

de certaines obsessions de l'auteur à disséquer des visées expansionnistes russes un peu partout et de trop nombreux raccourcis interprétatifs. Il reste à savoir si l'ouvrage recensé permettra une réinterprétation à long terme des responsabilités russes dans le déclenchement de la Grande Guerre, suivant le centenaire du début des hostilités. Ceci est fort probable, mais la nuance va s'imposer.

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SMITH, David E. – *Across the Aisle: Opposition in Canadian Politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013. Pp.228.

On June 22, 2015, the Reform Act, a private member's bill introduced by Conservative Member of Parliament Michael Chong, became law. The central piece of this legislation is a provision allowing individual MPs, with sufficient support, to force a party leadership review. Chong's bill was motivated by the widespread concern that individual parliamentarians were increasingly subject to the will of party leaders, resulting in their duty to represent their constituents being superseded by their role as party members. However, the Reform Act only represents the most recent expression of an increasingly dominant view in Canadian politics over the past half-century: that party politics have a caustic influence on democracy and must be countered as the first step to changing Canada's political culture.

It is this view and its effect on the functioning of parliamentary opposition that David E. Smith addresses in his new book *Across the Aisle: Opposition in Canadian Politics*. Smith focuses on how democratic opposition has functioned in Canada since Confederation. He specifically argues that, "government and opposition are parts of a shared community – Parliament – but that developments in Canadian politics over the past two decades have undermined that common bond" (p. x). This failure of politicians to maintain the common bond between opposition and government, and the subsequent relocation of opposition outside of parliament is harmful for Canadian democracy, as it degrades parliament's ability to function and leaves the government without an effective check on its power.

To make his argument, Smith begins by tracing the history of opposition in Canada. The first four of seven chapters of his book demarcate what Smith identifies as the four eras of oppositional politics in Canada. The first era begins with Confederation and ends in 1921; the second covers the period of Liberal dominance from 1921 to 1956; and the third extends from 1957 to 1993. Finally, the post 1993 period, culminating in the Stephen Harper-led Conservative majority in the 2011 general election, marks the end of the fourth era and a beginning of a fifth, identified by a decline in the perceived importance and legitimacy of opposition within Parliament. Smith then dedicates the remaining three chapters of the book

to explaining the decline of parliamentary opposition over the past twenty years, and identifies three major factors which have prevented Canada from developing and sustaining a tradition of effective opposition: the importance of regionalism in Canadian politics (particularly the West and Quebec); federalism and provincial governments as alternative sources of opposition; and finally, the declining influence of political parties, combined with a push for greater democratization of Parliament. Taken together, Smith argues that these factors have created the “perils of the opposition” by delegitimizing the opposition in the eyes of voters while rendering them less effective in actually opposing the government. For Smith, these factors represent the greatest problem facing Canadian politics in the coming years (p. 149).

The author’s combination of historical and contemporary analysis makes his book a necessary addition to scholarship in both Canadian history and political science. While scholars in both disciplines, including Walter Young, John Courtney and W.L. Morton, have written about specific political parties and their activities, Smith admirably bridges this body of literature into a unique discussion on the experience and theory of opposition in parliament. Throughout the book, Smith highlights the lack of research on the role of opposition at both the federal and provincial levels. Specifically, there has been a lack of research into the role of opposition at the provincial level. Smith notes the absence of any opposition parties in the NB legislature from 1987 to 1991, due to Frank McKenna and the Liberals’ sweep of all 48 seats, and highlights a lack of scholarship on the political effects of this situation (p. 137). Such gaps in analysis make it difficult to understand how the opposition influences - or fail to influence - the governing process at the provincial, and by extrapolation, the federal, levels of governance. Smith also highlights the need for comparative literature on opposition politics for countries with a Westminster System of government, specifically Australia. His book therefore identifies and addresses a crucial gap in scholarship at a national, but also international level.

One of the most important insights is Smith’s emphasis on how the “peril of the opposition” is linked to broader changes in Canadian democracy. Particularly, he argues that Canada has evolved from a “consociational” democracy, where the conventions of federalism and parliament are supreme, to a “contested” democracy, in which the people are seen as the supreme source of legitimacy and depicted as the real opposition to the powers of parliament. Smith begins by tracing the historical origins of this change in Canadian politics back to Mackenzie King’s tenure in office (p. 49). He then connects this historical trend to the attempts by the current Harper regime to craft a narrative of a government that is being stifled in its attempts to enact the people’s will by ambitious, self-interested parliamentarians. As Smith demonstrates, Harper most effectively employed this rhetoric during the “Coalition Crisis” of December 2008. Overall, the author’s ability to interweave historical and contemporary analysis is one of the strongest aspects of the book, and thoroughly grounds his use of political science theory in Canada’s past and present.

While the book's subject will interest many scholars, its brevity and very specific focus risk making the text inaccessible for non-specialists. Smith's time period, from Confederation through to the 2011 Federal General Election, means that the book covers a tremendous number of events and often relies on the reader's prior knowledge of issues as diverse as Borden's Wartime Unity Government through to the Bilingual and Bicultural Commission to fill in necessary details that are often crucial to his argument. Furthermore, when discussing seminal events in the history of opposition in Canada – such as the King-Byng Crisis – Smith only focuses on the specific aspects of the crisis that advance his argument and dismisses the rest as irrelevant to the current discussion. While such an approach allows for an efficient analysis of his subject matter, it also restricts the audience of the book to a certain subset of scholars already familiar with the contours of Canadian politics. Given the lack of scholarship on Canadian Opposition as a whole, as well as the potential for the book to appeal to international audiences, a broader contextualization of critical events would further strengthen the cross-discipline appeal of his book.

Overall, in *Across the Aisle*, David Smith has done an admirable job of delving into a previously unexplored facet of Canadian politics. Both historians and political scientists interested in Canada or formal politics in countries with Westminster-style governments will find many important insights in this book and an effective blending of historical and contemporary analysis. Given the current debates over the state of democracy in Canada, from the Reform Act to Senate reform, Smith's book provides valuable and timely insight. His defense of parliamentary opposition is much needed in a time when parliamentary politics as a whole is largely viewed with distrust. As Smith demonstrates, while people may yearn for a more cooperative model of government, our current Westminster-inspired system is based on conflict and checks on government power, the most important of these being an effective opposition in Parliament.

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SWYRIPA, Frances – *Storied Landscapes: Ethno-Religious Identity and the Canadian Prairies*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010. Pp. 296.

In *Storied Landscapes*, Frances Swyripa explores ethno-religious communities on the Canadian Prairies from the early days of European settlement through to the present. She moves beyond the traditional emphasis on settlement patterns and immigrant reception to probe issues of heritage and identity among prairie newcomers and their descendants. *Storied Landscapes* reveals that prairie landscapes were just that—storied. Through myths, symbols, commemorative traditions, and landmarks, settler peoples told narratives of their relationships with the land, their homelands, and their histories. In the telling and retelling of such