

REASSESSING THE ROGUE TORY

Canadian Foreign Relations in
the Diefenbaker Era

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Introduction

JANICE CAVELL

It is now over half a century since John Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservative government was defeated in the election of 1963. Diefenbaker came to power with a minority government in 1957, after more than two decades of Liberal rule; quickly returned to the hustings in 1958 and won the largest parliamentary majority up to that time in Canada (208 out of 265 seats); then was reduced again to a minority in mid-1962 and lost power in April of the next year. By 1962, his government was beset by controversies, many of them related to foreign policy. The events of early 1963 were, quite simply, unprecedented in Canadian history.

With his government crumbling from within as cabinet ministers questioned his leadership, Diefenbaker also faced a direct attack from Washington when the State Department issued a press release that in effect called him a liar. On 5 February 1963 he lost a non-confidence vote in the House of Commons, having been formally accused of "lack of leadership" and "confusion and indecision in dealing with national and international problems."¹ During the ensuing tumultuous election, Diefenbaker campaigned with passion, using openly anti-American rhetoric to win back some of the support he had lost. Liberal leader Lester B. Pearson was confronted by demonstrators who burned an American flag and denounced him as Washington's "stooge."² Pearson could do no better than another minority government, a result that was repeated in the 1965 election. Diefenbaker clung to his position as Conservative leader until 1967 and then stayed on as a member of Parliament until his death in 1979.

Understandably, Diefenbaker remains one of the most controversial prime ministers in Canadian history. His record in international affairs, and particularly his handling of Canada-United States relations, has always been the major focus of his critics, and the enduring image of Diefenbaker's foreign policy is one of disastrous indecision. In this view, Diefenbaker's election victory marked the end of a "golden age" in Canadian foreign relations, and his tenure as prime minister was an embarrassingly amateurish interlude between the more impressive Liberal regimes of Louis St. Laurent and Lester Pearson.

The Conservatives' foreign policy failures have long been attributed mainly to Diefenbaker's personality traits, particularly his indecisiveness, paranoia, and excessive fear of losing power. That Diefenbaker often showed poor judgment, emotional instability, and a partisan concern for domestic political advantage is unquestionable,³ and many contemporaries responded to these characteristics with distaste even if they did not entirely disagree with the prime minister's views. For example, the cosmopolitan and erudite diplomat Charles Ritchie, who was appointed as Canada's ambassador to Washington in 1962, often bristled with annoyance when US officials ridiculed Canadian foreign policy initiatives. Nevertheless, in 1963 Ritchie wrote that "there should be prayers of thanksgiving in the churches" for the Conservative electoral defeat so far as it concerned Diefenbaker himself.⁴

Basil Robinson, who acted as a liaison between Diefenbaker and the Department of External Affairs from 1957 to 1962, recorded numerous gaffes and rash decisions in his memoir, *Diefenbaker's World*. Yet Robinson was also careful to note that Diefenbaker handled many foreign policy issues well, particularly during his government's early years. Robinson concluded by remembering that in 1963, although he was relieved by the change in government, he knew enough about Diefenbaker's record in international affairs to be "sceptical of wholesale condemnations."⁵

Not only did the Diefenbaker government have several foreign policy successes to its credit, but after 1963 thorny issues such as anti-Americanism in Canada continued to plague Pearson and his ministers, occasionally causing embarrassing diplomatic fiascos. For example, in 1965 Pearson was harshly taken to task by President Lyndon B. Johnson over Canada's stance on the Vietnam War. Diefenbaker's oversized ego and his colourful outspokenness make it easy to place factors of personality front and centre when evaluating his government's foreign policy performance.⁶ However, even in the immediate aftermath of his defeat, some well-informed observers pointed instead to the broad underlying shifts in world affairs between 1957 and 1963. Both

the geopolitical scene and Canada's place in it were changing at an unprecedented rate, making the task that confronted first Diefenbaker and then Pearson exceptionally challenging. Indeed, the contrast between Pearson's successes during the 1950s and his sometimes floundering efforts at statesmanship during the 1960s demonstrates that even a politician with far more experience of international affairs than Diefenbaker found it impossible to maintain his former stature amid the turmoil of the '60s.

In 1965 Marcel Cadieux, then the undersecretary of state for external affairs (as the deputy minister of Canada's foreign ministry was called before 1993), addressed the question of how the breach in Canada-United States relations could be repaired. He began not by blaming the Diefenbaker government but by offering an overview of the past two decades. Cadieux noted that Canada's international stature was considerably enhanced by the Second World War; in the immediate postwar era, many other Western nations were still struggling to recover from the conflict, but Canada prospered. In foreign policy, "the circumstances were propitious for Canadian initiatives" through the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This period ended with the Suez Crisis. In the early Diefenbaker years, Cadieux wrote, "the international environment had begun to change," particularly through decolonization and "the increasing complexity of the nuclear problem." At the same time, "rightly or wrongly, the potential threat to Canadian independence from mounting United States investment began to be seriously felt." Cadieux pointed out that Washington was "not without fault in its attitude toward Canada" and tended "to make rather irrational demands" of its allies. He cautioned that these worrisome conditions "still exist, if anything in greater magnitude."⁷ The mere removal of Diefenbaker from office, then, would not be enough to set matters right.

The Diefenbaker Government and Foreign Policy

As Cadieux observed, the Suez Crisis of November 1956 marked both the high point and the end of a period when Canadian diplomacy met with great success and high international respect. On the domestic front, from 1945 until 1956 external policy was rarely, if ever, a matter of partisan debate. Indeed, if there was such a thing as a golden age it was Suez, rather than the victory of Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservatives seven months later, that marked its end. For the first time the policies of Canada's two main allies, the United Kingdom and the United States, diverged sharply. The domestic consensus on international issues was shattered; the Liberals' support for the American rather than the British position gained them as

much criticism as praise, and anti-American sentiment increased markedly. The next decade brought frequent questions about Canada's place in North America and in the Western alliance.

