came to the conclusion that some form of nationalism was their only option. The first generation of Québécois activists—including Trudeau—hoped that their **Quiet Revolution** would lead to a stronger Canada in which both Anglophones and Francophones would feel comfortable and overcome what the novelist Hugh MacGlennon, called the two solitudes which separated them.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau

No one has yet been able to live up to Pierre Elliott Trudeau's political legacy, including his own son. He certainly had his critics, but no one doubts the genius of his political instincts or his skills as a leader.

Politically, he will be best known for reorienting the Liberals, helping rebuild national unity in the face of separatism from his native Québec, and reasserting Canada's role in a rapidly changing world.

To begin with, Trudeau was charismatic, which is rare for someone who spent the first years of his career as a professor of law. However, once he entered political life, he proved to be Canada's first effective politician in the television age. And like many charismatic politicians, most of his fellow politicians either loved him or hated him. That put him in sharp contrast with the leaders of the other four dynasties who had many skills, but none of them could have been confused with charisma.

Trudeau also will be remembered for his unusual personal life. Before he became Liberal leader, he was an extremely private man. Although he tried to maintain his privacy after he became prime minister, he could not. His relationships, marriage, children, divorce, and subsequent relationships were front-page news around the world -- not just in Canada.

Trudeau retired in 1984, practiced law in Montréal, and died a few weeks before his eightieth birthday. His eulogy was given by his son Justin, who became prime minister himself in 2105.

Foreigners may have known Trudeau best for distancing Canadian foreign policy from that of the United States. That included opposition to the Vietnam War, widespread American intervention in what we then called the third world, and the Cold War arms race.

In Canada, his biggest impact lay in making the first major strides toward restoring a semblance of national unity, which was continued by his successors from both parties. When he came to office, there was a good chance that Canada would fall apart. Today, Canadians are not as unified as their neighbors to the south, but there is now next to no chance that it will disintegrate.

At first, the national government seemed to respond to Québécois demands. For example, it passed the **Official Languages Act** in 1969 which gave French and English equal legal status, required senior civil servants to learn both, and mandated the creation of schools in both languages wherever there were enough students whose native language was French.



*Pierre Elliott Trudeau.
Photo Courtesy Wikimedia
Common*

Indeed, many people thought that the totally bilingual, youthful, urbane Trudeau epitomized the new Canada. He did so very definitely as a Canadian, not a Québécois politician. To his dying day, Trudeau championed a unified and stronger Canada and resisted all efforts to give special privileges to Québec or any other province.

For good or ill, that is not what most Québécois ended up wanting. Many of Trudeau's erstwhile colleagues—and close personal friends—made very different political choices that put their province first and did so in ways that were at odds with any stereotype that Canadians are polite. The first signs of the new Québec appeared in the late 1960s, when the previously unknown **FLQ (Front for the Liberation of Québec)** launched a terrorist campaign. No one took much notice because the first attacks were little more than a nuisance, as when FLQ activists started blowing up mailboxes.

In 1970, the FLQ took more dramatic and tragic steps when its members kidnapped James Cross, a British diplomat based in Montréal, and the province's own minister of labor, Pierre Laporte. A number of local politicians wanted to open secret negotiations with the FLQ, but the provincial premier and Trudeau decided to use the army instead. Ten thousand troops descended on the province and arrested 468 alleged FLQ sympathizers, most of whom were eventually released and were never charged with a crime. Cross was released, but ten days later, Laporte's body was found.

That was just the beginning. As the tide turned against the Liberals, the main beneficiary was the new **PQ (Parti Québécois)**, which won its first majority in the provincial legislature in 1976. Its leader, **René Lévesque**, will always be best known for demanding an independent Québec, which led him to call two referenda. The first was held in 1980 and asked voters to vote on the less than clearly defined idea of **sovereignty-association** in which Québec would have had some continuing relationship with Canada but would act largely on its own. Had it passed, it probably would have been the first step toward formal secession, but it was defeated handily, winning only 44.4 percent of the vote.

After returning to office a decade later, the PQ held a second vote in 1995 that also called for sovereignty with a vague offer of some sort of partnership with what remained of Canada. This vote was much closer with the yes side getting 49.2 percent of the vote.

The second defeat took Québec separatism off the national agenda at least for now and cost the PQ dearly at the polls as we will see in the section on political parties and elections below. Nonetheless, hostility toward the dominance of Anglophone Canada still exists even if the possibility of a Canadian breakup is at least temporarily off the table.

The Québec dispute sparked broader constitutional debates that led to two outcomes that were largely achieved with passage of the **Constitutional Act of 1982**. As might have been apparent from the first pages of this section, Canada faced a number of unresolved regional and constitutional issues from 1867 onwards that came to a head at the same time as Québec separatism.

The problem started with the fact that the British North America Act was British. Although few Canadians spent much time worrying about it, almost everyone agreed that it made no sense for Canadians to be governed under a document that was not their own. Few objected to having the Queen's portrait on stamps, coins, or dollar bills, but there was something symbolic and different about the constitution itself.

The British gave up any desire to govern Canada in the nineteenth century. However, any constitutional change but still had to be formally approved by the British parliament. Until the 1960s, there was little pressure to either “patriate” the Constitution or developing a domestic “amending formula” for changing it.

All of that changed, however, with the rise of nationalism in Québec and the resurgence of regionalism in Western Canada. It wasn’t simply a matter of bringing the constitution home. The Québec crisis also convinced many Canadians that their country needed a formal equivalent of the American Bill of Rights which had not been included in the BNA Act given its British roots.

Following the defeat of the first referendum on Québec, Trudeau’s government lived up to its campaign promise and proposed a new constitutional deal that it hoped would check the growth of Québec nationalism, undercut other regional political loyalties, and cement a sense of Canadian national identity. Their proposal linked all of the constitutional issues by proposing the simultaneous adoption of a **Charter of Rights and Freedoms**, patriation of the constitution, and authorization of a new and totally Canadian amendment procedure. When it went into force as the Constitutional Act of 1982, the agreement succeeded in bringing the constitution home and made significant—if incomplete—progress on the other fronts.

The Constitutional Act of 1982 officially renamed the BNA Act as the Constitutional Act of 1867, though Canadians use both names interchangeably.

More importantly, it laid a number of ways to amend the constitution without recourse to the UK. The consent of two-thirds of the provinces and the federal government would be required for most constitutional amendments. For some issues, such as changes to the Senate and to the amending formula itself, all of the provinces would have to agree.

Many provincial governments had qualms about the charter, not because they opposed its guarantee of basic human rights, but because they feared that it would limit their authority. Québec, in particular, opposed its strong language rights guarantees, which they feared would limit its own jurisdiction over the use of French in its schools. The compromise permitted provincial legislatures to opt out of certain sections of the charter using the **notwithstanding clause** to be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

In the end, the Québec provincial government never formally supported the 1982 Act. Nonetheless, the Liberal government went ahead and passed the act over its opposition. Then, the British parliament had virtually no choice when it approved the act even though it left some of the federal-provincial issues open for further negotiations.

Negotiations continued under **Brian Mulroney’s** Progressive Conservative governments that were in office for the rest of the 1980s and the early 1990s. Québec nationalists still argued that the constitution had been altered without their consent and that this violated the spirit of federalism and undermined democratic legitimacy. Federalists countered with the argument that Québec’s reluctance alone should not be enough to block what they thought would be a permanent settlement to Canada’s constitutional logjam.

With the election of a Liberal government in Québec in 1985 and a Progressive Conservative government in Ottawa in 1984, hopes for a compromise on the remaining issues grew and led to the negotiation of the **Meech Lake Accord** in 1987. Among other

things, it would have recognized Québec as a distinct society within Canada, set limits on the use of the federal spending power in policy areas that fell under provincial jurisdiction, and expanded the kinds of constitutional amendments that would require unanimous consent of the provinces.

All parties agreed that they would reach a decision on the accord by 1990. Opposition mounted during the three years Canadians spent debating it. Western Canadians were dissatisfied that the accord contained no new provisions for their burgeoning energy sector. They also favored reforms that would give them a stronger voice in the Senate. Other provinces opposed the accord because they thought its “distinct society” clause granted too many concessions to Québec. Yet others objected to the limits on federal spending because they feared giving more power to the provinces would undermine national social service standards. Aboriginal Canadians weighed in with what little power they had, objecting to the fact neither the Meech Lake Accord nor the constitution addressed what they claimed to be their rights as the country’s first inhabitants.

The agreement died when Manitoba and Newfoundland failed to approve it.

By then, Québec separatism was back on the agenda. Nationalists were never happy with the accord but viewed its defeat as another slap at Québec. The Liberal provincial government of Robert Bourassa threatened to hold another referendum if a constitutional bargain to Québec’s liking wasn’t worked out.

With the specter of rising support for sovereignty and a referendum deadline looming, the Mulroney government made another try at constitutional reform by negotiating the **Charlottetown Accord** in 1992. It was even more complicated than the Meech Lake Accord perhaps because it included provisions designed to meet the demands of all key constituencies. Perhaps because it was written to be all things to all people, the Charlottetown Accord succeeded in satisfying no one and was defeated in a referendum later that year.

The defeat of the second referendum in Québec also took other constitutional issues off the political front burner. They have stayed there ever since.

The thirty years after the elder Trudeau’s retirement marked the longest interlude in Canadian political life in which no single party was able to dominate and set up a new dynasty. Mulroney, Jean Chrétien (Liberal), and Stephen Harper (Conservative) were each in power for about a decade. With the possible exception of Harper, none of them came close to establishing the kind of hegemony leaders had in creating earlier dynasties.

As we will see in the section on political parties and elections below, the party system fragmented. Harper, for instance, was able to win three consecutive elections, but it was only after his third victory in 2011 that he was able to lead a majority government. What’s more, all three of those leaders had trouble defining the issues that could serve as the ideological core of a new dynasty. Harper, in particular, provoked widespread opposition which led to his defeat in 2015 and—even more surprisingly—to Justin Trudeau’s Liberal majority.

It is too soon to tell if the younger Trudeau can have the same kind of sweeping legacy his father did. There is no question that he is popular and even charismatic. However, he has yet to make his mark as a leader in public policy; indeed, his strongest critics claim he is long on style but short on substance. And, as remarkable as his 2015 success was, there is no

reason to assume that it will turn into what American political scientists call a realigning election and begin a new dynasty.

Trudeau has a lot in common with other prominent North American politicians. Like his colleague to the south with whom he shares the first three letters of his last name, he comes from a wealthy family. Like the Bushes, Clintons, and Romneys, but unlike the Trumps, his family epitomized political power in the last half century.

Justin Trudeau was born on Christmas Day, 1971. His then 51-year old father had only been in office for three years but was already known for his Kennedyesque flair and innovative policies. Young Justin gave his first “speech” on his second birthday when he accompanied his father to the hospital for the birth of his brother.

But it was by no means certain that he would follow in his father’s footsteps. Unlike Pierre, he was neither a brilliant student nor an activist as a young adult. Indeed, he largely kept out of the public eye until his father’s funeral when his eulogy made people sit up and take notice. Unlike his father, too, he did not become a leader because of either the power of his intellect or his position on the issues. Instead, Justin Trudeau became an overnight sensation because of his flair which did remind observers of his father.

To the degree that genes matter in such things, Justin probably inherited more of his flashy style from his mother than from his father. She had been something of a celebrity, too. Margaret Sinclair was the daughter of a prominent Liberal politician who married the much older Pierre Elliot and gave birth to Justin shortly thereafter. After the Trudeaus’ marriage fell apart, Margaret stayed in the public eye because of her unconventional lifestyle that included very public liaisons with rock stars and others.

Despite his celebrity status, he did not enter political life right away after his father’s death. He first ran for parliament from an ethnically mixed **riding** (electoral district) in 2008 which he has represented in the **House of Commons** ever since.

