

these older foundations, which should be understood as “a form of ‘case law’ that makes up the legal traditions of Indigenous people”(2).

Jagodinsky herein makes several important interventions in the field of Indigenous and Western legal history. Her focus on territorial and state legal systems, rather than the federal records that are most often consulted in Indigenous historiography, opens questions about how access to land was facilitated outside of reservation boundaries. Historians of gender, borderlands, and colonialism will all find this work important in its careful investigation of the relationships between intimate local dynamics and state and federal laws. Jagodinsky’s vivid case studies will provide invaluable teaching tools to generate nuanced and engaging conversations around how individuals negotiated and challenged various legal orders and historic change. Her writing is at times very dense with detail, but by working through this density, the reader is rewarded with a rich picture of the interconnected personal and political relationships that influenced each of her case studies.

The extraordinary Twanas, Klallam, Salish, and Surem women with whom Jagodinsky opens her book encountered shape-shifting beings and were able to interpret the words of warning a talking tree brought to their communities. Likewise, the women to whom Jagodinsky introduces us played vital roles in “encountering and engendering change and conflict” (2) as they faced threatening and violent agents of change in their own lives. They returned to their children, their communities, and their lands bearing new strategies for survival.

Chandra Murdoch
University of Toronto

Andrew S. Thompson, *On the Side of the Angels: Canada and the United Nation Commission on Human Rights*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2017. Pp. ix + 193. \$89.95 cloth (ISBN 9780774835039); \$29.95 paper (ISBN 9780774835046).
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The history of human rights in Canadian foreign policy has been receiving increasing attention from scholars over the past decade. Andrew Thompson, an assistant professor at the University of Waterloo and the author of a previous study of the role of several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in building the contemporary Canadian human rights regime (Thompson, *In Defence of Principles: NGOs and Human Rights in Canada* [Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010]) has produced a valuable addition to this growing historical literature. Making special use of a wealth of archival

sources from the Canadian government—much of it gleaned through the painstaking use of Access to Information requests as well as from Britain—Thompson traces Canada's actions at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), which operated from 1946 to 2006. In doing so, he casts light on state-level policy making in regard to international human rights. Although state-centric studies are important and useful, his approach takes in a range of actors and issues beyond the state. Refreshingly, *On the Side of the Angels* is well written and clear of the jargon and blather that bogs down much writing by political scientists.

As the book's main title makes clear, many Canadians have a self-aggrandizing view both of Canada's reputation on human rights and of the country's involvement with the United Nations. Thompson shows how Ottawa's position on these two matters has been far from ideal. Yet in doing so, he avoids polemics and instead makes clear that Canada's advocacy of international human rights at the UNCHR—and more broadly—was a mixed bag. His statement “Canada was no different from any other country” (12) will serve as an important reminder for some who see Canada in exceptional terms. Still, there were periods in which Canadian officials did seek to advance the cause of universal rights, and in showcasing these efforts Thompson cautiously strikes a hopeful and welcome chord about the possibilities of the international rights regime.

Starting with the emergence of the UN rights regime in the wake of the Second World War, Thompson offers a chronological overview of Canada's involvement with the UNCHR. Each chapter is confined largely to the examination of a period in which Canada sat as a member on the commission. Thus, the book jumps around a bit, which some readers might find jarring, but which is an unavoidable result of this study's focus. Even so, some chapters would have benefitted from a bit more contextual framing with regard to domestic and international issues happening at the same time as the events analyzed in the book.

In any event, Thompson opens with an examination of Canada's response to the creation of the commission as well as the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As is well known among Canadian human rights scholars, but less well known among the broader Canadian public, at the outset of the postwar era and for several decades thereafter, Ottawa took a dim view of international human rights. Instead, the Canadian government's preference was to stick by its allies, an important consideration in a world frightened by the Cold War and upended by decolonization. Yet as Thompson shows, this Canadian inertia was not uniform. Moreover, although there were notable instances of Canadian hostility to the UNCHR, especially when rights violations in Canada were brought into the limelight, Canadian aversion to the commission and UN action on human rights began to wane by the mid-1970s.

Throughout, Thompson showcases how Canadian diplomats contributed—sometimes successfully, sometimes not—to the day-to-day work of building

the international human rights regime. Much of this diplomatic haggling was unglamorous, garnering little in the way of accolades or publicity. Yet these efforts proved necessary to the global legitimacy of international human rights and are a testament to “what is possible with creative diplomacy and political will, particularly in a highly politicized and troubled forum in which military might and economic power are not preconditions of influence” (13).

Beyond the cut and thrust of diplomatic haggling over draft conventions and resolutions, an interesting aspect of Thompson’s study is how he maps Canadian government officials’ fears concerning Canada’s own reputation abroad. Canada was far from perfect, particularly in its treatment of Indigenous peoples, and Thompson provides a welcome emphasis on the extent to which international human rights are a two-way street. Given current events, thoughtful readers will likely find much to ponder over in terms of the Canadian government’s response to Indigenous activists’ efforts to achieve international legal protections, notably in the recognition of their right to self-determination.

For non-Canadianists, the value of this book is in its treatment of the UNCHR and in what this discussion adds to the ongoing debate about the nature and timing of the “human rights revolution.” Overall, Thompson charts the ups and downs—and eventual collapse—of the UNCHR. He does so from the vantage point of a middle power, whose officials were often frustrated by the inaction of the great powers and by the seeming overactivity of the smaller states of the Global South. In sum, *On the Side of the Angels* is a detailed and well-researched analysis that marks an important addition to the growing history of Canadian international human rights and the human rights revolution more generally.

Asa McKercher

Royal Military College of Canada