It also brought a greater awareness of the need for Canada to engage with the global south. Decolonization was among the most important of the shifts in the Diefenbaker era. During the Suez Crisis, the Conservatives had seemed fixated on support for the United Kingdom, ignoring the effect that Britain's neo-imperial aggression had on the new Asian and potential African members of the Commonwealth. St. Laurent attempted to use this stance against Diefenbaker during the 1957 election campaign. An editorial in the Liberal *Toronto Star* agreed that the Conservatives were "living in an age that is past." The election was set for 10 June; a Commonwealth prime ministers' meeting would follow shortly afterwards in London. Another Liberal journalist argued that, while St. Laurent could play a constructive role at this meeting, with Diefenbaker as Canada's representative the outlook would be far less promising.⁸

Such predictions seemed reasonable enough: Diefenbaker was of Scottish descent on his mother's side, and he had an unusually strong dedication to the United Kingdom. The new prime minister did indeed revel in the traditional British connection during his triumphant visit to London. However, Diefenbaker was a dedicated upholder of human rights, and the German component in his ancestry made him sensitive to the concerns of those from non-British backgrounds. Once in office, he was quick to demonstrate his belief in the New Commonwealth. His 1958 world tour began with another visit to Europe and ended in the predominantly white dominions of Australia and New Zealand, but the main focus was on India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Malaya.

Francine McKenzie leads off the collection with a carefully nuanced chapter that examines Diefenbaker's vision of the future multiracial Commonwealth through a case study of the tour. She points out the contradictions in and limitations of this vision, but at the same time she demonstrates that Diefenbaker's political philosophy was broadly aligned with the new era of decolonization and, thus, was innovative and forward-looking rather than nostalgic. McKenzie's contribution also shows that Diefenbaker's character traits did not always stand in the way of effective diplomacy.

Like McKenzie's piece, Kevin Spooner's chapter on the Conservative government and Africa demonstrates Canada's growing attunement to the developing world during the Diefenbaker years, as do Asa McKercher's contribution on Latin America and the chapter on Asia by Jill Campbell-Miller,

Michael Carroll, and Greg Donaghy. McKenzie suggests that Diefenbaker was more of a liberal internationalist than previous historians have given him credit for, and his government's relations with Commonwealth countries in Africa and Asia do much to confirm her hypothesis. Outside the Commonwealth, Ottawa found the prospect of increased trade alluring and moved towards greater involvement, particularly in such episodes as the 1960 and 1961 wheat sales to the People's Republic of China. Yet, at the same time, potential Cold War flashpoints in the Congo, Cuba, and Indochina demonstrated the need for caution. Diefenbaker and his colleagues nevertheless made preliminary advances that would be followed up by later governments: for example, Diefenbaker was the first Canadian prime minister to make an official visit to a Latin American country (Mexico) and also the first to make such a visit to Japan.

While the studies of Africa, Latin America, and Asia offer broad overviews of the Diefenbaker government's policies in key areas of the Third World, Robert Vineberg's contribution is more tightly focused. Vineberg shows how Canada's first female cabinet minister, Ellen Fairclough, brought immigration policy in line with the evolution of foreign policy, easing the long-standing restrictions on non-white immigration. The prime minister himself did little except to let Fairclough have her way. This chapter demonstrates that, when Diefenbaker's own interest in the decolonizing world reached its limits, his ministers could step forward on their own to initiate major changes. In this way, the Conservative government's policy agenda gained a coherence that the leader would not have achieved alone.

Diefenbaker's liberal internationalism may have wavered at times, but it was strong enough to create unexpected difficulties. Ironically, his very dedication to the New Commonwealth brought the Canadian leader into conflict with the "mother country" to which he had initially felt such devotion. As Norman Hillmer's chapter explains, Diefenbaker became prime minister just when, in the aftermath of the Suez debacle, Harold Macmillan's government decided to turn away from imperial dreams and Commonwealth associations. Macmillan preferred to move towards Europe, which by then had not only recovered from its postwar malaise but was in a period of economic boom. Many in Whitehall viewed Canadian aspirations to world influence as (to borrow the term employed by a British diplomat in 1958) "tiresome" at the best of times.⁹ At this juncture, Diefenbaker's efforts to promote stronger ties with the New Commonwealth were especially inconvenient and unwelcome to Macmillan.

As Spooner's chapter shows, Diefenbaker's decision at the 1961 Commonwealth prime ministers' meeting to side with India's Jawaharlal Nehru and other New Commonwealth leaders against South Africa's apartheid regime (he was the only white prime minister to do so) was a principled stand that won him well-deserved applause. Hillmer, however, argues cogently that, from the perspective of Canada's bilateral relations with the United Kingdom, the move was disastrous. A wiser statesman might have satisfied New Commonwealth aspirations while keeping Britain's goodwill; as it was, Diefenbaker's relations with Macmillan were soured just when Canada could have benefited most from British advice and support in other areas.

Despite his reverence for Britain, Diefenbaker refused to change course. Many New Commonwealth leaders felt serious apprehension about the Macmillan government's application to join the European Economic Community. Throughout 1962, Diefenbaker acted as the spokesman for those who opposed the British move, thus alienating Macmillan even further.¹⁰ As Hillmer sums it up, the story of Anglo-Canadian relations during the Diefenbaker years is "not a happy one."

