usefully told us more about physical culture in the army than we recognised before.

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A good book can have a bad title. Neither Robert Borden nor William Lyon Mackenzie King could rightly be called warlords, at least not without expecting laughter. Title aside, though, Warlords is a very good book. Well-researched, drawing upon a wealth of complex scholarship, the book synthesizes a host of ideas. It succinctly summarizes complex debates, all the while making you want to read more. This is not a monograph of narrow specialization. Warlords is a double biography of Canada’s two wartime prime ministers, Borden and King. Cook is sympathetic, but often critical. He is judicious, but not naïve. What kind of account of Borden and King do we get?

On Borden, Cook makes the case that, on at least some fronts, his reputation should be resuscitated. Robert Borden was an ‘unlikely leader’. After starting his legal career in the small town of Kentville, Nova Scotia, he was spotted by Sir Charles Tupper, the Conservative cabinet minister, and brought to Halifax to join the Tupper’s Law firm. Drawn into public life and into the work of the Conservative Party, Borden eventually went to Ottawa as an MP in 1896, though he was not especially happy in the capital. He kept planning to leave, but never did. When Borden was tapped by Tupper to be the next leader of the Conservative Party, many including Borden himself were surprised. ‘Even in an age when cronyism was the rule,’ Cook writes, ‘to choose his law partner to take his place seemed beyond the pale.’ (p. 14) Borden stayed on, only to keep losing. He offered to resign after the party’s loss to Laurier again in 1904 but the Conservatives, seeing no other viable alternatives, kept him on.

The Great War both saved and ruined Robert Borden. After winning the reciprocity election of 1911, his party struggled through the next several years. The economic depression that began in 1913 did not help, nor did the tricky issue of Canada’s contribution to the British Navy. In the Great War, Borden saw a clear cause—as did, initially, most Canadians. Britain was at war, and so was Canada. What Cook does exceedingly well in this book is to trace several different narrative threads through the wartime years. He shows how the progression of the war complicated many initial assumptions and hopes. If this is clear in retrospect, it can also be complicated to show and explain. Cook traces the growing tensions in Canada over the extent of the Canadian contribution. Perhaps surprisingly given that Cook is known for his military history, it is his account of the domestic politics that really shines. We get the riveting story of the growing jingoism on the home
front, on the criticism of the government from many different angles. We also get the incredible accounts of the important year of 1917: the formation of a Union government, the gerrymandering elections acts that allowed the government to turn the 1917 election into ‘trial by a jury of its own choosing’ (p. 112). Cook’s account of the aftermath of the imposition of conscription, including the tense Easter 1918 violence in Quebec is excellent. Set alongside this tale of domestic disharmony is the growth of a Canadian nationalism in the country, amongst the soldiers, and in Borden himself. Cook tells this familiar story convincingly.

Many have subsequently seen Borden as ‘coming down on the wrong side of history in pressing for conscription.’ (p. 356). Still, the reason Borden made this decision, his sympathy for the troops, his concern to make the nation’s contribution to the war as equitable and efficient as possible, are reasonable. ‘Borden made his choice,’ Cook concludes, ‘and it was the right one.’ (p. 357)

Oddly, as the book moves over to the Second World War, and to the next warlord, Cook then proceeds to also justify the actions of the King government, a government which took a very different course. *Warlords* summarizes a host of works on Mackenzie King and his wartime government. The account of King’s early years seems bumpier than that of Borden’s pre-prime ministerial life. This is likely because the scholarship on King is so much larger, and because one always feels the need to cover so much ground, including of course the ghosts, the girls and relations with mother. When we get to 1939 and head into the war, *Warlords* settles down again.

If Cook is critical of the King government’s failure to support the military during the late 1930s, he nonetheless turns around and explains how the policy of limited commitments of 1939 up to the spring of 1940 was likely the wisest of decisions, most in line with public sentiment. Cook defends the way in which the King government was drawn into the arms of the Americans on issue of trade, investment and defence planning. Would this have been different under any other prime minister? Cook thinks not. Cook also follows the logic of historians like Granatstein in emphasising King’s great achievement on the conscription issue. By constantly finding the middle ground, by appeasing all sides, pleasing none, for long enough, King avoided what he saw as the catastrophe of a rehash of the Union government of the previous war. Of course, the country did not come apart in the previous war: the Liberal party did. But Cook’s assessment is certainly the one most historians now give.

Cook is most critical of King on two fronts. First, he points out King’s failure to push for influence on the strategic use of the Canadian military forces. King found out about the D-Day landings only on the day itself. “King had avoided assuming a role in the military decision making in the mistaken belief that responsibility came with chains,’ Cook argues, ‘Canada had earned a right to be consulted and to be a part of the discussion. King abdicated without a fight.’ (p. 316)

In a related way, Cook repeatedly points out the extent to which both Borden and King didn’t think about the experiences of soldiers. In 1915, after the second battle at Ypres, in which the Canadians saw their first real action, and in which so many were killed, Borden seems not to have noticed, at least not if one goes
by his private records. So too with King. ‘King’s diary conspicuously lacks any observation related to the fighting overseas,’ Cook writes. ‘Given the detail and complexity of King’s diary, it is fair to say that not only were the soldiers not on his mind but he completely ignored them.’ (p. 329)

Such are the judgments of hindsight that matter to us now. Previous decades have had their own Bordens and their own Kings. We are not so much worried about Americanization in Canadian culture. Is it any wonder that our historians are likely now to go easy on King on this front. The same goes for King-Byng and conscription. Cook’s account is of our era.

But it is more than that. Warlords is the kind of book more academic historians should write: engaging, synthetic, emotive and inspiring. Like Cook’s other books, it traverses the line between academic and popular history. Grounded in a solid sense of the academic historiography, it nonetheless tells a fascinating story that many non-academics will want to read. It will also be incredibly useful in undergraduate teaching. Buy it, and use it—to enrich your lectures or to inspire discussion in seminars. Your students will thank you.

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In this fascinating book Claire Dolan analyses the documents left by the community of procureurs in the Parlement of Toulouse. Procureurs were legal officers who represented clients through their mastery of procedural form but who were forbidden from presenting legal arguments to the court, a function that was reserved for avocats (lawyers). In 2012 Dolan published an important study of procureurs in southern France during the Ancien Régime (Les Procureurs du Midi sous l’Ancien Régime) and readers will benefit from reading the two books together, but Délibérer à Toulouse works well on its own, being focused on the functioning of the community and its writing practices. The book seeks to understand how the rhetoric of unity that pervades the community’s self-image intersected with the interests, business practices and mentalities of the individual members that comprised it.

Délibérer à Toulouse demonstrates how much caution is required when historians analyze and attempt to understand the registers of early modern communities of all kinds. The registers were clearly prepared after the fact, and while the rules of transcription could vary as the elected officers changed, the registers never present a complete picture of what happened in meetings. There was a gradual process whereby the registers became increasingly complete and detailed, notably after a 1749 Parlement arrêt required them to record all deliberations. Even then, however, they are much more (and less) than an objective account.