



The American Response to Canada Since 1776 (Canadian Series)

Gordon T. Stewart

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Canadians long have engaged in in-depth, wide-ranging discussions about their nation's relations with the United States. On the other hand, American citizens usually have been satisfied to accept a series of unexamined myths about their country's unchanging, benign partnership with the "neighbor to the north". Although such perceptions of uninterrupted, friendly relations with Canada may dominate American popular opinion, not to mention discussions in many American scholarly and political circles, they should not, according to Stewart, form the bases for long-term U.S. international economic, political, and cultural relations with Canada. Stewart describes and analyzes the evolution of U.S. policymaking and U.S. policy thinking toward Canada, from the tense and confrontational post-Revolutionary years to the signing of the Free Trade Agreement in 1988, to discover if there are any permanent characteristics of American policies and attitudes with respect to Canada. American policymakers were concerned for much of the period before World War II with Canada's role in the British empire, often regarded as threatening, or at least troubling, to developing U.S. hegemony in North America and even, in the late nineteenth century, to U.S. trade across the Pacific. A permanent goal of U.S. policymakers was to disengage Canada from that empire. They also thought that Canada's natural geographic and economic orientation was southward to the U.S., and policymakers were critical of Canadian efforts to construct an east- west economy. The Free Trade Agreement of 1988 which prepared the way for north-south lines of economic force, in this context, had been an objective of U.S. foreign policy since the founding of the republic in 1776. At the same time, however, these deep-seated U.S. goals were often undermined by domestic lobbies and political factors within the U.S., most evidently during the era of high tariffs from the 1860s to the 1930s when U.S. tariff policies actually encouraged a separate, imperially-backed economic and cultural direction in Canada. When the dramatic shift toward integration in trade, investment, defense and even popular culture began to take hold in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s in the wake of the Depression and World War II, American policymakers viewed themselves as working in harmony with underlying, "natural" converging economic, political and cultural trends recognized and accepted by their Canadian counterparts.

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