The story of Canada-United States relations in the same period is, of course, unhappier still: by 1963 the situation had deteriorated to the point where it can credibly be argued that President John F. Kennedy and members of his administration deliberately helped to bring about the fall and electoral defeat of the Conservative government. Here again, the Suez Crisis of 1956 marked an important change. As my own chapter demonstrates, Canadian public opinion about the invasion of Egypt was mixed. However, there was intense and widespread resentment of Washington for the humiliation it inflicted on the United Kingdom and France through its blunt insistence that their forces be withdrawn. Given this demonstration of just how powerful the United States had become, Canadians' nationalist aspirations increasingly seemed to be on a collision course with the forces of American political, economic, and cultural domination.

Diefenbaker deftly used these aspirations and resentments to his advantage in the election campaigns of 1957 and 1958, while holding back from the strongest excesses of popular anti-Americanism. Opposition to communism was one of Diefenbaker's most firmly held political convictions, making him unlikely to oppose the United States on substantive Cold War issues. As Greg Donaghy's chapter shows, Diefenbaker's good relationship with President Dwight D. Eisenhower owed as much to the prime minister's own efforts as to Eisenhower's. By the end of 1958 Eisenhower was

convinced that, when the “chips were down,” Ottawa could be relied on to stand with Washington.

At the same time, however, the outgoing Liberal government had left some difficult issues unresolved. First there was the agreement for an integrated approach to continental defence through the North American Air Defence Command (NORAD). Told by top military leaders that the agreement had already been negotiated and only awaited approval, Diefenbaker (who was temporarily acting as his own secretary of state for external affairs) and the minister of national defence, George Pearkes, signed in July 1957 without any discussion by the full cabinet. But, in fact, concerns previously raised by the Department of External Affairs about the need to protect Canadian sovereignty through ongoing political consultation had not been met.

In an episode proving that the non-partisan era in Canadian foreign policy was indeed over, the Liberals used their pre-election inside knowledge to embarrass Diefenbaker. Despite the strong military logic behind integrated continental defence, then, NORAD gave rise to serious and justified concerns. Eisenhower was sympathetic to the prime minister’s plight, and a more satisfactory agreement was substituted on 12 May 1958. This agreement provided for “the fullest possible consultation” at the political level whenever circumstances seemed to warrant placing forces on alert.¹¹ Although the Liberal attack did Diefenbaker no lasting political harm, he became more leery about controversial foreign policy decisions.

It was not long before the Americans suggested that the new arrangements should include Canada’s acquisition of nuclear weapons. This question was entwined with another difficult issue left unresolved by the Liberals: the fate of the CF-105 (Avro Arrow) supersonic interceptor aircraft. In August 1958, Pearkes recommended cancelling the Arrow program because of its ever-escalating cost and the seeming certainty that, for all their technological sophistication, the planes would soon be obsolete. The Arrow was designed to destroy Soviet nuclear bombers, but it appeared evident that bombers would be phased out and replaced by intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). As a far less expensive replacement for the Arrow in the interval before the end of the bomber era, Pearkes recommended the Boeing CIM10-B Bomarc defensive ground-to-air missile, which carried a nuclear warhead.

On this occasion, there was a full cabinet debate. However, the ministers focused mainly on the agonizing Arrow decision, knowing that cancellation would hurt both national pride and the Canadian aircraft industry.¹²

Acquisition of the Bomarc was approved in September 1958. The decision was announced along with the news that the Arrow might be cancelled. In February 1959 Diefenbaker confirmed the cancellation; he also stated that Canada intended to acquire nuclear warheads for the Bomarc and for another missile system, the Lacrosse, which would be obtained for the Canadian NATO brigade in Europe. In May 1959 a further step was taken when cabinet approved a nuclear strike role for Canadian aircraft serving with NATO. For this purpose, cabinet selected the Lockheed F-104G (Starfighter), which could be manufactured in Canada, helping to offset the Arrow loss.

As Isabel Campbell points out in her chapter, the momentous decisions of 1958 and 1959 opened a period when defence policy became a “political minefield” in a way it had never been before. Not only were the chosen weapons systems soon revealed to have serious flaws, but broad strategic concepts were in constant flux. Canadian military leaders, especially those in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), were stubbornly set on their nuclear choices, which they saw as essential to Canada’s prestige and influence within the Western alliance. They did nothing to promote awareness that, with the development of Polaris, Minuteman, and other ICBMs, the US nuclear deterrent was rapidly becoming strong enough to make a Soviet first strike all but impossible, rendering the potential Canadian tactical nuclear contributions to North American defence ever less significant.¹³

The Bomarc and Lacrosse systems (as well as the Honest John, which was later chosen to replace the unsatisfactory Lacrosse) were still under development when they were selected, while the F-104 required redesign for its new role. There was, accordingly, a lengthy period before the warheads would be required. Between 1959 and 1962, Campbell argues, there was time to formulate an approach that took new strategic developments into consideration. However, the Department of National Defence refused to work with the Department of External Affairs on a coordinated plan, with the result that the government received contradictory advice. With the publication of new and alarming facts about fallout, public opposition to the weapons was on the rise, and a well-organized disarmament movement soon formed. Moreover, by January 1960, Diefenbaker had concluded that not enough was being done to safeguard Canadian sovereignty. Nicole Marion contends that this realization, rather than fear of the disarmers’ influence on public opinion and voting outcomes, was the main cause of the prime minister’s notorious prevarications and delays on nuclear policy.

Another factor was the influence of Howard Green, who became secretary of state for external affairs in June 1959. In September 1957, Diefenbaker

had assigned the external affairs portfolio to Sidney Smith, the president of the University of Toronto. Although Smith lacked political experience, he had long-standing ties to the Progressive Conservative Party and, indeed, he had been urged by those who most strongly opposed Diefenbaker's leadership bid in 1956 to run for the position himself¹⁴ – a fact of which Diefenbaker was undoubtedly aware, and which casts an interesting light on both the prime minister's decision to offer Smith the external affairs post and the inability of the two men to work harmoniously together after Smith had accepted it. As Michael Stevenson's chapter demonstrates, despite a few successes Smith was generally a disappointment in his new role.

