

From the Peripheries to the Core: Re-interpreting Canada's Historic Relations to Conceptualizations of the "Third World"

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Karen Dubinsky, Sean Mills, and Scott Rutherford (eds.), *Canada and the Third World: Overlapping Histories* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016)

Amal Madibbo (ed.), *Canada in Sudan, Sudan in Canada: Immigration, Conflict, and Reconstruction* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015)

Canada's historical relationship to the Global South has been multifaceted and continues to be so. That is the primary argument forwarded in the edited collection *Canada and The Third World: Overlapping Histories* (2016) and *Canada in Sudan, Sudan in Canada: Immigration, Conflict, And Reconstruction* (2015). The trope of "middle power" diplomacy has prevailed over analysis of the history of Canada's foreign relations and policy since the days of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson. However, pushing beyond conventional histories of Canadian foreign relations predicated on examinations of Canadian foreign policy objectives and outcomes, these two edited collections broaden the perimeters of studies of "foreign relations."

By interlacing examinations of cultural, economic (both private and public enterprise), political, and civil society ties between Canada and the myriad of nations in the global south often labeled as the "Third World," these two works revisit hallmark paradigms of historical analysis with fresh lenses. Moreover, with migration and mobility as key characteristics to the ongoing and ever-evolving relationships, the two collections illustrate the pervasive ways in which Canada and Canadians both influence and are influenced by bilateral ties to a large portion of the world.

Concepts of historical overlaps and intersections are useful metaphors for interpreting the multidimensional relationships that various Canadian governments, organizations, and individuals have developed with several nations in vast regions of the world. By and large, the Third World has traditionally been depicted as both economically and structurally challenged, and inherently inferior to Canada. Most histories of Canada's relations with countries comprising "the rest"—or not "the West"—have reified steadfast beliefs in Canada's scramble for middle power status as the sole determinant for Canada's relations in the post-World War II era. Canadian policies, business interests, and aid and development objectives all collectively signify the ways in which the Canadian state and peoples articulate their vision of their place in the world. Hence, another argument put forth in these works is that to date, histories of Canada's relationship(s) to the Global South have not done enough to scrutinize and/or problematize the bilateral elements to these relations. Subse-

quently, these two edited collections examine the ways in which Canadian history intersects and/or overlaps with that of several other countries within the paradigm of the Global South.

Admittedly, then, the term Global South is utilized more frequently throughout this review essay, in lieu of the highly problematic and contested term the “Third World.” Historians Karen Dubinsky, Sean Mills, and Scott Rutherford acknowledge the inherent controversy in the use of the term Third World, from the title of the edited collection to paradigms of analysis offered by the works within.¹ The politically charged term has been rightfully subject to much criticism over the course of the past two decades. As Dubinsky et al. point out, the Third World has become a “shorthand to stereotype people from outside of the West as inherently poor, corrupt, culturally deprived and trapped in sad meaningless lives.”² These deeply imbedded perceptions reinforce the justifications reiterated by “European colonizers to justify the domination of non-Western people and places.”³ However, the editors maintain that Vijay Prashad’s suggestion that the Third World was “a project and not a place” still stands true.⁴ They argue that the term Third World is rooted in a “political position against colonialism and imperialism,” rendering it “inextricable from the history of empire and the social and political movements that sought to challenge its power and legacies in the postwar period.”⁵ Therefore, they assert that the term carries an analytical and political meaning that terms such as “developing world” or “Global South” do not.⁶ Yet, in light of its long and embattled history, the term is inherently problematic and should continue to be so.

Nonetheless, Canada’s relations with the Third World are articulated as complex and historically rooted “entanglements” throughout the nine distinct chapters of *Canada and The Third World*. These entanglements are embedded into the daily lives of ordinary Canadians through the consumption of material goods, multiculturalism, migration, remittances, foreign policy and the actions of civil societies. It is inarguable then, that at present, Canada’s entanglements with the Global South permeate across several paradigms. However, the prevalence of contemporary relations generates the false impression that “Canada’s relationship to the Third World has a present but not a past.”⁷ Thus, this collection of works brings the historical foundations of several of these contemporary relations to the fore.