To no one’s surprise, it did not take him long to rise to the top of the Liberal Party which was suffering through a leadership vacuum at the time. The Liberals had come in third in the 2011 election—also to be discussed below—and Trudeau became a serious candidate for its top job despite his limited track record.

Nonetheless, he easily won the party’s leadership race in 2013 in ways that solidified his celebrity-style image but did not require him to define his positions on the issues with any real clarity. That held for the next year until the run up to the 2015 election.

As the campaign began, the Liberals were still in third place in most of the polls. In an unusually long eleven-week campaign, Trudeau demonstrated enough mastery of the issues facing Canada and wowed enough young voters that the Liberals ended up winning a surprise majority in the House of Commons propelling Trudeau into the prime ministry at age 44 making him one of the youngest Canadians ever to hold that job. Trudeau’s win also came at a time when most industrialized democracies were moving rightward and at least flirting with populist leaders like Donald Trump,

Political Culture

Given that history, it should not come as a surprise that there are two main themes we need to focus on concerning Canada’s political culture, the second of which helps us

understand why it is so different from its southern neighbor. First is the fact that Canadians are as supportive of democracy as anyone in the Western world. Second, as Dryden and other commentators keep reminding us, Canadians are not all that certain of who they are in ways that take us beyond the stereotypes about their politeness.

Canadian Tolerance and More

Although no major study on Canadian political culture has been conducted in more than a decade, there is little doubt that its citizens support democratic norms and values as much or more than their counterparts in any country I could have included in *Comparative Politics*. In fact, some of the stereotypes about how tolerant and respectful Canadians could well be true at least in that respect!

Both Canada and the United States have liberal and tolerant cultures that span many of their somewhat different ideological and other divides. They are liberal in the sense that virtually everyone supports a capitalist economy and a government that guarantees basic freedoms of speech, the press, religious practice, and so on. They are tolerant in that most people at least say that they respect people's right to disagree with each other.

Similarly, Canadians today all but universally support their regime. That even holds true for most Québécois, because most of them have given up hope for sovereignty or independence in the foreseeable future.

The parallels between the two cultures were first explored by an American political scientist, Louis Hartz, who showed how Canadians and Americans inherited slightly different fragments from the UK and then adapted them in somewhat different ways in their time as independent countries. He also argued that French-Canadians came to Canada adhering to values that characterized eighteenth century France that stressed conservatism, Catholicism, and the like. However accurate Hartz may have been when he wrote in the 1950s, he missed social changes that were sweeping Québec and, to a lesser degree, the rest of the country that altered cultural norms as we will see throughout the rest of this chapter.

Canadian culture has come to resemble the one to the south in large part because political cultures are (re)produced in the ways people learn about political life because of what political scientists call the agents of political socialization. Because Canadian and American schools, mass media, and religious institutions are so similar, it would be surprising if there weren't a lot of overlap between the two cultures.

Despite these similarities, it makes more sense from a comparative perspective to focus on what seem like more important differences between the two cultures today. Those stressed most often in popular depictions tend to be superficial and usually gross oversimplifications. For instance, one former ambassador to the United States recently summed them up simply: Americans are arrogant while Canadians are smug. Canadians are also supposedly more polite, less prone to violence, and even nicer than their American counterparts.

More importantly, Canadians are probably more tolerant and are more willing to consider seemingly unconventional political points of view than Americans. To see that, consider these three brief examples.

Generally speaking, Canadians are more willing to accept an interventionist state while fifteen percent of them or more routinely vote for a political party that calls itself social

democratic. We will defer discussing these points in detail until the sections on political parties and public policy later on. Here, it is enough to note that the Canadian government has been an active participant in many areas of economic and social life, including public ownership of industries as different as the railroads and much of the radio and television systems. More importantly for our purposes, the national government has guaranteed basic health care and then some since the 1960s..

Similarly, consider gay rights. As has been the case everywhere, the expansion of civil rights to include sexual preference did not come easily in Canada. However, on at least two of the most important recent issues, it has consistently been significantly “ahead” of the United States. Gay men and lesbians have openly served in the Canadian military since 1992. The Royal Military College has even had married gay cadets.⁴ Along those same lines, the Canadian Supreme Court legalized gay marriage everywhere in the country in 2005. Many conservatives were infuriated by the decision, but the justices did little more than ratify a practice that was already legal and broadly accepted in most Canadian provinces. As American readers will surely know, the U.S. military only abandoned its “don’t ask, don’t tell” restrictions on gays in the military in 2011, and same-sex marriage remains one of the most divisive “wedge issues” invigorating the religious right in much of the country despite its court’s ruling on the subject in 2015.

Finally, Canada has largely escaped the recent wave of populist politics that has divided the United States, the United Kingdom, and other democracies in the first two decades of this century. It has not escaped the new right altogether, most notably in the short-lived ascendancy of the Reform Party in the west (see the next section). However, since its amalgamation into the Conservatives and Steven Harper’s defeat, Canada has largely avoided the kind of divisive politics represented by Donald Trump, Brexit, or the French National Front.

Regionalism

Regional differences are important enough in Canada that they should be treated separately when considering the country’s political culture. Such differences matter elsewhere, but Canada is the only country covered in *Comparative Politics* where regional issues have disrupted national politics and have led Dryden and other observers to note that many Canadians are not quite certain who they are as a nation or culture.

That starts, of course, with Québec and its recent bids to separate from the rest of the country. As we have already seen and will see again, there have always been tensions between the Anglophone and Francophone communities. Here, it is just as important to note how much French Canadian culture has changed since the 1960s. In particular, the Church has lost much of its influence as Québec urbanized and modernized to the point that French-speaking Canadians are as likely to be on the left socially and politically as anyone else.

Until the last few decades, Anglophone Canada was made up overwhelmingly of people whose origins lay in the British Isles. That does not mean that they thought and acted similarly as Canada evolved. Ontario was by far the most urban and industrialized province

⁴ Unlike the United States, Canada allows married cadets to attend its one military academy.

and, as home to Toronto, was the cosmopolitan center of Anglophone Canada. By contrast, values in the Maritime provinces most closely resembled the dominant ones in the UK and were least affected by the secular trends of the 1960s onwards. Finally, the western provinces were dominated by the same kind of values one finds in the American west with one major exception. As we are about to see, Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and to a much lesser degree, British Columbia, were home both to right-wing populism and to Canada's unusual brand of democratic socialism which we will also encounter in the next section.

Also unlike the United States, the status of the country's first peoples remains a visible and divisive issue. Canada's mistreatment of its indigenous population was at least as deplorable as and lasted longer than comparable policies did in the United States. However, their treatment has become a more important issue in recent years for two main reasons. First, they make up about five percent of the population and have far more effectively organized themselves politically. Second, the Liberals and the NDP have finally seen the importance of adding first nations' issues to the other domestic human rights they champion.

The New Canada

That brings us to the most important change sweeping Canada today. In less than half a century, the very face of Canada has changed. Put simply, it can no longer be thought of as a country dominated by citizens of French and British descent.

The available statistics are unreliable, even those gathered by the government itself because they are based on categories and definitions that have varied from time to time and study to study. Nonetheless, Canada has changed dramatically twice in the last century because it is a country that has regularly welcomed immigrants.

First, while Canada remained overwhelmingly white until the second half of the twentieth century, the new Canadians who arrived before the 1960s came from southern and eastern Europe and now make up more than a third of the country's population. Most of them did not speak English. Many were refugees who fled Nazism and Communism before and after World War II respectively. Most quickly adapted to Canadian life and adopted basic Canadian values, usually while shedding most politically relevant ties to their countries of origin.

Second, Canada has seen an explosion of immigrants from the rest of the world especially since the 1960s. Roughly five percent of the population is of African or, mostly, Afro-Caribbean origin. Almost 15 percent more have moved to Canada from South and East Asia. These new Canadians are concentrated in the cities—despite what *Little Mosque on the Prairie* might lead you to think. They have also been less willing to shed their original cultures although most have accepted the country's core political values about democracy and tolerance. Even more importantly, while there has been some opposition to further immigration, no one in Canada's political mainstream objects to the rate at which the country accepts new immigrants—about 200,000 or one percent of its total population per year.

Political Participation

As in any democracy, political parties and elections are at the heart of public participation in Canadian politics because they determine who runs the government.

From World War II until 1993, Canada had what political scientists call a two-and-a-half party system. Only the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives were serious contenders

for power. The NDP consistently won at least ten percent of the popular vote and more than a handful of seats. However, it never had a chance of winning the prime ministry and rarely won enough MPs to make either a minority or coalition government necessary.

Things have changed dramatically since then. The party system underwent a profound transformation in which none of those two and a half organizations remained the same. To begin with, two new parties, **Reform** and the Bloc Québécois, began contesting national elections. Between them, they took the Liberals to the brink of extinction, forced the conservatives to totally rebrand themselves, and introduced a degree of fluidity to partisan politics Canadians hadn't seen in at least one hundred years. As I write in late 2017, even an awkward label like two-and-a-half party system no longer captures the uncertainty that is Canadian electoral politics today.

Brokerage Politics

Brokerage Politics

Before turning to those changes per se, we should stress one of the few constants in the country's partisan life—the role of what Canadian political scientists call **brokerage parties**. They are basically the same as the **catch-all** parties discussed in Part 2 of the printed version of *Comparative Politics* with one single exception. They developed far earlier in Canada because victorious politicians from the two main parties there have always had to cobble together diverse regional and linguistic coalitions that include voters who disagree with each other on some key issues—and often do so dramatically.

The trend toward brokerage parties began before Confederation. Only on rare occasions have the major parties taken intransigent positions on any but the most pressing issues such as westward expansion, relations with the United States, the economic role of the state, and interregional and ethnic differences. They therefore had no choice but to build broad coalitions in order to have a chance of winning a parliamentary majority.

The major parties' reliance on general—and some would say non-ideological—appeals has been magnified by the way campaigns now focus on the media as reflected in the general literature on catch-all parties. Detailed policy positions have given way to sound bites presented by telegenic candidates who, in turn, depend on their slick campaign consultants, many of whom began their careers in advertising. There is no better example of that Justin Trudeau's meteoric rise to the top of the Liberals in which he rarely took specific positions on issue and relied instead on his family name and his own personal magnetism.

The brokerage nature of Canadian parties is also evident in their organizational structure. Power in today's Liberal and Conservative parties revolves around the leader and a few other elected

officials rather than their grassroots activists. If anything, that trend has continued in recent years now that both major parties choose their leaders through what resemble American primary elections in which all party members are eligible to vote. In the Liberal Party, in particular, one can simply declare oneself a member or sympathizer take part in leadership elections which is essentially the same thing as declaring oneself a Democrat or Republican before voting in an American closed primary.

The smaller parties cannot as easily be labeled brokerage parties because they are more firmly committed to their core ideological principles in part because they normally only try to appeal only to a limited range of voters—workers and others willing to accept socialism for the NDP, Québec nationalists for the Bloc, and disenchanted voters in the West and rural Ontario for what used to be Reform. However, as the NDP has come close to becoming a major party since the turn of the twenty-first century, it, too, has taken on more of the characteristics of a brokerage party at least as far as its leadership style is concerned.

Keep one caveat in mind here. The fact that they are brokerage parties does not mean that any of them can realistically hope to win an outright majority of the votes cast. Only once (1958) since the end of World War II has a single party won a majority of the votes. Depending on how the votes are distributed geographically, a party can win a parliamentary majority with little more than forty percent of the ballots cast. Still, a party that loses the ability to put together a broad electoral coalition of voters that spans linguistic, regional, and class boundaries courts disaster, as we will see befell the old Progressive Conservatives after the end of Pierre Elliott Trudeau dynasty.