Following Smith's sudden and unexpected death in March 1959, Green was chosen as his replacement. While Green did not initially question the nuclear choices the government had already made, his attitude soon changed. Green was an experienced parliamentarian, respected by his colleagues from all parties, but nothing in his background seemed to qualify him for the external affairs portfolio. However, unlike Smith, he had strong support from the prime minister, and he was exceptionally well informed about nuclear technology. Green was quick to grasp the implications of the new fallout studies, which showed that, because of global weather patterns, a disproportionate amount of radioactive debris fell in Canada.¹⁵ By late 1959, Green had dedicated himself to the cause of disarmament; a year later, Diefenbaker stated that there would be no nuclear acquisition "while progress towards disarmament continues."¹⁶

The disarmament crusade was consistent with Green's broad plan for Canadian foreign policy. He argued that it was time for Canada to drop the Liberals' "honest broker" model and take a more activist approach to world affairs. In Green's view, Canada needed to put forward more initiatives at the UN and elsewhere, thereby demonstrating that it had views and a voice of its own.¹⁷ In other words, Green feared that Canada was sliding ever closer to the position of an American satellite, and he sought above all to counter both the reality and the perception of such a development.

For all the harmonious relations between Ottawa and the Eisenhower administration, there was reason for Canadians to feel that Washington indeed often expected acquiescence rather than discussion. Following the Cuban revolution of January 1959 and the formation of a new government dominated by Fidel Castro, policy on Cuba was the cause of numerous disagreements. By mid-1960 Washington's anger against Castro's regime was intense. At the meeting of the Canada-US Ministerial Joint Committee on Defence in Montebello, Quebec, the Americans put forward proposals

for an economic embargo of Cuba; Canada declined to participate. The Canadian ambassador in Washington, Arnold Heeneey, recorded that Green was badly shaken by the US officials' aggressive attitude. Heeneey afterwards identified the Montebello meeting as the point at which Canada-US relations began to deteriorate.¹⁸

This was the situation when John F. Kennedy was elected as the new US president in November 1960. Diefenbaker had formed the opinion that Kennedy was "courageously rash" and set on reinforcing Washington's position of leadership within the Western alliance.¹⁹ Stephen Azzi's chapter demonstrates that Diefenbaker was not wrong: the general ethos of the Kennedy administration valorized extreme toughness, with opposing views frequently being dismissed as weak or ill-informed. The president and his officials used then common metaphors – heavily influenced by the jargon of Freudian psychology and by gender stereotypes – to express this attitude, describing the representatives of other nations as irrational women or children. These tropes had insidious power when employed by the many journalists (not all of them American) who supported Kennedy. Washington insiders used an even more extreme form of this language among themselves, and such rhetoric made overbearing behaviour appear justified in the Americans' own eyes.²⁰ As Azzi's chapter details, Kennedy displayed insensitivity throughout his May 1961 visit to Ottawa; in this context, the discovery that the president had left behind a memo by his advisor W.W. Rostow, in which Rostow listed the issues on which the US should "push" Canada, was particularly galling to Diefenbaker.

Campbell points out that Kennedy and his secretary of defence, Robert McNamara, were interested in the increased use of conventional forces. Yet the president concentrated on getting Canada to accept the nuclear warheads, and, despite the lack of any real strategic need for Canada to have these weapons, he was determined to secure quick Canadian compliance. Economic advantages were offered in the form of a deal whereby Canada would build F-104s for NATO partners and receive McDonnell F-101 (Voodoo) interceptors from the United States.

The crisis caused that summer by the erection of the Berlin Wall, along with the resumption of Soviet nuclear tests, added urgency to Kennedy's request. Diefenbaker, as ready as he had been in the Eisenhower era to cooperate with the Americans at moments of heightened Cold War tension, substantially increased the Canadian NATO contingent. On the nuclear front, Kennedy wrote to urge an agreement on the warheads as a means to demonstrate NATO solidarity.²¹ Diefenbaker was apparently on the verge of

action when the correspondence was leaked to journalists, quite possibly by Kennedy himself.

The chapters by Azzi, Campbell, and Marion all attest to the importance of this episode. Such heavy-handed intervention was the worst possible way to deal with Diefenbaker. Kennedy gave a speech to the UN General Assembly on 25 September in which he unveiled a new disarmament plan and stated that there should be no expansion of the “nuclear club” – meaning the group of nations with independent nuclear capability, which France had recently joined. Diefenbaker seized on the speech as an excuse to claim that the president had made it impossible for Canada to accept nuclear weapons.²² In the following month, a massive anti-nuclear demonstration on Parliament Hill provided another pretext for delay. There was little movement on the nuclear issue in early or mid-1962; as Azzi recounts, frustrated American officials concluded that Canadians suffered from a collective mental illness.

By the spring of 1962, the government was in serious trouble on economic issues such as unemployment and the falling value of the Canadian dollar. It was clear that Diefenbaker could not proceed without a renewed mandate, and he therefore called an election he was not sure he could win. In late April Kennedy hosted a White House dinner for Nobel laureates; Pearson was the only non-American in attendance. The State Department had advised against inviting him, but Kennedy not only went ahead, he agreed to Pearson’s request for a private meeting. Afterwards, Pearson let it be known that he and Kennedy had talked for forty minutes.