The first chapter, “Indigenous peoples, Colonialism and Canada,” by Scott Rutherford, takes an introspective look at Canada’s ongoing, long and troubling inequities in power relations. Rutherford’s overview of the “colonial project” as a history of assimilation and genocide, from the Indian Act to Residential Schools, predicates Canada’s ongoing geopolitical positionality as a settler-colonial nation.⁸ Rutherford’s argument is that “the attitudes and practices of Canadians outside of our borders have long been features that have also shaped our own local, regional, and national histories.”⁹ Canada’s troubling relations with its Indigenous peoples warrants incorporation into every examination of the history of the state’s relation-

ship to the world. However, the issue here is that the paradigm of the “Third World” as a project and not a place becomes muddled. The term the “Third World” is rooted in the events of the aftermath of World War II, and can be historically situated within the praxis of the establishment of a mid-twentieth-century new world order. The roots of the Canadian Colonial project precede the socio-political and socio-historical context of the origins of the term “Third World.” Thus, even though the alignments of the objectives of Indigenous political activism within Canada with those of activists the world over are implied throughout this chapter, the connections need to be made clearer. Hence, it is arguable that in spite of the similarities of the plights of the First Nations peoples in Canada, to those of many other Indigenous groups in the “Third World,” the formulation of a new vernacular term to articulate these experiences is warranted.

On the other hand, Barrington Walker’s chapter on “Immigration Policy, Colonization, and the Development of a White Canada” minces no words in delineating the ways in which historical conceptualizations of racial hierarchy and national belonging are mutually dependent clauses in articulations of belonging in and to Canada.¹⁰ Entrenched in an examination of official government policies from the Indian Act to the Immigration Act of 1962, the “polyvalent nature of race” is integral to Walker’s narration of the development of the Colonial Project.¹¹ Territorial dispossession of First Nations Peoples, and the prevalence of preferential settlement, immigration, and citizenship policies predicated on “race” inform Walker’s analysis.¹² It is clear that race is the historical lynchpin of Canadian articulations of identity both at home and abroad. However, here too, the connection to the “Third World” project or place is muddled. Given that this collection of works is primarily intended to elucidate these connections to undergraduate students, a much clearer connection to the concept is warranted by both Rutherford and Walker’s chapters.

Canada’s connections to the Third World are clearly articulated throughout the remaining chapters. The business of development, whether it be a *vis-à-vis* aid and/or neo-colonial business enterprises is a pillar of the nature of contemporary Canadian relations to the Global South. Canadian business interests abroad and the myriad of ethical, fiscal, societal and environmental implications of these relations are examined by Karen Dubinsky and Marc Epprecht in their chapter, “Canadian Business and the Business of Development in the “Third World.”” Moreover, Molly Kane explores the problematic ways in which the Canadian state has increasingly brought its foreign aid objectives into alignment with those of private companies. With a lucrative Canadian resource extraction industry growing roots across the globe, “Canada and The Third World: Development Aid” brings to the fore the inextricability of Canadian foreign interests from Canadian business. Evolving “from Missionaries to NGO’s,” Canada has been articulating a stance on the world stage for over a century.¹³ Foreign policy and diplomacy are thus closely intertwined with concepts of colonization, as they are intertwined with conceptualizations of decol-

onization and, arguably, neo-colonial policies.¹⁴

Of course, Canadian interests in the Global South have not been limited to business and/or acts of political diplomacy. Rather, Canada has also had a long history of military entanglements in foreign affairs. “The Somalia Affair,” a reprehensible marker of shameful Canadian engagements abroad is examined by Ian McKay and Jamie Swift to “crystallize three distinct ways of looking at Canada’s frequent post-1945 military interventions into the Third World.”¹⁵ In addition to the Canadian state’s military virility across the globe in the era post-1945, immigration would also bring home closer ties to the Global South. Hence, the transformation of Canada’s immigration framework is the subject of Laura Madokoro’s chapter, wherein she explores the ways in which the 1970s constituted a pivotal period in the “history of immigration and specifically refugee policy in Canada.”¹⁶ This flow of people, goods, ideas, policies, and histories is examined collectively by the contributors to *Canada and The Third World*. Exchanges which occur on multiple levels and elucidate the ways in the relations of Canada to the world are often bilateral.