As is the case with catch-all parties everywhere, Canadian brokerage parties have faced their share of criticism. Because they deal in generalities and seek something akin to the lowest common denominator electorally, brokerage parties have a hard time responding when bold, new policy initiatives seem to be needed. Similarly, their vague policy positions make it hard for citizens to hold them responsible for their actions after they are elected. Leftist analysts have also argued that brokerage parties deliberately distract citizens from class and economic issues while giving too much power to a narrow elite that tends to under-represent the interest of less-powerful groups in Canadian society, such as aboriginal peoples, ethnic minorities, and women.

Brokerage parties do have their strong points. They can reconcile deep social divisions that might otherwise spill over into ugly conflicts. Some have argued that when such conflicts are based on religious differences (Catholic vs. Protestant), linguistic and ethnic differences (English vs. French), or regional differences (the West vs. Central Canada), they can more easily be managed by elites who come from each segment of the population than by the broad mass of citizens. In the view of their defenders then, brokerage parties embody the values of negotiation and inclusiveness that are key to governing as diverse a country as Canada.

The Party System Today

Liberals

Despite the former, formal name of today's Conservatives, the Liberals have long been the more progressive of the two major parties (www.liberal.ca). However, to see what that means, we have to start by recalling the distinction between the European and American use of the term liberal introduced in Chapter 3.

Europeans use it in its pre-industrial sense to refer to people who believe in personal liberties, democracy, the separation of church and state, and free market capitalism. In the United States,

liberals more typically believe in an interventionist state and support some policies that favor a more even distribution of income and wealth. The Canadian Liberals fall somewhere between the two.

At a time when right of center parties are in the ascendance in much of the democratic world, it is easy to forget that some progressive parties have dominated political life in their countries. Such was the case of the Canadian Liberals who were in power more than two thirds of the time in the twentieth century.

Liberal governments were responsible for the passage of most of the country's progressive legislation that goes far beyond anything even contemplated in the United States, as we will see in the public policy section. More often than not, they have been the party that endorsed reallocating federal resources to poorer provinces and poorer regions within provinces. In recent years, they



Liberal Party Campaign Sign, Wikimedia Commons

have been the strongest promoter of global efforts to slow down global warming, including making the loudest protests against the Harper government's decision to withdraw from the Kyoto protocol regime in 2011. In addition, Liberals have traditionally been stronger supporters of equal rights for women and minorities as reflected in this campaign sign for one of its candidates for the Ontario Provincial Parliament in 2011, positions that have only been strengthened under the younger Trudeau.

Despite the fact that they have been more willing to endorse federal policies to overcome what they interpret as market failures than the Conservatives, the Liberals are strongly capitalistic. In fact, if there is any historical difference between the Liberals and Conservatives on economic policy, it has mostly been the former's support for free trade with the United States as opposed to the Tories' more nationalistic and protectionist policies. The Liberals have close ties to Bay Street, Toronto's version of Wall Street. Paul Martin, the last Liberal Prime Minister before Justin Trudeau, began his professional career in the steamship, power, paper, and financial services industries, including a stint as the chief of staff to Maurice Strong, a multi-millionaire who later became Under Secretary General of the United Nations and one of the world's strongest supporters of global environmental reform. Upon retiring from office for the final time, the elder Trudeau went to work as a corporate lawyer for a firm in Montréal's equivalent of Bay Street.

Despite having produced arguably the three most important Francophone prime ministers, the Liberals have a surprisingly uneven record on federalism, including on Québec, even though it has polled quite strongly there in recent decades. The Liberals have always done well among reformists, including Québécois who disagreed with the once-dominant Catholic and conservative provincial elite. In the 1950s and 1960s, that led them to be strong supporters of bilingual legislation and patriating the constitution, but they were also skeptical of affording Québec any kind of special status by giving the provinces even more power than they already had. Thus, politicians like Trudeau and Chrétien were among the leaders in opposing separatist demands. The PQ and the Bloc were created largely by former Liberal politicians. And there is little doubt that the party suffered from its failure to reach out to potential separatist voters, especially in the aftermath of the Quiet Revolution.

In the last few editions of *Comparative Politics*, I stressed the difficulties the Liberals had found themselves in following the end of the Trudeau dynasty and the weaker one led by Chrétien and Martin. As often happens once a dynasty of any sorts had run its course, the Liberals went through a decade-long leadership crisis. After Paul Martin took over the prime ministry in 2004 and then lost the election two years later, he was replaced by intellectuals--Stéphane Dion and Michael Ignatieff--

who led the party to two more defeats, the last of which led to an unprecedented third place finish in 2011. Veteran politician Bob Rea (once Ignatieff's college roommate) became the interim leader and at least stabilized the party's fortunes enough that it stood a good chance of regaining some of its lost ground the next time Canadians went to the polls.

Then came Justin Trudeau. He had all but completely stayed out of politics until he gave that rousing eulogy at his father's funeral. All of a sudden, Canadians started taking notice of this young man who combined his father's charm with his mother's good looks.

Trudeau did not rise to prominence because of his positions on the issues. Rather, he built on his image as someone who is young and hip and could draw on the image of a can-do leader he inherited from his father.

To the degree that Trudeau has focused on issues, they have been those of his generation and reflect the values of a new Canada I spoke of at the beginning of this chapter. Unlike the Trump administration, he has welcomed Syrian and other immigrants, taken his country's history racist past seriously, and given open support to the idea of a multi-racial, multi-ethnic country that gladly accepts everyone who shares core Canadian values. To be sure, he has endorsed economic reforms, most notably the rebuilding of the country's deteriorating infrastructure. Nonetheless, there is little question that he led the Liberals to the biggest electoral turnaround in Canadian history on the basis of his personality and attention to "new issues" rather than his positions on long-standing social and economic disputes.

That said, two years into his term in office, one cannot claim with any certainty that we are entering a second Trudeau dynasty.

Profile: Justin Trudeau

Canada is known for its partisan dynasties, but not for its dynastic families. Until Justin Trudeau burst onto the political scene after his funeral oration for his father, there had been nothing like the extended Adams, Roosevelt, Kennedy, Bush, or Clinton families who gave the United States two or more national leaders.



Justin and Pierre Trudeau Visit a French Art Museum. Photo credit. Wikimedia commons.

It probably is no coincidence that the Trudeaus produced the first Canadian family with multiple political stars. As a young man, he showed none of his father's brilliance or political ambition. He was a diffident student turned high school teacher and ski instructor before his father's death when his eulogy thrust him into the political limelight.

He also found himself with a million dollar inheritance, lots of lucrative speaking engagements, and a public persona. He soon married a woman who was almost as glamorous as his mother and began his meteoric rise up the Liberal ranks. He ran against and narrowly defeated a Bloc incumbent in a Montréal riding in 2008 but showed few signs of seeking the party's leadership until he decided to fill its leadership vacuum after its 2011 debacle. He then rode his personal charisma and the party's dire situation to election as party leader the following

year. He then took advantage of the Conservative Prime Minister Harper's declining public support to eke out a narrow—and unexpected—Liberal majority in 2015.

The rest, as they say, is history.

Conservatives

By contrast, the Conservative Party of Canada shows us that major and seemingly permanent political parties can reinvent themselves (www.conservative.ca). As we saw in the historical section, the Progressive Conservatives were the main architects of Canadian independence and dominated political life well into the twentieth century. The party's fortunes sagged from the 1920s onward, and it technically ceased to exist in 2003 when the rump of the old Progressive Conservatives merged with the upstart Reform party, itself having recently been renamed the Alliance.



Historically, the Progressive Conservative party disagreed with the Liberals on three main issues, each of which decreased in importance as the twentieth century wore on. It was more nationalistic, and Tory nationalism often had anti-American overtones. It championed westward expansion, and ended up doing well in the Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia in most election. Finally, it strongly support the creation and maintenance of a strong national government.

During the Cold War years, the Tories became a classical center-right party. On foreign policy, they overcame their lingering anti-Americanism and became a diehard ally supporting almost everything Washington did. At the same time, although they remained resolutely pro-capitalist, they shared the Liberals' broad commitment to Keynesian policies for managing the economy and providing social services.

The Conservatives had bastions of support among traditionalist voters in Québec and Ontario, but they usually did better in the West, which left them open to pressure from populists on the left and the right from the 1930s onward. The first populist party, the Progressives, merged with the then Conservative Party in 1949 to create what formally became known as the PC which was dominated by what Americans would think of as its establishment wing.

The new party was able to keep its two factions together under the leadership of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker who had strong populist roots in his native Manitoba. At first, the Quiet Revolution did little to disturb that balance since all PC leaders opposed initiatives that would have given Québec—or any other province—any sort of special status. Indeed, Diefenbaker was well-known for defining himself as an “unhyphenated Canadian,” a reputation that stuck with the PC for most of the rest of its existence.

The cultural pressures that began with the Quiet Revolution did, however, soon find echoes in a reborn western populism which proved too much for the PC to handle. It did not help that the party was in power when the Meech Lake and Charlottetown agreements collapsed in large part because increasingly disgruntled western leaders would not go along with what they thought were their pro-Québec leanings.

Meanwhile, **Preston Manning** created the Reform Party. Manning had deep roots in the populist right, since his father had been the first minister of Albert when the Social Credit Party ran that province during the 1930s (see the section on minor parties). Under the younger Manning's

leadership, Reform burst onto the national scene by championing a social conservatism that paralleled the religious right which was simultaneously gaining strength in the United States.

Then, PC suffered a debilitating defeat in the 2003 election, only winning two seats nationwide. The recently named Prime Minister Kim Campbell took the blame, and the party spent a soul-searching decade trying to figure out how to respond. To make a long and complicated story short, it decided to merge with Reform. When all was said and done, Reform (by then renamed the Alliance) for all intents and purposes took over the PC in everything but name.

The new party is more moderate than Reform. For example, it has refused to sponsor legislation that could roll back the Supreme Court's decision legalizing same-sex marriage. That said, its government ended federal funding of abortions and quietly supported provincial policies that have made it harder to obtain to get an abortion outside of the major cities. More generally, Harper tried to position his party midway between the establishment wing of the old PC and the populist politicians who came with him from Reform.

In 2006, Harper and the new Conservatives won the first of three consecutive elections because of the Liberals' weakness rather than their own strength. In fact, Harper first came to power as head of a minority government. Almost as soon as he realistically could, Harper dissolved Parliament in 2008 but again fell short of winning a parliamentary majority. The Conservatives finally won a majority in 2011, and many (myself included) thought the victory might mark the beginning of a Tory dynasty. (see Tables 18.4 and 18.5).

That is not what happened. Much of what worked for Harper early in his years in power no longer appealed to many voters. To cite but a few examples, the recession that began in 2007 all of a sudden made his austerity policies unpopular. He also lost support as more and more Canadians wanted their country to take decisive steps to limit the effects of climate change, which Harper opposed in part because of his close ties with the oil and gas industry. Others found him mean spirited in general and not sufficiently interested in minority rights. Last but by no means least, he had a hard time working with U.S. President Barack Obama after his close ally, George W. Bush, left office.

As a result, the Conservatives lost eight percent of its popular vote and a third of its seats in the House of Commons in 2015. It wasn't just Trudeau's popularity. Many observers saw the election as a sharp repudiation both of Harper's policies and his personal leadership style. He quit as party leader the day after the election and then resigned from his seat in the House of Commons and retired from politics in general the following year.

The party did not rush its selection of a new leader. Eventually, it decided to hold an election in which all registered party members could vote. The final ballot had eight candidates and used the increasingly popular single transferable vote electoral system which is designed to produce a majority for the most widely acceptable candidate in a race. In this case, the Tories chose Andrew Scheer (1979-) who has been an MP from Saskatchewan since 2004. Since he had only been in office for a few months when these lines were written, it is far too early to tell if he will be successful or not in leading the party back from its disastrous showing in 2015.