Diefenbaker was understandably angered that Kennedy seemed bent on giving his rival favourable publicity at such a critical time. However, the prime minister’s response was excessive by any standard. Diefenbaker informed US ambassador Livingston Merchant that he would make Canada-US relations a campaign issue, using the Rostow memo to demonstrate Washington’s arrogant attitude. Although Merchant was appalled and infuriated by Diefenbaker’s threat, he seemed to believe that the president might be at least somewhat in the wrong. The ambassador suggested a careful strategy to establish US neutrality in the election, involving a public, friendly encounter between Kennedy and his Canadian counterpart. But Kennedy furiously declared he would never see or speak to Diefenbaker again – a resolution to which he adhered for over six months.²³ The 1962 election, then, not only reduced the Conservatives to a precarious minority government, it brought Canada-US relations to a new low.

Throughout 1961 and 1962, Cuba continued to be the cause of frequent irritation between the two countries. As McKercher's chapter demonstrates, Diefenbaker and Green drew back from Latin American involvement once it became clear that Castro was aligning himself with the Soviet bloc. Nevertheless, during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 Kennedy and his officials were in no mood to observe the niceties of the 1958 NORAD agreement. The president avoided even speaking to Diefenbaker on the telephone, and this lack of communication or consultation exacerbated Diefenbaker's resentment, although it did not stop him from taking several measures in support of the Americans.²⁴ Following the crisis, public opinion shifted towards greater (although still far from universal) approval for the acquisition of nuclear warheads. There was broad agreement among media commentators that, with the weapons systems now in place, the time had come for a definite decision one way or the other.²⁵

Diefenbaker opened negotiations at last, but in the face of critical comments by the retiring NATO commander, General Lauris Norstad, he defended his delays. In contrast, Pearson sought political advantage by shifting to support for acquisition. Even within Pearson's own party, not everyone was convinced; for example, the Liberal *Toronto Star* continued to firmly oppose nuclear weapons for Canada.²⁶ As Campbell explains, there was much truth in the prime minister's arguments about the need for careful reconsideration of the entire issue. Nevertheless, following a State Department press release that cast doubt on Diefenbaker's veracity and was intended as shock therapy for the supposed "essentially neurotic" Canadian worldview,²⁷ the government fell. In the book's concluding chapter, Hugh Segal explores both the appeal of Diefenbaker's nationalist message during the election campaign and the doubts that prevented voters from giving Pearson's Liberals a majority mandate.

Diefenbaker and the Historians: Assessing (and Reassessing) the Rogue Tory

Two lines of interpretation for the Diefenbaker era were set out within a few years of its end. Philosopher George Grant's *Lament for a Nation* described Diefenbaker and Green as the last defenders of traditional Canadian nationalism, fighting a hopeless yet necessary battle. Grant's powerful polemic did much to inspire the "new nationalists" of the 1960s, but Diefenbaker himself, with his old-fashioned style of political oratory, was not well suited to become a hero among the younger generation.²⁸ Moreover, Peter Newman's *Renegade in Power* put forward a view that was starkly opposed to Grant's,

highlighting Diefenbaker's poor judgment and indecisiveness as the explanation for his government's failures.²⁹

Newman's basic premise was developed in a more academic vein through survey histories by Robert Bothwell, J.L. Granatstein, Norman Hillmer, and others.³⁰ Their case against Diefenbaker was most succinctly presented by Granatstein in 2011. In his view, good relations with the United States were the most basic factor contributing to Canada's national interest, and any prime minister who lost sight of this essential truth deserves condemnation.³¹ While these historians are sometimes critical of Kennedy, they assign by far the largest portion of blame for the breakdown in relations to Diefenbaker. Granatstein, for example, states that Kennedy's initial tolerance of Diefenbaker's antics "can only be described as remarkable."³² According to Bothwell, by early 1963 these antics were "more than could be borne," and the Americans were justified in deciding it was "high time to put Diefenbaker in his place."³³

On the other side of the argument, Jocelyn Maynard Ghent cast a critical light on the Canadian defence establishment and on the Kennedy administration. According to Ghent, Canadian military leaders felt more loyalty to their US counterparts than to their own civilian colleagues and political masters, and much of the confusion in the Diefenbaker era was caused by their determination to push forward with their defence agenda through the creation of NORAD and the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Ghent also produced evidence to substantiate long-standing suspicions about excessive US interference in Canadian affairs.³⁴ With regard to the personal clashes between the two leaders, she argued that, because the prime minister was willing to mend the relationship after the 1962 election while the president was not, Kennedy should bear the greater part of the blame.³⁵ On the NORAD issue, Ghent's conclusions were refined and expanded by Joseph Jockel, who demonstrates that the Canadian military chiefs of staff were even more enthusiastic about operational integration than their US counterparts; that they did not share the sovereignty concerns felt by many politicians and the general public; and that they deliberately misled the new Conservative government in 1957.³⁶

In 1995, Denis Smith's magisterial biography of Diefenbaker and the second volume of the official history of the Department of External Affairs, co-authored by John Hilliker and Donald Barry, provided thoroughly researched and well-balanced general accounts.³⁷ These works, along with the release of documents through the *Foreign Relations of the United States* and the *Documents on Canadian External Relations* series and the expanded

declassification of government files, opened the way for numerous specialized studies. There has, in fact, been an upsurge of interest in the Diefenbaker era, characterized by a strong revisionist trend. Among the historians who have used the wealth of new primary source material since 2000, a favourable (though never entirely uncritical) attitude is often apparent, particularly on what once seemed to be the weakest point in the Diefenbaker government's foreign policy record: its performance on the nuclear weapons issue. On this topic, revisionism was encouraged by Don Munton's 1996 article, in which he shrewdly questioned several widely accepted but erroneous beliefs.³⁸ Among those who followed Munton's lead in disputing the anti-Diefenbaker consensus, the work of Patricia McMahon, Daniel Heidt, Erika Simpson, and Michael Stevenson is particularly noteworthy.³⁹ Other key areas of study are Canada-UK relations and decolonization. Following the growth of imperial history and postcolonial theory, Canada's relations with Britain and with the global south (especially the New Commonwealth) have taken on fresh interest and are the focus of innovative works by Asa McKercher, Ryan Touhey, and others.⁴⁰ Finally, Daniel Macfarlane and Asa McKercher offer positive assessments of Diefenbaker's diplomatic performance during the Berlin and Cuban crises.⁴¹