The recently published edited collection *Canada in Sudan, Sudan in Canada: Immigration, Conflict, And Reconstruction* examines the bilateral nature of transnational relationships forged between Sudan and Canada, and vice-versa. Penned by scholars and experienced frontline workers engaged with research in both Sudan and Canada, this collection successfully examines a number of factors that have shaped the nature of the Sudanese community within Canada. Through an introduction to key social and political issues concerning Canada and the Sudan, the contributors effectively demonstrate the multilayered nature of both migration and settlement. One of the researchers’ outlined objectives is to explain the “root causes of conflict in Sudan and identify measures that could foster peace, stability, development and cooperation.”¹⁷

The strength of this collection is in the scope of the material presented. Through an interrogation of some key factors associated with Sudanese migration to Canada, and in some cases the return of these same migrants to Sudan, the collection invites readers to think of the process of migration as a multivariate and dynamic practice. Migrants do not cease to have a history upon migration, and often the full scope of their migratory experiences cannot be encapsulated in studies solely focused on their experiences of integration or assimilation into the Canadian social landscape. Martha Fanjoy’s chapter “There’s No Place Like Home(s): South Sudanese-Canadian Return Migration” effectively demonstrates this point in her examination of the correlations between identity, gender, displacement (particularly the impact of refugee resettlement), political circumstances and the search for purpose in establishing a “home” within any geographical locale. Through the lived experiences of her interview participants, readers feel the gravitas of both history and the present political and economic conditions in the subjects’ conceptualizations of home. For some migrants, escaping trauma and establishing a life of relative physical comforts is not enough to find purpose, but returning to the site of their

initial hardship to make a difference in living conditions can be.

To this end, Juli Finlay's chapter "To Cross the River: Refugee-Physicians and Their Mission to Return to Post-Conflict Sudan" disrupts the notion that all skilled migrants or refugees aim to flee their homelands in search of "better" opportunities. This is a notion that is perhaps inadvertently accentuated and/or implicit in studies focused on the failed integration experiences of skilled professionals, particularly with relation to medical practitioners in a Canadian context. Finlay's analysis of the experiences of doctors moving between Sudan, Cuba, and Canada aptly demonstrates that through their migratory experiences, the doctors were even more empowered to fulfill the original mandate of their program to "return home" and make a difference. This understudied phenomenon warrants further consideration, as it unsettles preexisting conceptualizations of the nature of "aid" provided by Western countries like Canada.

Too often, studies of migration to Canada solely focus on the migratory experience within the perimeters of the destination country. Where other studies have done much to illustrate transnational ties between the original "homeland" of some migrant groups and their new home within Canada, not many have successfully managed to historicize factors of out-migration and or the continued links to homeland within a single work. In contrast, *Canada in Sudan, Sudan in Canada* interrogates the implications of ideological and political shifts that led to Sudanese outmigration, examines the effects of return-migration and makes links between aid organizations and reconstruction within a single collection of works based on one African source country.

However, what the various authors have done in this collection is initiate a dialogue on the possibilities that may be pursued beyond their research. For instance, in the final chapter "Canada's Contribution to the Resolution of the Darfur Conflict" by Ashley Soleski and Amal Madibo, readers are able to glean insight into the wide-reaching impacts of Canada's foreign policy objectives. Through both a political and gendered lens, these two authors highlight the impact of Canadian engagement within the region that is bound to have long-term effects, including in the field of education, as a future mitigation technique for peaceful conflict resolution. That said, while the collection is strong on current migration challenges, it is silent on the past. Many of the authors addressed the history of colonialism in the Sudan region, but not twentieth-century involvements of Canada within the Sudan. As the title suggests, the aim of the collection is to illuminate the history of Canada in Sudan, Sudan in Canada, and as such future research can build on what these works have initiated, and can engage in further dialogue with previous works that have examined Canadian involvement in the Sudan. Works such as Peter Piggott's *Canada in Sudan: War Without Borders* (2009) and Roy McLaren's *Canadians on the Nile, 1882-1898: Being the Adventures of the Voyageurs on the Khartoum Relief Expedition and Other Exploits* (1978) provide necessary historical context for current issues. In the paradigm of Canada-Sudan relations, just as the authors disrupt the notion

of migration as a unilateral event or action, the collection could also do more to disrupt the steadfast notion of the “recency” of Canada-Sudan relations, especially through the lens of war and crisis.

