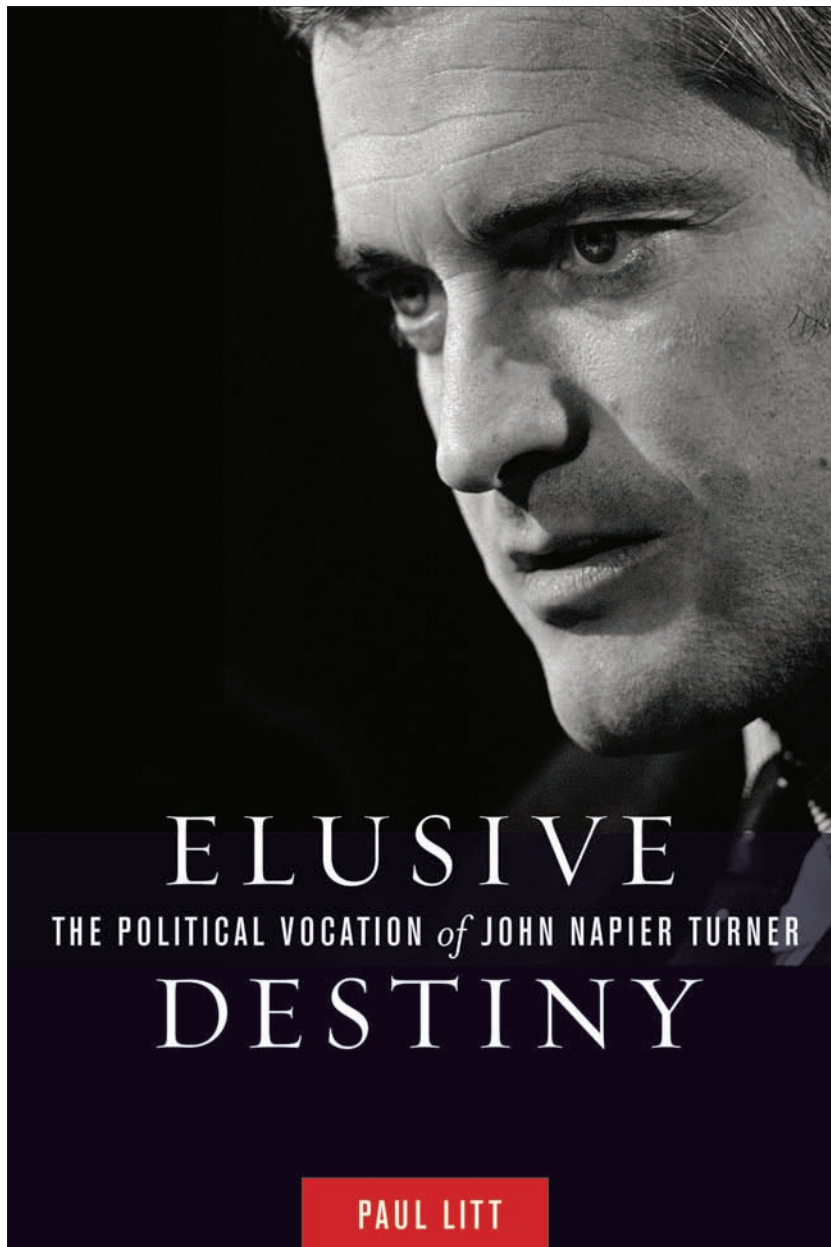


MEDIA KIT

NEW BOOK RELEASE FROM UBC PRESS

ELUSIVE DESTINY

The Political Vocation of John Napier Turner
Paul Litt



UBC Press

.....
celebrating
40 years
.....

thought that counts

TWITTER: @UBCPRESS

FACEBOOK: UBC PRESS

WWW.UBCPRESS.CA

CONTACT: KERRY KILMARTIN • EMAIL: [KILMARTIN@UBCPRESS.CA](mailto:kilmartin@ubcpres.ca) • TEL: 604.822.8244 • WEB SITE: WWW.UBCPRESS.CA

UBC PRESS • 2029 WEST MALL, VANCOUVER, BC V6T 1Z2 • 443 RHODES AVENUE, TORONTO, ON M4L 3A6



THE BEST POLITICAL BOOK OF THE SEASON

Biography Reveals Untold Story of John Turner and Charts Culture of Liberal Rivalries

If timing is everything, was John Turner doomed from the start? A young, successful Liberal politician, he was the “prime minister in waiting.” At least until Trudeau nabbed the spotlight, dazzling voters and pundits alike. Then, after an eight-year absence from politics and triumphant return, a comeback was derailed by vicious Liberal Party infighting and political gaffes, culminating in the 1984 televised election debate. Brian Mulroney’s finger-pointing indictment of Turner’s broad patronage appointments: “You had an option, sir. You could have said I’m not going to do it,” stunned the nation, and heralded the end of John Turner’s political run.