Perhaps the key overall theme – sometimes explicit and sometimes implicit – in recent writing is the inadequacy of the “golden age” periodization. Greg Donaghy, Adam Chapnick, and Hector Mackenzie all point out the flaws of this approach, which in its most extreme form involves two broad assertions: first, that the genius for foreign policy demonstrated by Pearson and his subordinates in the Department of External Affairs was the main cause of Canada's increasing international stature between 1945 and 1957 and, second, that Diefenbaker's election marked the end of the era.⁴² The golden age concept was first outlined by retired diplomat Escott Reid in 1967, but in Reid's view it extended roughly from 1941 until 1951, and the era's end came as Canada became ever more closely tied to US Cold War policies.⁴³ Using Reid's chronology, it is possible to consider the Suez Crisis, the Diefenbaker government's difficulties over defence and other Cold War issues such as Cuba, and the anti-American protests of the Pearson years as parts of an ongoing process. Diefenbaker had the misfortune to gain office at a time when this process was entering a period of acute crisis. As Chapnick points out, his underlying philosophy on international affairs did not differ in any essential way from that of the Liberals.⁴⁴ Chapnick's analysis makes clear the need to study the continuities between the Liberal and Conservative periods and to account for their

differences by considering broader factors than Diefenbaker's personal quirks and failings.

The historiography of the Diefenbaker period stands at the point where a general reassessment is warranted. Not only are there conflicting interpretations to be considered, but the periodization that underpinned some major works of the late twentieth century must be called into question. *Re-assessing the Rogue Tory* offers innovative studies of the well-known themes that have long concerned historians, while also extending into newer areas of scholarly interest. The contributors address the wider issues that affected Canadian foreign policy throughout the 1950s and 1960s, carefully analyzing the domestic and international pressures with which the Conservative government had to deal. They avoid generalizations and instead examine the factors that led to success or failure, decision or indecision, on specific issues. Although Diefenbaker inevitably plays a major role in many chapters, the aim of the volume is to consider the foreign policy of his government as a whole and to place its achievements and shortcomings within a broad context. Together, the contributions demonstrate that underlying structural changes were indeed largely responsible for the extraordinary tumultuousness of the Diefenbaker era. Diefenbaker has often been criticized for failing to “master” his times,⁴⁵ but it may well be questioned whether any Canadian politician could have done so.

NOTES

- 1 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1962–63, vol. 3, 3409.
- 2 John A. Munro and Alex I. Inglis, eds., *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson*, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 82.
- 3 For a detailed and often devastating critique of Diefenbaker's foreign policy methods from a former professional diplomat, see Peyton V. Lyon, *The Policy Question: A Critical Appraisal of Canada's Role in World Affairs* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), 91–113, 116–18. Despite their general validity, Lyon's points are put forward with a superciliousness that does much to explain Diefenbaker's distrust of the Department of External Affairs, where Lyon worked from 1953 to 1959. On Diefenbaker and the department, see John Hilliker, “The Politicians and the ‘Pearsonalities’: The Diefenbaker Government and the Conduct of Canadian External Relations,” *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* 19, 1 (1984): 151–67; and Asa Mc-Kercher, “No, Prime Minister: Revisiting Diefenbaker and the ‘Pearsonalities,’” *Canadian Journal of History* 52, 2 (2017): 264–89.
- 4 Charles Ritchie, *Storm Signals: More Undiplomatic Diaries, 1962–1971* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1983), 47.
- 5 H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 311.

- 6 Factors of personality can, of course, also be studied in the context of broad trends: both British prime minister Harold Macmillan and US president John F. Kennedy had adopted varieties of masculinity in which Diefenbaker's histrionic style was viewed with suspicion, making his relations with them more difficult. See Martin Francis, "Tears, Tantrums, and Bared Teeth: The Emotional Economy of Three Conservative Prime Ministers, 1951–1963," *Journal of British Studies* 41 (July 2002): 354–87; and Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).
- 7 Marcel Cadieux, draft memo for Paul Martin, 4 January 1965, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), MG30 E144, Arnold Heeney Papers, vol. 4, file Canada-US Relations 1943–65. The first draft of this memo was written by Paul Bridle, who did include several negative comments about the Diefenbaker government. These comments were removed by Cadieux. A.E. Ritchie also believed that "it would be a mistake to make too much" of the contrasts between the Diefenbaker and Pearson governments. See changes by Cadieux to Bridle's draft, 23 December 1964, and Ritchie to Bridle, 29 December 1964, both in LAC, RG 25, vol. 8795, file 202–1-2-USA pt. 1.
- 8 "Two Commonwealths," *Toronto Star*, 8 May 1957; H.H. Guest, "Mr. Pearson's Commonwealth Policy," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 6 June 1957.
- 9 See Francine McKenzie (Chapter 1, this volume).
- 10 The British application was ultimately unsuccessful due to the opposition of French president Charles de Gaulle.
- 11 Joseph T. Jockel, *Canada in NORAD, 1957–2007: A History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 36.
- 12 There is no substance to the popular theory that the Arrow's cancellation was caused by a conspiracy emanating from Washington. See Donald C. Story and Russell Isinger, "The Origins of the Cancellation of Canada's Avro CF-105 Arrow Fighter Program: A Failure of Strategy," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, 6 (2007): 1025–50.
- 13 The Bomarc and other defensive nuclear weapons were intended to protect Strategic Air Command bases in the United States so that, in the event of a Soviet first strike, retaliation would still be possible. They offered little protection to the civilian population and were effective only against bombers. There were no defensive systems to counter the ICBM threat. However, the new US offensive intercontinental missiles could be launched from submarines and protected underground sites. The certainty of strong US retaliation was accordingly enough to deter any Soviet attempt at a first strike.
- 14 Party members such as Grattan O'Leary, Donald Fleming, and George Nowlan considered Smith as "the only individual we could see across the country who might be successful against Diefenbaker" – a judgment that appears questionable in the light of subsequent events. Smith was tempted, but ultimately declined. Interview with R.A. Bell, in Peter Stursberg, *Diefenbaker: Leadership Gained, 1956–62* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 12–13.
- 15 Daniel Heidt, "I Think That Would Be the End of Canada': Howard Green, the Nuclear Test Ban, and Interest-Based Foreign Policy, 1946–1963," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 42, 3 (2012): 347–50.