Stephen Harper was Prime Minister of Canada from 2006 until 2015. During his first two years in office, his minority government clung to power, constantly fending off threats from the three opposition parties to oust it. His second minority government ultimately did lose a vote of confidence in 2011 after which he dissolved parliament and won a majority in the elections that followed.



Stephen Harper with George W. Bush *Source : White House Archive*

Harper was born in 1952 in Toronto. After dropping out of the University of Toronto, he moved to Alberta, eventually earning a BA and an MA in economics from the University of Calgary. After brief sojourns in the two major parties, he joined the upstart Reform Party in the 1980s and was first elected to parliament in 1993.

Although a well-known leader of the new party, Harper clashed with its founder, Preston Manning, and his protégé Stockwell Day, who wanted to stress socially conservative positions instead of Harper's preferred pro-market economics. He decided not to run for reelection

in 1997 and criticized Reform from the outside. When it recreated itself as the Canadian Alliance, he reentered active politics and was elected to the Commons again in 2002. When the Alliance and the PC merged, he became the new party's first leader, largely because he was seen as less abrasive than the more populist Manning and Day.

The Minor Parties

To begin with, Canada has plenty of them. In 2015, 24 parties ran at least one candidate, including the misnamed Unity Party whose one and only candidate (so much for unity) won a mere 57 votes. All but four them—including the Rhinoceros and Animal Alliance (yes, they were different parties)—can safely be ignored here because they won less than one percent of the vote and no seats in the House of Commons (www.elections.ca).

That said, the most important minor parties have done well enough to keep either of the two major parties from winning a parliamentary majority in seven of the last seventeen governments. By contrast, Great Britain, which uses exactly the same electoral system, in 2010 and 2015 elected its first Parliaments that did not have majority support in the Commons in three quarters of a century.

Moreover, the “major minor” parties have a lot to do with Canada's electoral volatility, because they provide outlets for dissatisfied voters. As we are about to see, the minor parties that have done well have succeeded largely because they had regional bases of support as we are about to see in considering the three most recent influential minor parties.

The NDP

Readers in the United States often find the NDP the most interesting party in Canada because of its commitment to democratic socialism (www.ndp.ca). Its origins lie in the union movement and in the left wing of the western populist movements of the 1920s and 1930s. It does not owe as much to traditional socialist thought as any of the European leftist parties. Nonetheless, few of its leaders or voters are



uncomfortable with the label social democrat. Today, it takes strong stands for minority and women's rights, the environment, and expanded social services.

The NDP has never had a chance of winning a national election outright. However, it has The NDP Logo. Source Wikimedia Commons governed six provinces at one point or another and is currently in power in Alberta and British Columbia. In something of a surprise, it won 59 seats in Québec in 2011 or almost sixty percent of its total. That was an unprecedented result in a province where it had never won more than two seats in any previous election and was largely credited to the strong performance of its leader Jack Layton and the collapse of the Bloc Québécois (see the next section). The highly respected Layton died shortly after the election, the party has struggled ever since, ending up with only 44 MPs after the 2015 election.

The party's fortunes may recover again now that it has a new leader, **Jagmeet Singh** (1979-). A Sikh and a son of Indian immigrants, Singh is Canada's first non-white party leader. He is slightly younger than Trudeau and shares many of the prime minister's attributes despite coming from a far more humble background.

[Parti Québécois/Bloc Québécois](#)

Canada's other prominent minor party, the *Bloc Québécois*, faces even more daunting challenges (www.blocQuebecois.org). As we saw earlier, the Bloc was at least a semi-official offshoot of the *Parti Québécois* (www.pq.org) and was created after Québec separatists decided that they had to have a voice in Ottawa which led them to form a political party. The PQ (founded 1968), per se, only contests provincial elections, has won four of the last ten since 1970 and has been the leading advocate of separatism, while the Bloc (founded 1990) only runs in national elections.

As we also saw earlier, the second referendum's defeat took a toll on both the PQ and the Bloc. The Bloc, for instance, won between 38 and 49 per cent of the provincial vote in federal elections between 1993 and 2008. It dropped to under 20 per cent of the vote in 2011 and 2015 and four and 10 MPs in the two elections. That might prove to be only a temporary decline, but it is too early to tell how either will do if the legal status of Québec does not become a key political issue again.

[Reform/The Alliance](#)

Québec separatism is not the only regional movement to have found a partisan outlet. Instead, the most enduring political impact of Canadian regionalism may be the way it has incubated new political parties in the west. Although no such party exists today, you could argue that today's Conservatives really are an extension of the most recent manifestation of western populism—Reform and the short-lived Alliance.

Canada's populist parties—left and right alike—have typically risen first in the West. That started with the original Progressives who opposed free trade and forged alliances with small farmers whose livelihoods were at risk during the years before and after World War I. Most of them found a way to merge with the Conservatives and become the PC.

Some rejected the merger and created the Social Credit movement, which itself turned into a conservative, populist party that believed in giving consumers, farmers, and others a greater share of the national income while taking political and economic power from urban, industrial, and financial interests. It was one of the leading protest movements during the Depression and reached its peak in the early 1960s when it won more than ten percent of the vote. It soon declined and disappeared despite a brief resurgence among rural Québécois farmers and small business owners in the 1960s.

The Progressives also indirectly gave rise to Reform and the Alliance which officially only existed in the West from 1987 to 2000. Reform's roots in Social Credit were personified by its first leader Preston Manning, whose father had been the prominent Creditist first minister of Alberta during the Depression. Perhaps because it resembled the religious right and the tea party movement in the United States, Reform was never able to break out of its western bastions until it merged with the dying Progressive Conservative Party in 2000 and won the next three elections.

Ironically, other veterans of the original Progressive Party helped create the CCF or Cooperative Commonwealth Foundation which is one of the NDP's precursors. It, too, appealed largely to western farmers but did so along socialist lines. It reached its peak in the late 1940s when it won about the same share of the votes and seats that Social Credit reached a decade later. Unlike Social Credit, it did build an organization in other parts of the country and in the labor movement. The CCF and the main union merged in 1961 to form today's NDP.

Elections in Canada

As in any democracy, the way Canada conducts its elections matters. At first glance, there should be nothing new or surprising about it, because we have encountered **first-past-the-post electoral systems** in other chapters. In its Canadian version, any number of candidates can run in one of the country's 338 **ridings** as its districts are known, and the one with the most votes wins the seats whether he or she wins a majority or not.⁵

To win an election at the national level, a party must win more ridings than any other party. To form a majority government, it must win more than half of the seats in the House of Commons. As noted previously, if no party wins a majority in the House, a minority government takes office.

As noted earlier, a party that wins a parliamentary majority today does so with far less than half of the votes. In the last 50 years, a single party has only won a majority of the popular vote once, when the PC nosed above that barrier with 50.03 percent in 1984. No party has come close since then (again, see Tables 18.4 and 18.5).

As such, Canadian electoral law is subject to the criticisms one hears in all countries whose parliamentary systems were based on the Westminster model and its bias in favor of the largest party or parties. To cite the most recent example, the Liberals won 54 percent of the seats in the House of Commons despite getting only 39.6 percent of the vote in 2015.

But in at least one way, the Canadian electoral system works against the interests of the major parties. Because of the regionalism discussed on and off throughout this chapter, it is very hard for Canadian politicians to make the case that casting a ballot for a minor party amounts to little more than a wasted vote as often happens in the U.S. or UK. As we just saw, support for minor parties has historically been concentrated regionally, which has led to sharp spikes in seats won in a given province in a given election and even more precipitous declines in the parliamentary representation of major parties as was the case for the PC in 1993, the Liberals in 2011, and the Conservatives four years later.

Opposition politicians often demand electoral reform. Thus, Justin Trudeau called for the adoption of proportional representation before the 2015 election. Once they win control in Ottawa, they just as often renege on such pledges, as Trudeau's government did in 2017 when it announced that it did not plan to move forward on electoral reform during the life of the current Parliament.

⁵ The number of ridings was increased from 308 to 338 in time for the 2015 election.

Canadians are also among the most unpredictable voters in the western world. Few voters have strong party loyalties or what I called party identification in Chapter 3 of the print edition of *Comparative Politics*. As a result, many change their votes from election to election. And given the peculiarities of the electoral system, even a relatively small change in the vote can have a massive impact on the number of seats individual parties win.

Voter volatility is also part and parcel of having brokerage parties. Since they do not stand for firm principles and programs, voters do not develop loyalty to them because they share basic values on issues that reappear election after election. As the parties change position and often resemble each other, voters are willing to switch from election to election.

Also, unlike most European countries, Canadians have never voted primarily along class lines. The NDP may be a social democratic party, but workers are just as likely to vote for the Liberals, Conservatives, or one of the regional parties. While better-educated and more affluent Canadians are more likely to vote for the right-of-center parties, this tendency is not nearly as strong as it is in Europe. More importantly, Canada has seen many upper middle class voters—especially women—shift leftward to either the Liberals or the NDP since the 1960s.

Last but by no means least, Canada is unique among the countries covered in *Comparative Politics* in the way regional and linguistic differences shape the vote. Until the election of Mulroney in 1984, Francophones were likely to vote Liberal, whereas Anglophones were more likely to vote Conservative. Many Francophones shifted to support the Conservative Party under the bilingual Mulroney out of frustration with the elder Trudeau's policies, but then switched their allegiance to the Bloc in the 1990s before turning to the NDP en masse in 2011 and then returning to the Liberals in 2015. By contrast, the remaining opponents of bilingualism vote mostly for the right, especially for the Alliance before it merged with the PC.

Religion has also been an important factor in voting behavior throughout Canadian history in part because it overlaps to some extent with linguistic divisions. Catholics tended to support the Liberals, whereas Protestants have supported both major parties. Again, these traditional loyalties have broken down considerably with the declining importance of religion in daily life, especially in Québec

Table 18.4 Recent Canadian Elections: Percentage of Popular Vote

Party	2004	2006	2008	2011	2015
Liberal	36.7	30.2	25.3	19.6	39.5
Conservative	29.6	36.3	37.7	39.2	31.9
NDP	15.7	17.5	18.2	30.6	19.7
Bloc Québécois	12.4	20.5	10.0	6.1	4.7
Other	5.6	5.5	7.8	4.9	4.7

Table 18.5 Recent Canadian Elections: Seats Won in the House of Commons^a

Party	2004	2006	2008	2011	2015
Liberal	135	103	77	34	184
Conservative	99	124	143	166	99
NDP	19	29	37	103	44
Bloc Québécois	54	51	49	4	10
Other	1	1	2	1	1

a. The number of seats was increased from 308 to 338 in 2015.

Interest Groups

Interest groups and political movements are a significant part of any democratic political system because they play a vital role in developing and maintaining civil society. As is the case in any democracy, Canada is home to a wide variety of such groups, ranging from tightly knit organizations that promote the interests of business, labor, farmers, and consumers to newer and more fluid ones that have arisen over the last half century, such as the women's movement, and usually have fewer resources but broader demands.

Despite the supposed power of "Bay Street," the country does not have a single organization that represents the entire business community. Their most influential group is the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (www.ceocouncil.ca), which is Canada's foremost business lobby and includes most of its wealthiest corporations as members. It combines its money and substantial policy expertise to gain access to both major parties and the media on economic issues of the day.

Nonetheless, most political scientists are convinced that business is far more powerful than the trade unions. Unlike the United States, Canada has competing unions each of which claims to best represent workers' interests. The most important of them are the Canadian Labour Congress (www.clc-ctc.ca), its largest union confederation, and the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux* (www.csn.qc.ca), which represents most unionized Francophones. The rivalry among these and other unions has probably weakened them all.