John Napier Turner served as Prime Minister for only 79 days.

But there was more to John Turner than the election failures indicate, much more. In *Elusive Destiny: The Political Vocation of John Napier Turner* his remarkable, and remarkably candid, story is told. During decades of roiling politics, the FLQ crisis, abortion debates, stagflation, the gay rights movement, foreign relations with Nixon, the Official Languages Act, and Meech Lake, John Turner’s decisions, speeches, and actions—as Minister of Justice, Minister of Finance, and as Prime Minister—were decisive. This political biography extraordinaire reveals a progressive thinker, a civil rights advocate, a canny political manager—and a man with faults. Above all, it profiles a leader who has a profound dedication to Canada, a dedication never more evident than during his impassioned defence of Canadian sovereignty during the free trade election of 1988.

Historian Paul Litt charts the meteoric rise and fall of John Turner, exposing the inner workings of the Liberal Party during its heyday, devastation, and rebuilding.

The cast of political characters is iconic of the time: Marc Lalonde, Mitchell Sharp, Keith Davey, Robert Bourassa, Allan MacEachern, André Ouellet, Iona Campagnolo, and Paul Martin, among others. But it is Turner’s tempestuous relationship with Trudeau and the calculating machinations of Jean Chrétien that dominate the narrative. Here are the origins of the catastrophic leadership rivalries and competing camps that have come to characterize the Liberal Party.

Based on extensive interviews—many with The Right Honourable John Turner himself—this superbly written work shows that the right person for the job is not always the person chosen. Turner was dubbed, incorrectly, as “yesterday’s man.” This meticulous biography persuades that John Napier Turner could have been the Liberal Party’s best promise for an ongoing tomorrow.

TWITTER: @UBCPRESS
FACEBOOK: UBC PRESS
WWW.UBCPRESS.CA

AUTHOR BIO



PAUL LITT is a historian of twentieth-century Canada cross-appointed to the Department of History and the School of Canadian Studies at Carleton University, where he currently serves as director of the M.A. program in public history. He has worked as a historian for the Ontario Heritage Foundation (now the Ontario Heritage Trust), served as a policy advisor at the Ontario Ministry of Culture, and conducted a variety of history projects on a contract basis. His previous books include *The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission*, a study of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (1949-51), and *Isotopes and Innovation*, a history of the former Commercial Products Division of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (now MDS Nordion), once the leading international marketer of medical radioisotopes.



UBC Press

.....
celebrating
40 years
.....

thought that counts

TWITTER: @UBCPRESS
FACEBOOK: UBC PRESS
WWW.UBCPRESS.CA

CONTACT: KERRY KILMARTIN • EMAIL: [KILMARTIN@UBCPRESS.CA](mailto:kilmartin@ubcpres.ca) • TEL: 604.822.8244 • WEB SITE: WWW.UBCPRESS.CA

UBC PRESS • 2029 WEST MALL, VANCOUVER, BC V6T 1Z2 • 443 RHODES AVENUE, TORONTO, ON M4L 3A6

1. Most Canadians recall John Turner from the 1980s as an embattled Liberal leader who lost two elections to Brian Mulroney and had problems controlling his own party. What does this biography add to the historical record?

Turner's time as Liberal leader was his second go-round in Canadian politics. His first was far more successful. He was a force in federal politics before Trudeau even considered running for office.

He had all the makings of a great political leader – he had been a Rhodes scholar and Olympic athlete, as well as a successful lawyer. He was bilingual and had political bases in the West, where he'd gone to university, and in Montreal, where he practiced law and was first elected to Parliament. It was expected that he would be prime minister one day.

He might have won the Liberal leadership in 1968, or soon thereafter, had Trudeau not won.

From 1968 to 1975 he was “the best minister of justice since Confederation,” then, amazingly, a successful finance minister, despite holding that office during the energy crisis, stagflation, and the international financial convulsions.

He was the most powerful politician in the country, aside from Trudeau, and more popular than Trudeau in many parts of the country. In partnership with Trudeau, he was the Anglo half of the kind of French-English leadership alliance that has historically underpinned the most successful Canadian governments.

2. Why did Turner resign in 1975?

Trudeau clearly wasn't going anywhere. The top job wasn't open.

Turner found himself increasingly at odds with the rest of cabinet over uncontrolled spending, the bureaucratization of decision making under Trudeau, and the government's failure to build bridges with western Canada and the business community.