- 16 John Diefenbaker, "Foundations of Canadian External Policy," Canadian Club of Ottawa, 24 November 1960, Canada, Department of External Affairs, *Statements and Speeches*, No. 60–41.
- 17 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1960, vol. 1, 929–40.
- 18 Arnold Heeney, *The Things That Are Caesar's: Memoirs of a Canadian Public Servant* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 162–63.
- 19 Robinson memo for Green, 9 November 1960, Janice Cavell, ed., *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 27, 1960 (Ottawa: Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 2007), doc. 239.
- 20 For a different view, see Asa McKercher, *Canada and Camelot: Canadian-American Relations in the Kennedy Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 18.
- 21 See Dean Rusk to Livingston Merchant, forwarding Kennedy to Diefenbaker, 3 August 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, vol. 13, *Western Europe and Canada*, ed. Charles S. Sampson and James E. Miller (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1994), doc. 426 (hereafter *FRUS*).
- 22 Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 231–32. In support of Diefenbaker's position, it should be noted that the term "nuclear club" was often used in popular discourse to mean all nations with nuclear weapons, whether independently produced or obtained from the United States.
- 23 See Jocelyn Maynard Ghent, "Canadian-American Relations and the Nuclear Weapons Controversy, 1958–1963" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1976), 132, 133, citing memo by Letitia Baldrige, 2 April 1962, and memo by Fred Holborn, 29 April 1962. Ghent's dissertation, which, unfortunately, was never published, gives the best account of this crucial episode. See also "Mike, JFK in 40-Min. Private Talk," *Toronto Star*, 30 April 1962; Livingston Merchant to George Ball, 5 May 1962, *FRUS, 1961–1963*, vol. 13, *Western Europe and Canada*, doc. 433; Knowlton Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker: Fear and Loathing across the Undefended Border* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), 160–62. At Harold Macmillan's urging, the president reluctantly had a short, awkward meeting with the prime minister in Nassau in late December 1962.
- 24 On these measures, see Asa McKercher, "A 'Half-hearted Response'? Canada and the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962," *International History Review* 33, 2 (2011): 335–52.
- 25 For example, see "Define the Objectives," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 10 December 1962.
- 26 For example, see, "Militarily Useless, Even Perilous," *Toronto Star*, 20 February 1963. The *Star* gave its editorial endorsement to Pearson as the party leader most likely to provide stable, effective government, but remained critical of his new pro-nuclear policy throughout the 1963 election campaign. For example, see "The Basic Issue Remains," 6 April 1963. The *Vancouver Sun*, *Ottawa Citizen*, and *Le Devoir* also opposed acquisition. For an overview, see Mark A. Eaton, "Canadian Editorial Opinion and the 1963 Nuclear Weapon Acquisition Debate," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 35, 4 (2005): 641–66.
- 27 See Stephen Azzi (Chapter 5, this volume).
- 28 George Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965).

- 29 Peter C. Newman, *Renegade in Power: The Diefenbaker Years* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963).
- 30 See Robert Bothwell, *Canada and the United States: The Politics of Partnership* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Robert Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion: Canada and the World, 1945–1984* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Robert Bothwell, *Your Country, My Country: A Unified History of the United States and Canada* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, and John English, *Canada since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981); J.L. Granatstein, *Canada 1957–1967: The Years of Uncertainty and Innovation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986); Norman Hillmer and J.L. Granatstein, *For Better or For Worse: Canada and the United States to the 1990s* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1991); Norman Hillmer and J.L. Granatstein, *Empire to Umpire: Canada and the World to the 1990s*, 1st ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994), rev. ed. (Toronto: Nelson, 2008); and Norman Hillmer and J.L. Granatstein, *For Better or For Worse: Canada and the United States into the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto: Nelson, 2007). For a critique of this approach, see Phillip Buckner, “How Canadian Historians Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Americans!,” *Acadiensis* 25, 2 (1996): 117–40, on 126–31.
- 31 J.L. Granatstein, “When the Department of External Affairs Mattered – And When It Shouldn’t Have,” in *In the National Interest: Canadian Foreign Policy and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1909–2009*, ed. Greg Donaghy and Michael K. Carroll (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011), 69–79, on 70, 75–77.
- 32 J.L. Granatstein, *Yankee Go Home? Canadians and Anti-Americanism* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1996), 131–32.
- 33 Bothwell, *Canada and the United States*, 86. See also Buckner, “How Canadian Historians,” 127, 130; and Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion*, 173, 176–77. Some of Granatstein’s and Bothwell’s views have recently been upheld in McKercher, *Canada and Camelot*.
- 34 Ghent, *Canadian-American Relations*. See also her “Did He Fall or Was He Pushed? The Kennedy Administration and the Collapse of the Diefenbaker Government,” *International History Review* 1, 2 (1979): 246–70, and “Canada, the United States, and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *Pacific Historical Review* 48, 2 (1979): 159–84; and Kevin J. Gloin, “Canada-US Relations in the Diefenbaker Era: Another Look,” in *The Diefenbaker Legacy: Canadian Politics, Law and Society Since 1957*, ed. D.C. Story and R. Bruce Shepard (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1998), 1–14.
- 35 Ghent, *Canadian-American Relations*, 282.
- 36 Joseph T. Jockel, “The Military Establishments and the Creation of NORAD,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 12, 3 (1982): 1–15; and Joseph T. Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs: Canada, the United States, and Origins of North American Air Defence, 1945–1958* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1987).
- 37 John Hilliker and Donald Barry, *Canada’s Department of External Affairs: Coming of Age, 1946–1968* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995); Denis Smith, *Rogue Tory: The Life and Legend of John G. Diefenbaker* (Toronto: Macfarlane, Walter and Ross, 1995). A third work from the 1990s, Knowlton Nash’s