In other domains, many groups that start off as loose movements do become formal organizations. For example, the women's movement of the late 1960s, which began as networks of small groups, came together in 1971 through the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, which represents as many as 700 feminist groups primarily in English-speaking Canada. Early in its history, the committee developed significant policy expertise and was regularly consulted by the government and the media especially when the Liberals were in power.

One could argue that the feminist movement lost some of its influence for an obvious but rare reason from a comparative perspective—it has met many of its goals. Canada has made tremendous progress when it comes to the most visible parts of political life. In particular, Justin Trudeau appointed one of the world's first gender-balanced cabinets.

To be sure, plenty of discrimination remains. In 2017, Oxfam issued a report on Canada's track record giving it only middling grades when it comes to providing for pay equality and affordable

child care or preventing gender-based violence. At about the same time, a survey found that a bit more than half of all Canadians felt that there were “enough” women in politics, even though they only account for 28 percent of the MPs, 18 percent of the mayors, and only three of the 11 provincial premiers. Perhaps most surprising of all, most Canadians thought it would only take 14 years before women’s salaries came equal those of men.

At the other end of the continuum are smaller groups that function more as loose networks of activists rather than as well-organized groups that can lobby in the American sense of the term. Many of them lack the organization and resources of groups like the Council of Chief Executives and therefore often have little choice but to turn to the streets in order to get their messages heard.

Nowhere is that trend clearer than in the history of the Alliance of First Nations (www.afn.ca), which is one of many groups claiming to represent the interests of Canada’s aboriginal peoples. The country’s historical treatment of its indigenous peoples rivals that of the United States. What’s more, aboriginal rights made it onto the national political agenda sometime after it did south of the border.

The first attempt to create national lobbying groups on their behalf began in the aftermath of the two world wars. To put it mildly, these groups were greeted with indifference or repression from provincial and federal authorities. Since the 1960s, aboriginal groups have been more assertive and more effective. Their rights were included in the 1982 Charter. Subsequent laws give them some formal rights and representation in the provinces and territories where their population is most concentrated, including more control over education in the territories.

In conclusion, one thing stands out about Canadian interest groups. In the so-called European corporatist states, labor and business have enjoyed relatively close ties to the government, which routinely seeks their advice and participation in making economic policy. The trade union movement in Canada has never enjoyed that kind of relationship with the federal government. In contrast, the Liberal and Conservative parties both have close ties to the business community. Therefore, it has been much easier for business to have access to government no matter who is in power.

The Canadian State

Like the other Westminster systems, Canada’s state was patterned on the one in the United Kingdom with two main exceptions. First, Canada has a federal system in which provinces vie for power with the central government. Second, although it is not covered in the two constitutional acts, Canada has a lot more experience with minority governments, something Theresa May’s government in the UK today may well envy.

The Constitution

Most democracies have had more than a single constitution in the last two centuries. Canada is unusual in having had two, blending them, and now using both of them simultaneously. As we have already seen, the British North America Act was followed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canada Act which “patriated” the constitution by removing all vestiges of British rule (laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/#A). Together, the two documents are referred to as the Constitution Acts of 1867 and 1982.

Perhaps because it is relatively new, the 1982 Act starts with one of the world’s most extensive list of protected rights and freedoms. In addition to those discussed in Chapter 2, it defines French and English as the country’s official languages and affirms that both must be used in federal proceedings in Québec and New Brunswick, the two provinces with significant francophone

populations. It also explicitly guarantees that women and aboriginal peoples enjoy the same rights as all Canadians.

For the most part, the Canadian institutional arrangements mirror those in the UK other than its use of federalism, which we will return to later in this section. The most controversial feature of the 1982 Act was its amending procedure which had held up the patriation of the constitution for decades. As we saw earlier, it was the main reason that the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords failed.

Table 18.6 Political Indicators—Democracies

Country	Democratization (Country Rank)	Governance	Control of Corruption	Positive Peace (country rank)
United States	21	89	94	19
United Kingdom	16	93	90	14
Germany	13	94	93	11
France	24	89	88	16
Japan	20	96	91	17
Canada	6	95	94	12

To get a sense of how controversial the amendment procedures can be, the compromise reached in 1982 act lays out three different ways the constitution can be changed. In most instances, the identical text of an amendment must be passed by the House of Commons, the Senate, and two-thirds of the provincial legislative assemblies representing at least half of the country's population. Second, amendments that affect only a single province simply have to be passed by its legislative assembly. Finally, amendments involving the Supreme Court, the Crown, and the amending procedures themselves must be passed by both houses of Parliament and all of the provinces.

Canada is also unusual (but not unique) in legal scholars' discussion of its provisions being "entrenched" in the constitution. Typically, the term refers to "normal" acts of parliament that have constitutional implications and are widely believed to be part of the constitution in the ways the British think of the term. One of the more controversial of the supposedly entrenched institutions is the Supreme Court, which was authorized in the 1867 Act but was not immediately created. Once it was, it only became the highest court for cases involving judicial review in 1949.

The Crown: Formal Authority

Canada is a member of what used to be called the British Commonwealth and is now simply The Commonwealth. As such, the queen of England remains the titular head of state. And while many Canadians resent their continued ties to the United Kingdom, there is no Canadian equivalent of the Australian movement that would transform that country into a republic by shedding the remaining formal ties to London.

The Crown is little more than a symbol of national unity and Canada's historical legacy. The monarchy is deeply rooted in Canada's history and culture. However it is part of the Canadian equivalent of what Walter Bagehot called the dignified elements of the British constitutional system a century and a half ago. Legal formalities aside, the Crown had for all intents and purposes ceased being sovereign long before the Constitution Act of 1982 was passed.

When Canada was a colony, local authority was legally subordinated to London. Over time, British power was reduced through constitutional and other conventions that limited royal rights, especially following the passage of the first constitutional act. That said, the Crown is the symbol of state authority. That can be seen in criminal proceedings in which the accused is technically and officially prosecuted by the Crown rather than by the Canadian state.

When Canadians think of the Crown, they tend to focus not on the queen but on her official representative in Canada, the **governor general**, who is, in fact, appointed by the Canadian prime minister (www.gg.ca). The governor general is the titular head of state but can only act with the approval of the prime minister. The office almost always goes to a nonpartisan figure who is respected throughout the country. The incumbent, David Johnston, for example, assumed the office in 2010 after a distinguished career as an academic lawyer.⁶

In theory, the Crown appoints the prime minister, cabinet ministers, senators, the governor general, ambassadors, and a host of lower level officials. In practice, they are appointed according to constitutional rules much like those in the United Kingdom. The governor general has to respect the outcome of a general election. As a result, the leader of the party with the most seats is the first person asked to form a government. However, on the few occasions when the results of the election do not yield an obvious winner, the governor general usually allows the political parties to negotiate the terms of the next government before making a choice. Once an agreement between the parties is reached, the governor general must respect it. If the government loses its majority, the governor general has the formal power to dissolve parliament and call new election, but that power, too, is really held by the outgoing prime minister.

The Government

According to the constitution, the governor general is advised by a group known as the Queen's Privy Council for Canada. Membership in the Council is now largely ceremonial except for the cabinet, which is technically one of its committees. It, of course, is the real center of political authority and is thus the efficient part of government in Bagehot's terms.

Once named, the prime minister chooses the other cabinet members, and together they form the government (See Table 18.6). As in most modern democracies, the defining feature of Canadian governance is the fusion of executive and legislative authority rather than the separation of powers or checks and balances, which is at the heart of the U.S. presidential system. The prime minister and most members of the cabinet are also MPs who retain their seats while they serve in government.

The prime minister is thus the leader of the largest party in Parliament. Today, all of the parties represented in the House of Commons choose their leaders through an election in which all party

⁶ As a young man, Johnston to play in the NHL and was captain of the hockey team at Harvard. While he was a student, his dorm mate, Eric Segal, began writing his famous 1970s novel *Love Story*, in which Johnston is a minor character. His character was not included in the film adaptation of the not very fictional (and some would add not very good) novel.

members—and in the case of the Liberal case, sympathizers as well—are eligible to vote. Those votes take place at some point after the previous leader dies, retires, or is forced to resign. Unlike the UK, Canadian party leaders have often risen to the top quickly without having first spent years rising through the parliamentary ranks from the backbenches, must like Justin Trudeau.

In the past, the prime minister often also ran a department. Government is too large and leadership too demanding for the prime minister to take the time to do so today. Instead, he (or in the case of Kim Campbell, she) manages the cabinet and is the government's chief spokesperson. The prime minister's staff has grown to 100 or more, and unlike the case in many parliamentary democracies, most of them are political appointees rather than career civil servants.

Cabinets also have a deputy prime minister. Typically, the person in that job is not the second most important person in the party as is often the case in the UK, but mostly fills in when the prime minister is not available. Some prime ministers, most recently Brian Mulroney, have given the deputy responsibility for the day-to-day management of government so that they could concentrate on a handful of critical issues.

Table 18.7 Canadian Prime Ministers since 1968

Name	Party	Time in Office
Pierre Trudeau	Liberal	1968–79; 1980–84
Joe Clark	Progressive Conservative	1979–80
John Turner	Liberal	1984
Brian Mulroney	Progressive Conservative	1984–93
Kim Campbell	Progressive Conservative	1993
Jean Chrétien	Liberal	1993–2003
Paul Martin	Liberal	2003–6
Stephen Harper	Conservative	2006–2014
Justin Trudeau	Liberal	2014–

The law does not require all cabinet members already be sitting Members of Parliament when they are appointed, but it is understood that someone named to the cabinet will seek a parliamentary seat as soon as one becomes open and a by-election is held. Convention also has it that the cabinet has to have at least one member from each province, at least one senator, a woman (now women in the plural), and representation from what the Canadians call visible minorities.

As is the case in all parliamentary systems, the cabinet is too large to function effectively as a single decision-making body. Recent prime ministers have therefore experimented with a variety of cabinet subcommittees. Whatever variation on this theme is in use at a given time, a smaller group makes most important decisions, which the cabinet as a whole normally rubber stamps.

The cabinet can only remain in office as long as it retains the support of the House of Commons or Parliament reaches the end of its five-year maximum term. Maintaining support in Parliament has not been a problem in the UK where majority governments were the rule at least until the 2010 and 2017 elections.

That is less true in Canada where minority governments are far more common. As was the case in the first Harper government, that puts its fate in the opposition's hands. If a government falls, the parliament can try to put together a new majority from sitting MPs. In practice, however, the outgoing prime minister normally asks the governor general to dissolve the House of Commons and call a snap election within a matter of weeks. That happened last in 2011 when Harper's minority government fell after less than three years in office. Even under those conditions, the process can be more complicated than in the UK. Harper maneuvers at the time included the temporary closure (prorogation) of the House which subjected him to vicious attacks from the opposition. Nonetheless, when elections were held 40 days later, Conservatives surprisingly won a majority of their own.

The federal civil service officially works for the members of the cabinet in either line departments, which provide services for a single ministry, or central agencies that have more of a coordinating function. The federal civil service employs about 250,000 civil servants without counting the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Another 300,000 men and women work directly for the provinces.

Parliament

Like most Westminster systems, Canada has a bicameral legislature. Of the two houses, only the Commons has a role in determining the makeup of the government. Officially, both houses have to approve all legislation, but for the last half century, convention has it that the Senate will not try to defeat a bill that has already passed the House.

The House of Commons

The House of Commons represents individual citizens, passes laws, and recruits future political leaders. Its members are elected from 308 districts or ridings under the first-past-the-post, discussed a few paragraphs ago. The ridings are supposed to be roughly the same size. Things are complicated a bit by the fact that Ontario and Québec have 75 members each, while the three sparsely settled territories are slightly overrepresented, since none of them have enough voters to warrant their single seats on the basis of their population size alone.

