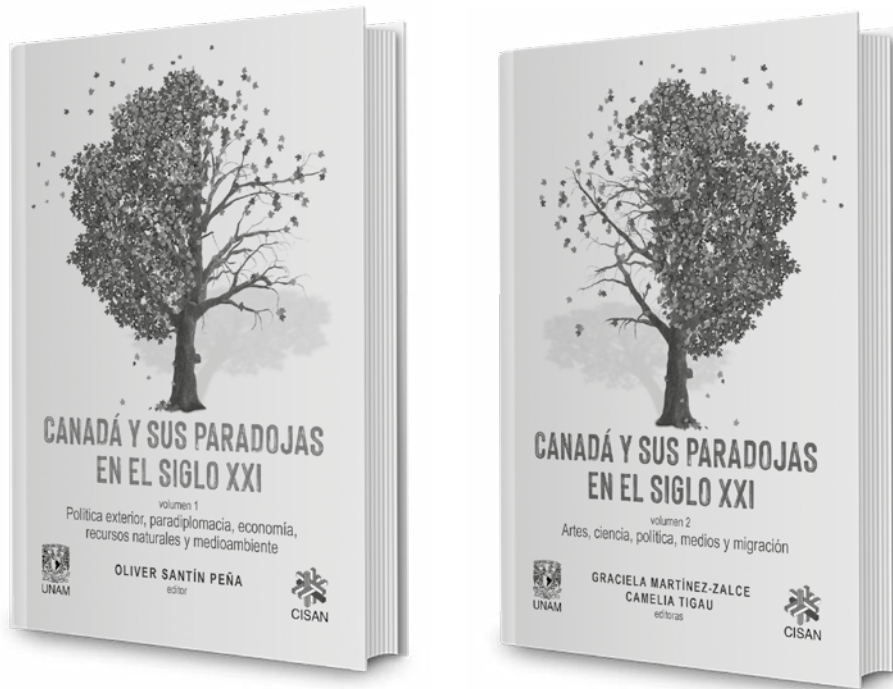


REVIEWS



Canadá y sus paradojas en el siglo XXI

(Canada and Its Paradoxes in the Twentieth-first Century)

Volume 1, *Política exterior, paradiplomacia, economía, recursos naturales y medioambiente*
(Foreign policy, Paradiplomacy, Economy, Natural Resources, and the Environment)

Oliver Santín Peña (editor)

CISAN-UNAM

Mexico City, 2021, 335 pp.

Volume 2, *Artes ciencia, política, medios y migración*
(The Arts, Science, Politics, the Media, and Migration)
Graciela Martínez-Zalce and Camelia Tigau (editors)

CISAN-UNAM

Mexico City, 2022, 295 pp.

Canadian studies have developed enormously in recent decades as an area of research. However, this has happened above all in Canada itself and in a few other, mainly English- or French-speaking countries. The National Autonomous University of Mexico's Center for Research on North America (CISAN) has done significant work to foster Canadian Studies in Mexico in Spanish, undoubtedly making the CISAN a leader in this area throughout Latin America in recent years.

One example of this are the two volumes reviewed here. The overall title, *Canada y sus paradojas en el siglo XXI*

(Canada and Its Paradoxes in the Twenty-first Century) includes twenty-one chapters by twenty-three authors from different Mexican and Canadian universities compiled by three CISAN researchers. This contribution to knowledge about Canada is original because its intention is to deal with the main contemporary problems facing this great nation from a critical perspective. That is, its different expert viewpoints analyze the situation from outside the official Canadian government positions or mainstream thinking that has studied Canada using theories and methodologies designed ad hoc to underline its virtues and

The authors attempt to understand the mystery of why this great country of North America still preserves its wide-ranging prestige as an avant-garde nation.

project a positive international image. The aim here is to present a line of research devised to do precisely the opposite: to think about Canada from the viewpoint of its contradictions and paradoxes in order to demystify and reveal some of the big differences that exist between the official discourse and reality.

There is no doubt that Canada today is very different from that of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, above all under the governments of Pierre Elliot Trudeau and Jean Chrétien, which fostered multiculturalism and centered their governmental efforts on implementing and strengthening a welfare state. This changed with the so-called “neo-conservative turn,” originating under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and surging forward and with its maximum expression under Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s government.

The main objective of the authors of this vast work is the analysis of the transformations that this neo-conservative turn brought in what had been the former liberal, progressive Canadian nation. They attempt to understand the mystery of why this great country of North America still preserves its wide-ranging prestige as an avant-garde nation in many fields, respectful of human rights, a world leader in favor of the environment and the fight against climate change, and the standard-bearer of inclusion with its famous multicultural policies. The authors’ analysis are carried out from a multidimensional perspective, covering almost all the issues that are important for contemporary Canada: foreign policy, multilateral international relations, paradiplomacy and the growing power of the provinces within the federation, and of course the environment, migration, economic development, the role of the Arctic in the definition of its public policies, the complex and often tense relationship with the First Peoples, the financialization of the economy and its impact on Canadian middle classes and families, and the importance of its diverse cultures and the complexities of their living together. They also look at the influence of Canada’s cultural, literary, and artistic production as tools for creating awareness; the option of a free market economy linked

to the most orthodox neoliberal, globalization-based orientations, increasingly distant from the social concerns and support for those most in need; as well as the repercussions of a bipartisan parliamentary political system that reduces the options for developing truly democratic pluralism, a political and electoral system that has promoted the uninterrupted alternation in office of the two hegemonic parties for almost two centuries, in many senses without big differences in their ways of governing and views of the world.