Kennedy and Diefenbaker, should be used with caution, but contains valuable information on the journalism of the time.

- 38 Don Munton, "Going Fission: Tales and Truths about Canada's Nuclear Weapons," *International Journal* 51, 3 (1996): 506–28.
- 39 Heidt, "I Think That Would Be the End of Canada"; Patricia McMahon, *Essence of Indecision: Diefenbaker's Nuclear Policy, 1957–1963* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009); Erika Simpson, *NATO and the Bomb: Canadian Defenders Confront Critics* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); Michael D. Stevenson, "A Very Careful Balance': The 1961 Triangular Agreement and the Conduct of Canadian American Relations," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 24, 2 (2013): 291–311; and Michael D. Stevenson, "'Tossing a Match into Dry Hay': Nuclear Weapons and the Crisis in US-Canadian Relations, 1962–1963," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 16, 4 (2014): 5–34. Diefenbaker is viewed much less favourably in Andrew Richter, *Avoiding Armageddon: Canadian Military Strategy and Nuclear Weapons, 1950–1963* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002); and Sean Maloney, *Learning to Love the Bomb: Canada's Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007).
- On Canada-US relations generally, see Donald Barry and Duane Bratt, "Defense against Help: Explaining Canada-US Security Relations," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 38, 1 (2008): 63–89; Brian Bow, *The Politics of Linkage: Power, Interdependence, and Ideas in Canada-US Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009); Janice Cavell, "'Like Any Good Wife': Gender and Perceptions of Canadian Foreign Policy, 1945–1975," *International Journal* 63, 2 (2008): 385–403; and Asa McKercher, "Dealing with Diefenbaker: Canada-US Relations in 1958," *International Journal* 66, 4 (2011): 1043–60.
- 40 Philip Buckner, ed., *Canada and the End of Empire* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); Janice Cavell, "Suez and After: Canada and British Policy in the Middle East, 1956–1960," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 18, 1 (2007): 157–78; Asa McKercher, "Southern Exposure: Diefenbaker, Latin America, and the Organization of American States," *Canadian Historical Review* 93, 1 (2012): 57–80; Asa McKercher, "The Centre Cannot Hold: Canadian, Colonialism and the 'Afro-Asian Bloc' at the United Nations, 1960–62," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42, 2 (2014): 329–49; Asa McKercher, "Sound and Fury: Diefenbaker, Human Rights, and Canadian Foreign Policy," *Canadian Historical Review* 97, 2 (2016): 165–94; Kevin A. Spooner, "Just West of Neutral: Canadian 'Objectivity' and Peacekeeping during the Congo Crisis, 1960–61," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 43, 2 (2009): 303–36; Kevin A. Spooner, *Canada, the Congo Crisis and UN Peacekeeping, 1960–1964* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009); Ryan Touhey, "Dealing in Black and White: The Diefenbaker Government and the Cold War in South Asia 1957–1963," *Canadian Historical Review* 92, 3 (2011): 429–54; and Ryan Touhey, *Conflicting Visions: Canada and India in the Cold War World, 1946–76* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).
- 41 McKercher, "Half-hearted Response"; and Daniel Macfarlane, "Courting War over a Rubber Stamp: Canada and the 1961 Berlin Wall Crisis," *International Journal* 63, 3 (2008): 751–68. For a different evaluation of the Berlin crisis, see Timothy Andrews

- Sayle, "Canada, NATO, and the Berlin Crisis, 1961–1962: 'Slow-boil' or 'Pressure Cooker'?" *International Journal* 68, 2 (2012–13): 255–68.
- 42 Greg Donaghy, "Coming off the Gold Standard: Re-assessing the 'Golden Age' of Canadian Diplomacy" (lecture, Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy, 26 October 2005), <http://www.suezcrisis.ca/pdfs>; Adam Chapnick, "The Golden Age: A Canadian Foreign Policy Paradox," *International Journal* 64, 1 (2008–9): 205–21; Hector Mackenzie, "Golden Decade(s)? Reappraising Canada's International Relations in the 1940s and 1950s," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 23, 2 (2010): 179–206. On the varying temporal definitions of the golden age, see Mackenzie, "Golden Decade(s)," 180–82. For the most specific identification of Diefenbaker's 1957 victory as the end of the age, see Bothwell, *Canada and the United States*, 71. Bothwell's analysis is challenged in Cara Spittal, "The Diefenbaker Moment" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2011), 251.
- 43 Chapnick, "Golden Age," 206–9.
- 44 Adam Chapnick, "Peace, Order, and Good Government: The 'Conservative' Tradition in Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal* 60, 3 (2005): 635–50. See also Asa McKercher and Galen Roger Perras, "Introduction: Lester Pearson and Canadian External Affairs," in *Mike's World: Lester B. Pearson and Canadian External Affairs*, ed. McKercher and Perras (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 13.
- 45 For example, see Newman, *Renegade in Power*, 333; Smith, *Rogue Tory*, xii–xiii; Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion*, 134.

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