However, individual MPs' influence is constrained by the fact that they are part of a parliamentary system that revolves around the same kind of party discipline discussed in Chapters 2 and 4 of the printed edition of *Comparative Politics*. Only ministers are allowed to introduce bills that authorize either raising taxes or spending money.

As in the UK, governments with a majority in the House of Commons can assume that the government will not fall because party discipline will keep MPs in line (www.parl.gc.ca). Once they receive a three-line whip, the majority's backbenchers essentially have no choice but to toe the party line. For the same reasons, opposition members normally vote against the government on major legislation though it is easier for them to defect on divisive issues. In short, MPs end up representing their party far more than their constituents and have little or no policy impact on issues affecting their ridings that are also considered critical national issues by their leadership. Still, there is a fairly close connection between MPs and their constituencies since ridings are small, varying between 60,000 and 95,000 voters apiece.

Strong party discipline exists for a number of other reasons. Majority MPs support the government in part because of the many powers the prime minister can wield, ranging from deciding the date of the next election to determining who gets promoted. In extreme cases, MPs may be expelled from their party's caucus and deprived of the party's support in their reelection bids if they

fail to vote the way the leadership wants. Because of the volatility of results from one election to the next, relatively few MPs can build the lengthy careers in which they develop the policy expertise, strong ties to their constituencies and parties, and the independence that characterizes MPs in Britain, let alone members of Congress in the United States.

Thus, the House's main job is to hold the government accountable. For the majority, that means supporting the government unless the prime minister's actions are seen as too far out of line, in which case the government's MPs can insist on new leadership, usually doing so by plotting against the incumbent behind the scenes.

The opposition's job is mostly to criticize the government which is reflected in the House's architecture and procedures. As this picture suggests, MPs face each other just as they do in Westminster. Similarly, Wednesday's sessions begin with the singing of *O Canada* and then immediately turns into its version of Prime Minister's Question Time. In fact, the Canadian version differs from the British one in only one key respect. MPs can pose and ministers can respond to questions posed in either official language.



House of Commons, *Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

If there is a majority, opposition MPs understand that they have no chance of bringing the government down. Instead, they use their criticisms to pave the way for a hoped-for victory in the next election. Opposition MPs also have incentives to follow the "guidelines" issued by their party whips. The opposition names "shadow critics" for each cabinet portfolio that can ensure media visibility and influence for MPs, and these positions are often seen as stepping stones to higher office the next time their party wins.

This strict discipline was one of the reasons for the growing voter dissatisfaction with Parliament and the sudden burst of support for Reform in the 1990s. It consistently argued that party discipline had to be loosened so that MPs could represent their constituencies' interests and went so far as to argue that members should be recalled if they failed to vote the way their constituents wanted. However, it should be noted that the new Conservative Party is almost as disciplined as the Liberals.

MPs can occasionally act independently. At times, governments allow free votes on issues that they define as matters of individual conscience such as capital punishment or abortion. Similarly, groups within the party's caucus may pressure the government to change its position by threatening to vote against its legislative agenda as a whole, but that almost never happens. Parliamentary committees are dominated by MPs from the governing party and do not have any real affect on the policy-making process because real decisions are made in the cabinet.

[The Senate](#)

Like the British House of Lords, the Senate has to approve all laws, ostensibly giving it an absolute veto over legislation, although that veto power only exists on paper. In practice, the Senate can no longer reject legislation that has been passed in the House of Commons.

Because Canada does not have an aristocracy, the Senate has never been a hereditary body. Instead, its members are appointed by the governor general, which, as with all Crown "powers," means that the prime minister decides who serves in the upper house. Its 105 members are determined geographically on the basis of an equality principle that has not changed much since confederation. Twenty-four each come from Ontario, Québec, the Maritimes, and the Western

provinces. Newfoundland and Labrador share six seats, and the sparsely populated Nunavut, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories have one senator each. Senators must be at least thirty, live and own property in the province they represent, and retire by age 75. The Crown can also appoint up to eight additional senators, a power which has only been used once in the last century when Prime Minister Mulroney did so to help ensure passage of the Goods and Services Tax in a body that was still controlled by active Liberals.

Like most upper houses in parliamentary systems, the Senate cannot initiate bills that levy taxes or authorize government spending, and it cannot cast a vote of confidence. Instead, the Senate has evolved in such a way that it is often seen as a sinecure given to loyal politicians who no longer sit in the Commons or to dignitaries such as retired general Roméo Dallaire, who headed the United Nations force in Rwanda and now champions the plight of child soldiers, who served in the Senate from 2005 until 2014.

In fact, it is only after the end of a dynasty that the Senate gets even the slightest bit rambunctious. The Liberal-dominated Senate, for instance, initially refused to acquiesce to the first free trade agreement with the United States, obliging Prime Minister Mulroney to dissolve the lower house and call a new election.

Proposals to reform the Senate are almost always on the table. The NDP, in fact, favors abolishing it altogether. Most reform proposals call for a slight increase in its power, the election of some or all of its members, or both. None of those reforms are likely to be enacted any time soon. After all, the Senate costs the average Canadian about \$1 a year in taxes, which very few people believe is too high a cost to pay for an institution that no longer serves any real purpose.

The Senate has been in the news recently because Justin Trudeau wants to remove it from partisan politics altogether. Even before he became prime minister, Trudeau removed formal Liberal support from the Senators who had been appointed by his predecessors by abolishing what is known as the party's caucus. They have all kept their seats and most still think of themselves as Liberals. Nonetheless, the Senate is likely to become less partisan and feature even less in the legislative process at least as long as Trudeau remains in office.

The Courts

When the Constitutional Act, 1867 was passed, no one expected the courts to have a major role in political life. The Founders clearly did not want the judiciary to become one of three equal branches of government, as had already happened in the United States. They assumed that the courts would mostly adjudicate legal disputes and decide how existing law should be enforced.

It has only been in the last century that courts began asserting the right to lead Royal Commissions of Inquiry on policy issues and to exercise judicial review of legislation. Thus, it was only in 1949 that the Supreme Court was entrenched in the constitution with the power to strike down a law it determines has violated the constitution.

The Supreme Court has nine members, one of whom serves as chief justice (www.scc-csc.gc.ca). As in the United States, the justices do not have a fixed term, although, like members of the Canadian Senate, they do have to retire by their seventy-fifth birthday. Again, as with the senators, they are officially appointed by the governor general on the advice of the prime minister. The only requirement is that justices must be senior lawyers or judges and must live within twenty-five miles of Ottawa after they are appointed. Unlike the United States, the justices do not have to be confirmed by either house of Parliament, so Canada is spared the often bruising battles that occur in the U.S. Senate.

Alleged violations of all constitutional provisions, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, now normally make it to the Supreme Court. For example, in 1998, the Supreme Court ruled that Alberta's human rights legislation must include a prohibition against discrimination based on sexual orientation. Seven years later, the court used those same logic in granting same-sex couples the right to marry.

In addition to cases arising from the charter, the government can refer cases directly to the Supreme Court. Unlike other types of court cases, these do not have to emerge out of a specific legal dispute and can be requested before a law fully goes into effect. Two of them in recent history stand out.

In 1981, the elder Trudeau government asked the court if the federal government could unilaterally patriate the constitution without the consent of the provinces. In 1998, the Chrétien government did the same for the second referendum on Québec sovereignty. The Court crafted a compromise decision for each of them.

In the first, case, the Court ruled that the government's initiative was legal but that it violated constitutional convention. Because the courts cannot enforce constitutional conventions, the justices ruled that, technically, the Trudeau government could proceed but that it would be violating unwritten constitutional norms were it to do so. The result was that the government returned to the negotiating table, and the 1982 constitutional act was finally approved without further resort to the courts.

In the Québec case, the federal government asked the Supreme Court to rule if the province had the legal right to secede. The court faced a difficult political dilemma. If it ruled against Québec, it risked alienating nationalists who viewed the province's right to self-determination as sacrosanct. If the court said Québec could secede, it would risk alienating English-speaking Canada. As in the patriation case, the Supreme Court chose a middle path, ruling that Québec could not unilaterally secede, but that a "yes" vote in a referendum on secession would have to be taken seriously in the rest of the country and would have to lead to negotiations of some sort.

Canada also has a system of provincial courts. However, they are only handle criminal and administrative cases. If a case touches on policy or constitutional issues at the national level, it invariably reaches the Supreme Court just as similar ones do in the United States, which is why we can limit our attention to the highest court.

All Canadian courts face many of the same criticisms one hears in the United States, such as the complaint that appointed judges are "making law." Given the continued importance of federalism in Canada, the Constitution Act of 1982 contains the **notwithstanding clause** which allows provinces to opt out of certain federal provisions. It may seem strange that legislatures can violate rights guaranteed by the charter. However, many provincial premiers had qualms about the charter in part because they feared that it would undermine their power. Patriation almost certainly would not have been possible without some version of this clause.

The federal government has never invoked the clause. The last Liberal government under Prime Minister Martin wanted to eliminate it. Québec inserted it in every law it passed before the Liberals regained control in 1987, and it has not been tested since. Alberta tried to use it to forbid same sex marriage, but that bill was disallowed because the definition of marriage is a federal rather than a provincial concern.

The government of Saskatchewan used it to order striking workers back to work in 1986. Robert Bourassa's provincial Liberal government in Québec used it to pass the "inside-outside" sign law in

1988 that required outdoor store signs to be in French allowed them to have bilingual material about the products they offered for sale available inside the store.

Federalism

Most Canadian constitutional provisions have British origins. Not federalism. The Canada created in the 1860s could hardly have been a unitary state along British lines. Because the Founders had to balance so many conflicting linguistic, religious, ethnic, regional, and economic interests, a federal system was their only viable option. The only surprise is that they turned to federalism even though the United States was fighting its Civil War at the same time, which was caused by the debate over slavery and unbridgeable disagreements about states' rights.

Perhaps as a result, the architects of confederation opted for a system that seemed to concentrate power in federal rather than provincial hands. The Tenth Amendment to the American constitution gives the states power over all issues not explicitly assigned to the federal government. By contrast, the British North America Act gave the federal government sweeping powers over trade, commerce, and criminal law. The provinces were only granted jurisdiction over local matters. Last but by no means least, unlike the Tenth Amendment, the “residual powers” clause of the first Canadian constitutional act gives the federal government — not the provinces — the right to pass laws for the “peace, order, and good government of Canada.”

Most public policy that has national implications has always been made in Ottawa. Even in those arenas, the provinces matter in at least two ways. First, as we will see next in the section on health care, the provinces have considerable leeway in implementing policies that are initially put in place nationally. Second, the provinces also play an integral role in funding most domestic policies, given the division of taxation power since 1867. In most respects, the demands on their resources now outstrip the funds available to them, and the federal and provincial governments have developed elaborate formulas for sharing costs that involve transferring some funds to the poorest provinces and regions.

For three reasons, however, Canadian politics is probably more federal in nature than anything else we will see in *Comparative Politics*. First, of course, was what turned into the debate over the status of Québec and the very structure of Canada. Second, the provinces were given the right to impose direct taxes, which were not expected to be a major part of Canada's early revenue stream. As the demands on government rose, so did pressure for a national income tax, which eventually tilted power further in the federal direction, but only after considerable controversy. Third, the “local matters” included social services which were modest at the time. However, as we will see in the next section, Canada introduced a huge nationwide welfare state in the years after World War II, which required another reconfiguration of national and local responsibilities.

Each province has a unicameral legislature. Originally most also had an upper house, but these were gradually abolished, with Québec being the last one in 1968. The legislatures and their members go by a variety of names, the most common of which is Legislative Assembly. Each province determines the size of its own version of the national House of Commons, which the Liberals controlled in six of the 10 provinces in 2017.