This collection’s approach is not only multidimensional; it also has the merit of being interdisciplinary, since it deals with the different issues from the points of view and methodologies of different disciplines: economics, political and social sciences, anthropology, cultural studies, and international relations, among others. This enriches the final result, offering us a work that not only covers a broad range of topics about our northernmost neighbor, but also does so with the virtue of scientific pluralism, since in its pages offer a widely diverse series of methodological, theoretical, and even ideological positions.

Another undoubted merit of this work is the noticeable deliberate intention on the part of all the authors to write and communicate their ideas clearly and didactically. This turns this collection of texts into an insuperable entryway into knowledge about Canada for the general public, and, in particular for students of all levels of higher education training in social sciences, the humanities, and international relations that include a view of this interesting, influential country in their study programs.

It would be impossible in this small space to comment on each of the twenty-one texts in these two volumes. However, we can say that the vast majority live up to the quality of the best research centers about regional studies. Also, many of them make truly original contributions to a profound understanding of Canadian reality, its paradoxes, and contradictions, as the volumes’ title indicates.

At the risk of being unfair, I will mention a few outstanding examples: one group of chapters focuses on analyzing human mobility and migration in Canada. This is a country that has not only fostered the entry of highly qualified immigrants, who contribute considerably to its economic development, offering them friendly, considerate treatment, but at the same time has encouraged and has certainly not impeded the over-exploitation and inhumane treatment of agricultural worker immigrants, above all the participants

in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP), in which most Mexican migrants participate. Several case studies look at this situation, which reflects the contradiction in Canada's immigration system, including its undoubtedly polemical asylum policies, which became stricter under Conservative governments and which Justin Trudeau has not improved. Two Canadian academics also study the undeniable changes in recent governments' foreign policy. As incredible as it may seem, they have departed from the country's multilateralist tradition, at times even leading United Nations peacekeeping missions, to align often uncritically with the positions of the more conservative countries on the spectrum of nations. Proof of this are the two defeats Canada recently suffered in attempting to become a member of the United Nations Security Council.

Another important aspect this book covers is the change in attitude of both Liberal and Conservative governments regarding First Nations. The authors that cover this issue do state that both Canadian government and society have always behaved in a discriminatory and even racist manner toward indigenous peoples, while simultaneously recognizing that at different times attempts have been made to incorporate them into national development, respecting their customs and historical traditions. However, they also point out that these attempts have been predominantly acritical and have included pressure for the peoples to renounce their ancestral beliefs and practices to "adapt" to the values and principles of white Canadian society. In this sense, the chapters that analyze the depth of the different kinds of indigenous resistance in different fields like literature, film, and documentaries are to be highly recommended.

The environment is perhaps one of the issues that best illustrates the consequences of the "conservative turn"

in Canada and the paradoxes it implies. Several texts deal with the contradictions involved in the current prime minister's attempt to develop a green economy and fight against climate change complying with the Paris Accords, at the same time that he supports the construction of oil pipelines and the exploitation of some of the dirtiest forms of energy in the western provinces through fracking.

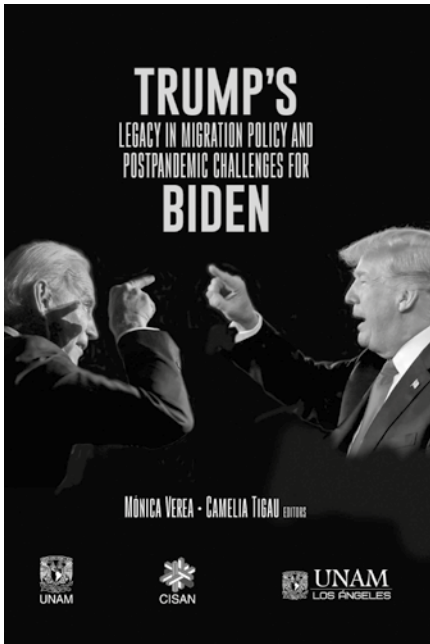
A careful reading of the whole work reveals that on economic and public policy issues, the differences between Liberals and Conservatives are shrinking more and more, to the point that on some matters today it is impossible to see any real differences. This could be a positive development if what had happened was that the two main forces in Canadian politics had moved to the political center. But that's not the case. Rather, what has happened is that they share policies in accordance with worldwide economic neoliberalism. The chapter that closes the second volume deals with this delicate issue, recognizing that while it is true that the electoral political system based on British parliamentarianism has fostered an important political and social stability that has allowed Canada to continue to be among the first places on the UN Human Development Index, it is also true that the "first-past-the-post" method of electing representatives has fostered a two-party system and the exclusion of other ideologies and political forces. This not only affects minorities in Canada, but also produces high levels of social and economic inequality.

