E. Mancke, “Early Modern Imperial Governance and the Origins of Canadian Political Culture,” *CJPS* 32:1 (1999)

**Overview**

For the last 3 decades, scholars of Cdn political culture have favoured ideological explanations for state formation with the starting point being the American Revolution and Loyalist resettlement in BNA. The article challenges the ideological bias and the late 18th century chronology through a reassessment of early modern developments in the British Imperial State. It shows that many of the institutional features associated with the state in British North America and later Canada – strong executives and weak assemblies, Crown control of land and natural resources, parliamentary funding of colonial development and accommodation of non-British subjects – were all institutionalized in the imperial state before the American Revolution and before the arrival of significant numbers of ethnically British settlers to Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Quebec.

**Background**

* Horowitz’s argument – in Canada, the “feudal” or tory legacy of Loyalist thought explains why Cdns are deferential, why they believe in “peace, order, and good government” and why they have been more receptive to a strong state, especially with socialist leanings, than have their US neighbours
* Many have challenged Horowitz’s understanding of Cdn political culture, however, they have left his underlying formulation of the problem largely intact. These studies, from Horowitz onwards, rest on three interrelated assumptions:

1. Within the colonies and territories that became the state of Canada, political culture began with the Loyalists
   * + For Horowitz, Loyalists represent the “point of departure” for the divergence in Cdn and American political cultures
2. Pre-1783 influences on Cdn political culture were from the British colonies that rebelled, that is, from the former homes of the Loyalists
   * + By making Cdn political culture a fragment of colonial American political culture, this second assumption leaves little interpretive room for significant metropolitan and imperial components
3. Canadian state formation can be best understood as an outgrowth of post-1783 ideology

* This paper challenges the validity and continued utility of these assumptions – offering an alternative perspective that draws on the founding influences of metropolitan-determined institutions in defining British North American and then Canadian political cultures and state formation. It argues that over the 18th century, the British government, often in reaction to centrifugal developments in the colonies from New Hampshire to South Carolina, established many of the constitutional and institutional structures for a strong state in the colonies and territories that later became Canada. The decisions for most developments originated in Britain, and were implemented by colonial officials ***before*** the arrival of significant numbers of British settlers. Thus, post-1783 developments in British North American ideology found expression within colonial institutional and constitutional frameworks that had been determined in Britain by governments willing to use the state in the interest of the empire.

**Conclusion**

Canada’s statist orientation is not a development that can be attributed to the Loyalists or to specific ideologies in British North America. Strong state development was an integral part of political cultures from Newfoundland to BC. Over the 19th century, each colony negotiated its own relationship with the imperial state and with the institutional arrangements within each colony. However much Sir John A Macdonald wanted a strong centralized government, Ottawa did not replace London, and the Privy Council legitimated the distinctive powers that provinces brought with them into Confederation