Federalism is more contentious in Canada than in the United States or Germany, the other two federal systems covered in Part 2. Disputes over the relative role of the federal and provincial governments may no longer threaten Canada's existence, but they are still divisive enough that they are worth more attention here than in the chapters on those other two countries. Federalism is important enough that one of the best recent textbooks on Canadian politics placed it ahead of the

other state institutions, something no one would do in a comparable book on American or German politics.⁷

Ironically, pressures to both recentralize and decentralize power have been constant features in Canadian political life. As in most countries, the long-term trend has been toward giving more power to the national government, albeit with periodic controversies in which the balance between the two levels temporarily shifted downward.

There is also a tendency especially in the smaller provinces for politicians to run against “Ottawa.” This is somewhat different from the anti-Washington sentiments one finds these days in the United States. In Canada, many people in the western and Atlantic provinces feel overwhelmed by the size of Ontario and Québec and believe they can only rely on their provincial governments to defend their interests.

Because regional differences have overlapped with linguistic ones since the 1960s, issues involving federalism have more important emotional overtones than they do in the other decentralized countries covered in *Comparative Politics*. Québécois activists, in particular, have consistently sought to reaffirm and reinforce provincial power. In English-speaking Canada, there has been some push back against giving provinces more power if doing so also means acceding to Québec’s demands. That could change if regional interests in Maritimes or the West spark interest in deepening federal authority in the rest of the country.

In the end, we are left with an unusual *modus vivendi* between the central and provincial authorities that reflect the way the major policy disputes since the Great Depression have played themselves out. In essence, the federal government defines broad policy outlines and at least indirectly provides the lion’s share of the funding for implementing those initiatives. Yet, the actual administration of those programs remains largely in provincial hands.

For example, almost all Canadian universities are public and run by the provincial governments. That said, the federal government transfers upwards of \$2 billion a year to help defray the cost of maintaining the university system nation wide and keep tuition rates low and roughly the same all across the country. Thus, tuition fees ranged from a low of about \$2,500 in Québec to a high of about \$7,500 in Ontario in 2013.

Similarly, unemployment insurance and pensions for senior citizens have both evolved as joint federal-provincial undertakings. Even though the Privy Council and the courts have consistently ruled that social policy making should lie in provincial hands, they also have long been dependent on funds from Ottawa.

Disagreements over federal and provincial responsibilities are particularly pronounced in on economic issues that have strong regional repercussions, such as agriculture and energy. In agriculture, there has been a lot of pressure for a larger federal role. Agriculture has been in decline for most of the last century, which has led farmers and provinces that are dependent on them to clamor for federal supports. In energy, the provinces have historically demanded more autonomy. Most of Canada’s energy deposits are located in the West, especially Alberta). Control over energy resources—including the revenue made from selling them—has often given rise to disputes between the national and provincial governments. At this point, the federal and provincial governments are

⁷ Patrick Malcolmson and Richard Myers, *The Canadian Regime: An Introduction to Parliamentary Government in Canada*. Third ed., (Peterborough ONT: Broadview Press, 2005), ch. 4.

in agreement, if for no other reason than Harper and many of his Conservative colleagues are from Alberta. It has not always been that way.

The federal government was never completely blind to provincial discontent. Over the years, it has used its funds to transfer money in an attempt to reduce inequalities between the provinces. Some transfers go directly to individuals who are, of course, concentrated in the poorest provinces. In addition, Canada has been a pioneer in creating regional development funds initially for poorer provinces and now also for disadvantaged regions within all provinces, including those largely populated by people from the First Nations. At first, the federal government had a single agency (DREE) to allocate those funds. Now, it relies on programs tailored to underdeveloped and underserved regions that may or may not coincide with provincial boundaries.

Public Policy

So far, we have seen that its history, diversity, and institutional arrangements have made Canada surprisingly different from the superpower to its south. Now it is time to see how those differences manifest themselves in three policy areas—health care, economics, and foreign policy. Each is controversial on both sides of the border, with advocates for reform in one often holding up policies and politics in the other it thinks of as models worth emulating. Here, we will see that Canadian and American policies are indeed very different. However, they are different for reasons that would make it hard for either one to copy the other, for instance, when many Americans hope could happen by adopting a version of the Canadian single-payer health care system.

Domestically, Canadian policy makers have taken their country in a very different direction from the United States. Despite recent shifts toward more market-oriented policies, Liberal and Conservative governments alike have created a more extensive social service system and adopted more interventionist macro- and microeconomic policies than even the most left-leaning administrations in the United States.

Internationally, Canada, of course, cannot hope to match the military and other influence the United States can bring to bear. Instead, it has become what international relations experts call a middle-level power that has charted an independent course focusing on peace-keeping and development in the Third World, especially under the Liberals since the governments of Pearson and Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

Health Care

On those rare occasions when people in the United States think about Canadian politics today, the odds are that they start and end with its health care policy and then only because the U.S. is mired in what seems like a never-ending and always heated debate over its own policies. American supporters of public health care point wistfully to Canada where everyone is covered and there are no out-of-pocket expenses for basic services. Critics angrily point to the program's chronic underfunding, which is easiest to see in lengthy waiting lists for some treatments (e.g., optional surgery) and lines of Canadians who are willing and able to come to the United States for care that they have to pay for.

The first conclusion to reach about Canadian health care probably applies to any social service program anywhere. It is a lot more complicated than it seems to be at first glance (<http://www.canadian-healthcare.org>).⁸

Before the Canada Health Act of 1984 was passed, the provinces had primary responsibility for health care which meant that coverage varied dramatically around the country. There was one common denominator, however. They all had a hard time paying for whatever coverage they did offer, given their inability to levy enough money through the kinds of taxes they were allowed to levy. Some, especially those run by the NDP, experimented with something approaching universal coverage with provincial funding as early as the 1950s. Pressure grew until Trudeau's government could forge an agreement on the need for national coverage and uniform care. The Constitutional Act of 1982 gave the federal government more leeway in setting national standards, but it is likely that something like the 1984 bill could have been passed under the constitutional provisions that existed before patriation.

Like Britain, Canada has what is known as a single payer system. Regardless of income or any other insurance coverage people may have, everyone is included in what has to be one of the most straightforward health care systems in the world.

Health care coverage is paid for almost completely by the state — the national government in Britain, the federal and provincial governments in Canada. In the simplest terms, everyone is covered for just about everything that takes place either in a general practitioner's office or in a publicly accredited hospital. For instance, anyone who suffers a heart attack receives the same treatment, which costs upwards of \$100,000 even for a relatively uncomplicated case. Perhaps the most important effect of the 1984 law was to make coverage "portable" which means a Canadian can move from one province to another without losing health care coverage, even temporarily.

All citizens and permanent residents (but not all newly arrived immigrants) have a general practitioner (GP) who is responsible for their basic care. Most GPs are in community-based but privately-owned practices. If more advanced treatment is needed, the GP serves as a gatekeeper and refers patients to specialists, most of whom have their offices in hospitals. Above and beyond GP services, only hospital-based care is usually covered which, for example, means that there are fewer psychiatrists in private practice than in the United States.

Most hospitals are privately run, not-for-profit institutions. Both GPs and hospitals have contracts with their provincial government that pay them on the basis of a complicated formula established by each province that is based heavily on the number of patients they see. The federal government guarantees half of each province's health care bill, although in some cases it provides more. The rest is covered by provincial taxes.

If the system covers a service like flu vaccinations, patients must use it. As in the United Kingdom, there are supplemental private insurance plans that, for example, allow new mothers to have a private room after giving birth rather than sharing a ward with three or four other women and their babies. If the system does not cover something—it does not, for example pay for Viagra—patients can go to the small private sector or to the United States.

⁸ Katherine Fierlbeck, *Health Care in Canada: A Citizen's Guide to Policy and Politics*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), Preface.

Literally speaking, Canada does not have a single national health care system. Various court rulings have affirmed the federal government's right to define national health care standards. Nonetheless, the law still gives the provinces lots of leeway for the provinces in determining what to cover and how to do it. When all is said and done, the provinces for the most adopt and administer similar programs because the basic health care system is enormously popular, and few voters would tolerate much deviation from the national norm.

Before rushing to the conclusion that the United States and other countries should adopt a system that covers all basic health care needs without any cash passing from patient to doctor, you should be aware of Canada's many health care problems some of which grow out of the fact that it is universal and tax-supported. There are major gaps in the system's coverage, which means that quite a number of medical services are not provided at no out-of-pocket cost. Prescriptions, vision and dental care, long-term geriatric and rehabilitation services, physiotherapy, and mental health care services delivered outside of hospitals are not included. Some provinces do provide them. Many Canadians who are not covered take out private health insurance to defray such costs. A smaller number pay providers themselves, including the people who avoid waiting lists by seeing American doctors. In other words, once one goes beyond the care offered by general practitioners or hospitals, the Canadian and American markets frankly are not all that different.

Canadian also struggled to pay for this generous health care system. That starts with something Canada shares with health care systems everywhere. With everything from new technologies to an aging population, costs are skyrocketing, however health care is administered or funded. Some Canadians think that it would be cheaper and more efficient if hospitals, in particular, were forced to compete with each other. Some experiments along these lines have been tried, but the evidence from them is limited and mixed.

In other words, even if you accept its premises, the system is far from perfect. No system is. Every country has to have some ways of controlling costs, especially as they continue to rise -- something critics of universal health care coverage disparagingly call *rationing*. In Canada's case that often translates into those long delays before people can get elective and non-emergency surgery. A 2005 Supreme Court decision ruling tried to limit waiting lists for elderly patients, but doctors still complain about how long it can before their patients, say, can see a psychiatrist or get a hip replacement.

The bottom line is that all health care systems have to "ration" the care they provide somehow. At least until now, Canadians have been willing to accept some significant delays and more institutionalized care than many would like in order to avoid the kind of skewed provision of service one finds in the United States, where well-insured citizens have world-class coverage and many poor people have to do make do with minimal coverage—or less.

Some statistics might be useful here. In 2009, Americans paid \$7,960 per person on health care; the comparable Canadian figure was \$4,808. That does not mean that health care is almost twice as good south of the border, because the best estimate is that about 20 percent of the money spent in the U.S. goes to administrative costs which barely exist in Canada. Nonetheless, health care in Canada suffers to some degree because its voters are less willing to pay as much as their southern neighbors do.

The Keynesian State

It's not just the social services. Along with Germany, Canada has had a rough consensus about managing the economy for the last seventy years. In Germany's cases that revolves around maintaining balanced growth and keeping inflation to a minimum.

Overall economic policy remains more deeply grounded in Keynesian ideas than most other industrialized democracies even when Conservative leaders like Stephen Harper have tried to build their support around traditional classical laissez-faire norms. That has been true at least since the Great Depression and World War II.

Canada's consensus has focused more around economic growth that benefits as much of the population as possible as the country inserts itself more deeply into global markets. At times, Canadians have disagreed with each other more than the Germans have, especially under the Mulroney and Harper governments. However, on balance, Canadians have been able to avoid wild swings between left and right which, among other things, meant it could also escape the most wrenching effects of the Great Recession.

Until the end of World War II, the two major parties had supported very different goals most of the time. The Liberals favored free trade, including low tariffs and other policies that would help expand business ties with the United States. The PC and its predecessors were more likely to endorse policies that restricted imports and fostered industrial growth. During the first forty postwar years, a succession of governments from both major parties rejected both the laissez-faire and protectionist doctrines of the 1930s in favor of Keynesianism with its interventionist state and extensive social services.

As was the case in most industrialized democracies, a succession of mostly Liberal governments came to embrace the idea that the state should use its powers to tax and spend to mute the impact of the periodic ups and downs all capitalist economies go through. Keynesian economics suggested that such intervention was especially needed during recessions, even if it leads the government to run a substantial deficit, because they believed that the infusion of new spending and lowered tax rates would spur economic recovery.