This work is a magnificent opportunity for anyone who wants to know more about Canada in general and that also delves deeply into very diverse specific issues with investigative rigor and clarity. ■■■

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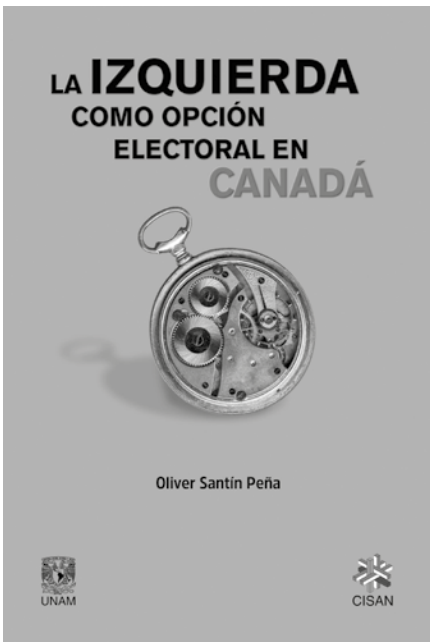
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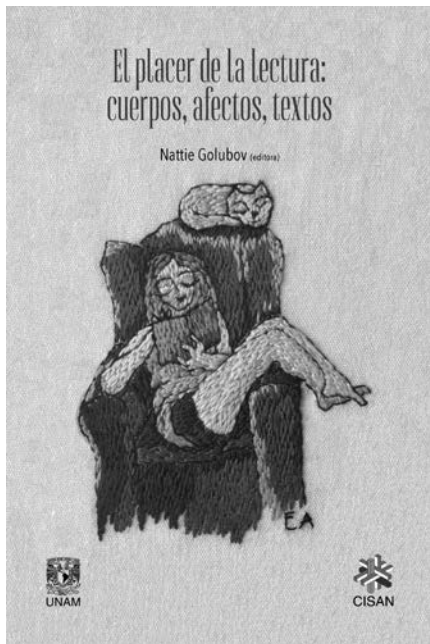


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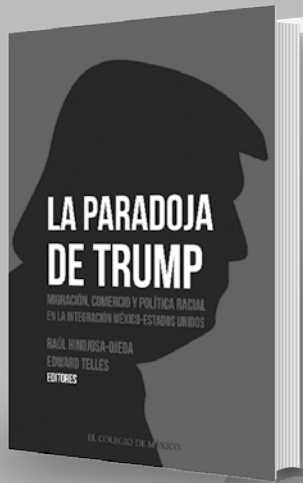
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LA PARADOJA DE TRUMP

MIGRACIÓN, COMERCIO Y POLÍTICA RACIAL
EN LA INTEGRACIÓN MÉXICO-ESTADOS UNIDOS

RAÚL HINOJOSA-OJEDA
EDUARDO TELLES
EDITORES

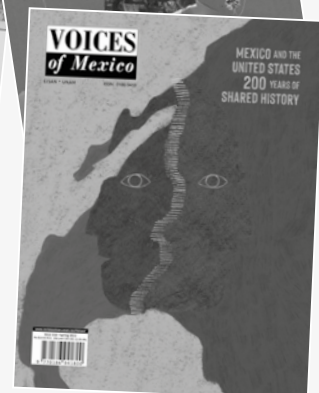
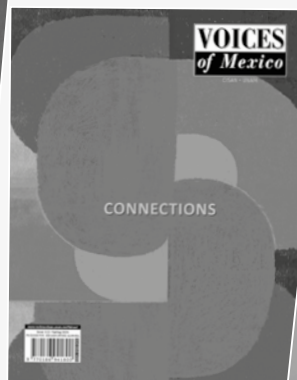
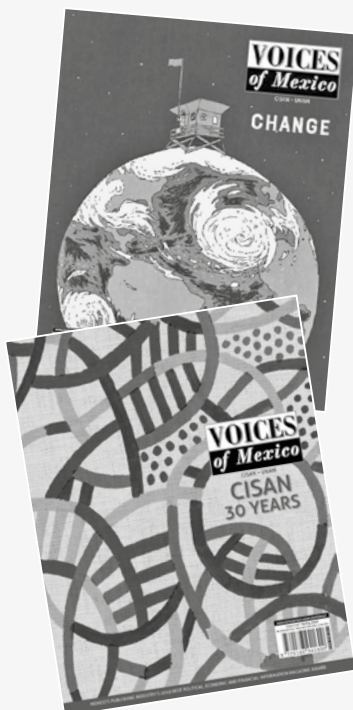
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