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Frenemy Nations: Love and Hate Between Neighbo(u)ring States

Mary Soderstrom
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Even when nations and states share geographical boundaries, they are often very different places, writes Mary Soderstrom in *Frenemy Nations*. Indeed, the book argues that boundaries are often created in an arbitrary way that ignores factors like Indigenous history, migration, and culture that help to direct their relations with their neighbors.

Exploring the variables that affect economic and cultural development and what they mean for relationships between bordering entities, the text includes thorough descriptions of the history and politics of industrial and developing nations, as well as stories of trips to such places. These include Tunisia's progressive majority, which encouraged the start of the 2011 Arab Spring; and Algeria, Tunisia's conservative neighbor, which oppressed its citizens at the same time. Scotland and Ireland are another interesting study in contrasts: though united by Christian roots and the Gaelic language, Scotland remained free from English colonization and experienced economic prosperity that was not enjoyed in Ireland.

There's a personal element to the text, which relates that Soderstrom and her husband migrated from California to Montreal in 1968. Stories about her adjustment to the new country lighten its sometimes dense work. Comparing the US and Canada, Soderstrom covers Canadian abuses of First Nations people but maintains that Canada has not demonstrated the enduring racism found in the US.

Canadian and US relations are detailed more than the other comparisons, and the text is at its most illuminating in describing life in Soderstrom's home turf. The book's consideration of how nations evolve, and what those evolutions mean for residents, is engaging. The book does not extrapolate its findings beyond the nations investigated here.

Frenemy Nations is a brisk, lively investigation of some twin nations and states, how they evolved, and what their changes meant for their external relations.

KARL HELICHER (November / December 2019)

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