Canada did not adopt these so-called counter cyclical policies as quickly as many western European countries did. Nonetheless, Canada now uses policy levers such as unemployment insurance not only to help people who are in economic trouble but also to have an automatic mechanism for spending more money during the downturns that are in inescapable part of capitalism.

For most of the last 70 years, both Liberal and Conservative governments supported these kinds of interventionist policies. Many of the key social service programs were established or dramatically expanded during the long periods of Liberal rule, including unemployment insurance, pension plans, and, of course, universal health care coverage, but the Tories usually went along.

There was a period when the consensus was shaken, just as it was in most of western Europe. In the 1970s, the Canadian economy was foundering and threatened the Keynesian consensus. The oil shocks of 1973–74 and 1979 led to the first postwar recession, which included stagflation, a combination of high unemployment and high inflation. According to Keynesian economic theory, the two were not supposed to occur simultaneously. Initially, the Trudeau government reacted by reinforcing state intervention, but both the unemployment and inflation rates reached double digits and stayed there.

The deficit soon created substantial long-term debt because interest rates went up, too. By the end of the elder Trudeau's last term, the Liberal government had begun to turn away from

traditional Keynesian economic doctrines. That led the Mulroney government to adopt pro-market rhetoric and slowly begin to move Canada away from Keynesianism for the first time in fifty years.

His was not, however, a commitment to neoliberal orthodoxy that we saw in the chapters on Britain and United States. Mulroney and, later, Harper did introduce some measures that resembled those undertaken by Thatcher, Reagan, and their successors. The government slashed transfers to the provinces for health care, education, and social assistance. It also introduced provisions to claw back certain federal government benefits. For example, Old Age Security, the general pension paid to all Canadians over 65 (akin to Social Security in the United States), was cut back for those with the highest incomes. The same soon happened for family benefits that help defray the cost of raising children. The government also imposed a federal Goods and Services Tax (GST) of seven percent on almost all transactions that acts much like the Value Added Tax used in most of Europe.

The deep ideological divisions eased when the Liberal governments from 1995 until 2006 kept many of the social service cuts adopted by the Mulroney government. In some respects, they actually reinforced them, as in the passage of the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) in the 1995 budget, which combined federal transfers to the provinces for health care, post-secondary education, and social assistance into one block grant, reduced the size of the transfer, and gave the federal government the power to change the level of funding at any time without consulting the provinces.

The Conservative government that took office in 2006 did use the same kind of pro-market rhetoric we find among right-wing politicians in the United States and the United Kingdom. However, actual changes in economic policy were marginal even after the Tories won their majority in 2011 for reasons that reflect this book's subtitle. Canada's economy is too small and too dependent on exports to significantly go against global trends.

If there was a key change under Harper it was to support the booming energy industry in the western provinces where the core of his support was located. Alberta, in particular, has what is thought to be the world's second largest oil reserve. Much of it is trapped in sand and shale, which has made it too expensive to extract until recently. As global prices have risen, so have the opportunities to export Canadian oil. That, in turn, led the Harper government to join the Bush administration in resisting pressures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in an effort to limit the effects of climate change.

The oil boom and Canada's effective use of global trade tools made it possible for the country to weather the 2008 recession after only going through less than a full year of economic decline. Still, Harper's government did less to address economic inequality which paved the way for his defeat in 2015.

Since then, Trudeau has returned to more traditional Keynesian policies, albeit with one unusual twist. Among the traditional Keynesian tools he has used is his government's willingness to run short term budget deficits to, among other things, commit over \$100 billion for a variety of infrastructure projects. The unusual twist has been his expansion of programs begun under Harper that encourage wealthy people to immigrate *by* using economic investment as a criterion for gaining what Canadians call landed immigrant status.

By far the biggest change undertaken by any post-war government was the negotiation of a comprehensive free trade deal with the United States that was expanded to include Mexico six years later, which also serves as an intellectual bridge into the final subsection on public policy. Canada's membership in GATT and the WTO had already resulted in reduced tariffs between Canada and the United States. In addition, Canada had already negotiated the Auto Pact in 1965, which removed all

barriers to trade for cars and car parts. During the 1980s, it negotiated a treaty that created a virtually free market with the United States, which was expanded to include Mexico with passage of the sweeping **North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)** in 1993. NAFTA called for:

- the reduction of remaining tariffs between the two countries
- a dispute resolution mechanism for resolving conflict on trade issues
- special agreements for specific sectors such as investment, energy, and the media
- continued use of measures such as countervailing duties against the other country, when and if the terms of the agreement were violated.

Opponents argued that Canada's very survival was at risk. They claimed that free trade was a good idea in principle, but that a bilateral free trade deal with the United States would put Canada at a disadvantage because it is so much smaller and less powerful. Canadian sovereignty would be undermined, and it would have to bring its economic policy more in line with Washington's.

Even more importantly for our purposes here, NAFTA did not spark the same kind of opposition we have seen in the United States. By the time NAFTA came up for ratification, most major economic interest groups realized that the country needed to loosen barriers to trade with its largest trading partner--United States--and, to a far lesser degree, Canada.

Supporters of free trade argued that Canada had no choice but to pursue a deal with the United States because it was by far the country's leading trading partner. If protectionist forces in either country threatened access to this market, Canada's economy would suffer. The agreement had the most support from those groups with the most to lose: Québec, the West, and large business interests. By the time the Liberals returned to power, most Canadians had come to accept NAFTA and the relatively minor limitations to Keynesian orthodoxy introduced by the Conservatives.

Foreign Policy

Of the industrialized democracies covered in *Comparative Politics*, Canada is by far the smallest and has the most limiting global "footprint." What's more, its proximity to the United States and the close cultural connection between the two countries both limit how independent Canadian foreign policy can be.

Canada has successfully charted its own foreign policy path *to the extent that it has been able to do so* especially under Liberal prime ministers. But do keep the italicized words in the preceding sentence in mind, because given the often unspoken but very real influence of the United States, Canada cannot be too independent. It is an active and loyal member of the NATO alliance, and during the Cold War, it almost always followed the United States' lead in making its foreign policy.

Generally speaking, post-war Liberal governments have been more willing to be critical of the United States than those led by Conservatives. The elder Trudeau's government did protest the war in Vietnam and some of the more bellicose statements and arms program expansions during the Reagan years. Although it did not get as much criticism from the George W. Bush administration as France did, the Chrétien and Martin governments opposed the policies that led to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. They argued that any such decision should be made by the United Nations, not by individual governments acting on their own. More recently, the younger Trudeau has been among Donald Trump's most vocal critics among national leaders and has reaffirmed his government's strong support for the Paris Accords on Climate Change.

Yet, when all is said and done, Canada cannot easily chart a course that is at odds with what the United States wants. The U.S. is a military superpower; Canada is decidedly not. Its military is about four percent the size of the one in the United States. It spends only a little more than one percent of its GNP on the military, which puts it on a par with Lichtenstein on a per capita basis. Canada is in many ways dependent on the United States in all aspects of its foreign policy. The two countries share the world's longest undefended border. And Canadians cooperated with the United States in attempts to strengthen security after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, especially once officials in Washington criticized what they saw as lax border controls that allowed suspect individuals to get into the United States from Canada.

Within those parameters, Canada has been less willing to follow international trends in foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. Since then, it has tried to carve out an independent niche for itself, especially when Lloyd Axworthy was foreign minister in the 1990s.

Two such areas stand out.

First, Canada has consciously changed its military into one whose primary mission is peacekeeping. It has the world's only stand-alone training unit for peacekeepers, the Lester Pearson Centre. A year-long course on peacekeeping is part of the required second-year curriculum at the Royal Military College, whose students prepare for careers in all branches of the service (www.rmc.ca).

Globalization

In Canada

Globalization has had a major impact on Canada even though it shares a border with only one other country.

Globalization is most visible in the changing —face|| of the Canadian population. Tens of thousands of Muslims, Africans, and Caribbean natives have moved to Toronto, Montreal, and other eastern cities. Chinese, Indian, and other Asian immigrants are hard to miss in British Columbia.

But the most important impact of globalization is in foreign trade, which is a central part of the Canadian economy. On a per capita basis, it exports more than most countries, and unusual among the wealthy democracies, most of the goods it sells abroad are heavy industrial products. Twenty percent of total exports are auto parts, for example.

The last two companies to have owned Wadsworth -- the publisher of this book -- have had Canadians as majority owners.

What makes Canada unique is that more than 80 percent of its exports go to a single country: the United States.

In the years after World War II, Canadian troops were not deployed in a combat setting until they were sent to Afghanistan as part of the NATO command after the Taliban was toppled in 2001. Even then, the government argued that its involvement was consistent with its peacekeeping and developmental traditions. Canada was given responsibility for security and reconstruction in the area around Kandahar, which was the center of Taliban support and remains one of the most dangerous regions in that war-torn country. As such, Canadian troops help ensure basic security

while the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team works to rebuild its infrastructure, create an effective government, and open access to education and health care for its residents. In 2009, Parliament agreed to extend its commitment to Afghanistan through 2011. All combat troops left in summer 2011.

Second, it has also become one of the world's leaders in development assistance both through its foreign ministry (www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca) and its equivalent of USAID, CIDA (www.acdi-cida.gc.ca). It is the largest country to have committed itself to the commonly accepted (and commonly overlooked) goal of contributing 0.7 percent of its gross national product (GNP) on development assistance within the next decade. CIDA provides funds to the United Nations and to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) based outside Canada as well as to Canadian organizations. It is one of the first international development agencies to create an active peace-building program and was a leader in providing support for Palestinians after the Oslo Accord was signed in 1993.

Its developmental effort is aided by CANADEM, a group of about 10,000 citizens from all professional walks of life who are willing to work in places like Afghanistan that are ravaged by fighting or in regions devastated by disasters such as the tsunami that hit most of Asia in December 2004 (www.canadem.ca). CANADEM is also the model for the recently dismantled U.S. State Department's Civilian Response Corps.

Canada: No Wicked Problems?

You may have noticed that this chapter has not mentioned wicked problems once so far. That doesn't mean that Canada doesn't face its share of intractable issues, especially around identity, ethnicity, first peoples, and immigration. Similarly, it has a sluggish economy and a health care system with deeply rooted problems as well as its highly prized accomplishments.

What makes Canada—and Germany—different from the other democracies considered in Part 2 is that it has found ways of dealing with at least some of its deeply embedded problems at some of the time and done so reasonably well. Not all analysts would agree with that assertion, especially if one focused on Canada during its more divided and difficult periods in its not-so-distant past.

However, when the clichéd push came to the clichéd shove, Canadians found ways to make reasonable amount of progress by being able to work across identity and regional lines despite the limitations of its political culture and institutional arrangements. In fact, one might be tempted that its leaders found ways of turning that culture and those institutions into an advantage along the lines one rarely sees in a leading democracy.

Key Terms

Concepts

brokerage parties

brokerage parties

catch-all parties

Charter of Rights

Confederation
Critical election
federal
first-past-the-post electoral system
judicial review
patriation
proportional representation
riding
royal prerogative
sovereignty-association
visible minorities

People

Chrétien, Jean
Harper, Stephen
Laurier, Wilfrid
Lévesque, René
Macdonald, John A.
Martin, Paul
Mulroney, Brian
Trudeau, Justin
Trudeau, Pierre Elliot

Acronyms

BNA Act
BQ
NAFTA
NDP
PC
PQ
PR

Organizations, Places, and Events

1982 constitutional patriation
Act of Union
Battle of the Plains of Abraham

Bloc Québécois
British North America Act
Charlottetown Accord
Conservative Party
governor general
House of Commons
Liberal Party
Meech Lake Accord
New Democratic Party
North American Free Trade Agreement
Official Languages Act
Parti Québécois
Progressive Conservative
Quiet Revolution
Québec Act
Reform Party
Senate
Supreme Court
Tories

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