In light of conflict, war, migration and mobility becoming key characteristics of the post-millennial global framework, edited collections such as *Canada and The Third World: Overlapping Histories* and *Canada In Sudan, Sudan In Canada: Immigration, Conflict, And Reconstruction* are necessary tools for interpreting both Canada’s contemporary and historic relationships to the world. In his chapter on “Popular Internationalism” in *Canada and The Third World*, Sean Mills offers what he calls a reconnaissance of some of the alternate sites where Canadians have engaged in the Third World through means other than the Canadian state and/or Canadian business interests.¹⁸ Mills asserts that “Popular Internationalism,” born out of the social movements of the 1960s, was informed at least in part by the “intellectual and political analysis that migrants from the Third World brought with them” during the late 1960s and 1970s.¹⁹ In essence, his chapter encapsulates the aims of both collections: to articulate the ways in which Canadian relations to the world—and particularly the “Third World”—are far more nuanced and multidirectional than is often depicted.

In his recent speech to the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau proclaimed that Canada is “re-engaging in global affairs through institutions like the United Nations.”²⁰ With global migration on the rise and nation states the world over fraught with issues precipitated by the mass mobility of millions of people, Canada has once again articulated a place in the world stage as a model haven and recipient of immigrants. Trudeau’s mantra that “We’re Canadian and we’re here to help” is arguably priming the General Assembly for Canada’s bid to win a temporary seat on the United Nations Security Council in the 2021-22 term.²¹ However, given the breadth of the aforesaid publications, his words have much historical resonance.

Trudeau further articulated that as Canadians “it doesn’t serve our interests—or the world’s—to pretend we’re not deeply affected by what happens beyond our borders.”²² He is correct. As the works reviewed demonstrate, Canada has a long history of being affected by what goes on outside of its borders, just as the state and its peoples are affected by what goes on within. The two collections reviewed in this essay illustrate the pervasive ways in which Canada and Canadians both influence and are influenced by bilateral ties to a large portion of the world. Canada’s historic and ongoing, ever-evolving relationships with the world are influenced by the ways in which the nation-state and its peoples articulate themselves. By pushing beyond the conventional parameters of Canadian foreign relations histories predicated on examinations of Canadian foreign policy objectives and outcomes, works such as these two edited collections expand analysis of Canada’s “foreign relations”, both at home and abroad.

NOTES

¹Karen Dubinsky, Sean Mills and Scott Rutherford, eds., *Canada and The Third World: Overlapping Histories* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 1.

²Ibid., 7.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 9.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., 3.

⁸Scott Rutherford, "Indigenous Peoples, Colonialism, and Canada," in *Canada and The Third World: Overlapping Histories*, eds. Karen Dubinsky, Sean Mills and Scott Rutherford (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 15.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Barrington Walker, "Immigration Policy, Colonization, and the Development of a White Canada," in *Canada and The Third World: Overlapping Histories*, eds. Karen Dubinsky, Sean Mills and Scott Rutherford (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 38.

¹¹Ibid., 37.

¹²Ibid., 54.

¹³The title of Historian Ruth Compton Brouwer's chapter in the collection.

¹⁴Historian David Webster's chapter "Foreign Policy, Diplomacy and Decolonization" examines the ways in which the Third World has had a continual presence in Canadian diplomacy, whether it be from the peripheries or the core, dependent on the prevailing issue at any given point in time.

¹⁵Ian McKay and Jamie Swift, "Military Intervention and Securing The Third World," in *Canada and The Third World: Overlapping Histories*, eds. Karen Dubinsky, Sean Mills and Scott Rutherford (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 195.

¹⁶Laura Madokoro, "A Decade of Change: Refugee Movements From The Global South and The Transformation of Canada's Immigration Framework," in *Canada and The Third World: Overlapping Histories*, eds. Karen Dubinsky, Sean Mills and Scott Rutherford (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 217.

¹⁷*Canada in Sudan, Sudan in Canada: Immigration, Conflict, and Reconstruction*. Amal Madibbo, ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015): 3.

¹⁸Sean Mills, "Popular Internationalism: Grassroots Exchange and Social Movements," in *Canada and The Third World: Overlapping Histories*, eds. Karen Dubinsky, Sean Mills and Scott Rutherford, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 246.

¹⁹Ibid., 247.

²⁰Matthew Kupfer, "Trudeau makes 1st major speech at UN as Canada bids for Security Council seat: 'We're Canadian and we're here to help': Trudeau tells UN General Assembly," CBC News, Posted: Sep 20, 2016. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/justin-trudeau-un-general-assembly-1.3759656>

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.