If Turner stayed, he worried that he would lose political capital as a result of his association with an increasingly unpopular government. He didn't want to become just another careerist political hack.

TWITTER: @UBCPRESS
FACEBOOK: UBC PRESS
WWW.UBCPRESS.CA



3. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Turner was the fair-haired boy, a great leader waiting in the wings who would replace Trudeau, restore the Liberals' popularity, and continue the party's dynasty. Instead, he lost in an election landslide to Brian Mulroney. What went wrong?

The myth was overblown. Turner was supposed to be the answer to every problem and frustration people had with Trudeau. Their expectations were impossibly high.

Then, when Turner returned, he was rusty. Worse, he appeared wooden and ill at ease on TV. Canadians, accustomed to Trudeau's charisma, were disappointed. They had become accustomed to having an actor as the nation's figurehead.

Turner wanted to set a new tone for Canadian politics—after all, people told him they were fed up with Trudeau's arrogance. But he ran into trouble whenever he tried to modify, however slightly, any of Trudeau's policies. For example, official languages (Manitoba and Quebec); the Constitution (Meech Lake); and left-liberal social spending (the 1984 election). The late 1960s, when Trudeau came to power, saw the high tide of Canadian nationalism: Trudeau's policies were imprinted into the national identity.

4. In the book's introduction, you write that John Turner was "the right man at the wrong time." Can you elaborate?

During Turner's time in politics, television became influential in politics, Turner was not good on TV.

His image was right for the 1950s and early 1960s, but, while the cultural radicalism of the late '60s shifted fashion and politics left, Turner's image as a staid junior-executive remained.

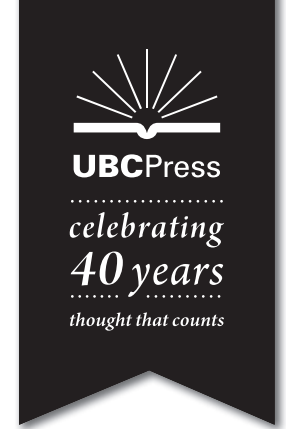
Finally, his career, unfortunately, overlapped with Trudeau's.

5. How did Canadian political culture change during Turner's time?

Turner represented a style of leadership that had maintained national unity and kept the Liberals in power for most of the twentieth century. This style managed Canada's diverse regions, cultures, and political interests by avoiding divisive issues, consulting widely, and crafting compromises. Trudeau, in contrast, had his own firm principles and liked to get his own way.

TWITTER: @UBCPRESS
FACEBOOK: UBC PRESS
WWW.UBCPRESS.CA

TALKING POINTS



TWITTER: @UBCPRESS
FACEBOOK: UBC PRESS
WWW.UBCPRESS.CA

The Trudeau Liberals leaned to the left and ran on issues that appealed to women, immigrants, and the poor; Turner preferred a more balanced approach that offered something for everyone.

Media and celebrity politics came to matter more than the eternal verities of Canadian political culture. Trudeau used his star power to sell his agenda.

6. How did Turner's media performance affect his political career?

Trudeau's fabled charisma, and his ability to come across well on TV, underpinned his electoral success. He was a relative political newcomer when he was first elected.

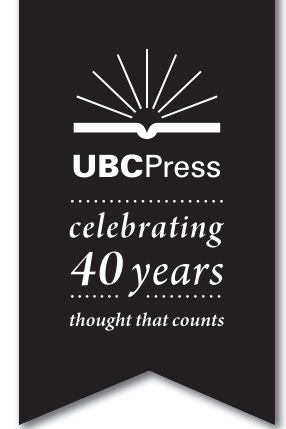
Turner, however, performed poorly on TV, and the media pounced on his "colourless" personality. He thought that the House of Commons was the centre of the political action and that his focus should be there. Thus, he failed to realize that the national media was the main forum for modern politics. He naively thought that if he did his job well, good publicity would follow. He once said, "I don't think I should have to be an actor." He was wrong.

This was demonstrated during the free-trade election campaign in 1988. An election fought on an issue vital to the country's future was decided by the Conservatives' personal attacks on Turner, attacks that fueled voters' doubts about his character.

7. Are politicians, by-and-large, elected based solely on how they come across in the media?

Canadians are no doubt influenced by party's platforms, but they also believe that they can know and judge a politician by what they see of them on TV. It is the simplest and most instinctual basis for deciding how to vote.

What happened to Turner happened again to Michael Ignatieff and Stephane Dion. Both are very intelligent and capable men who couldn't capture the attention or respect of voters because they failed to project a compelling, attractive image during prime time.



TWITTER: @UBCPRESS
FACEBOOK: UBC PRESS
WWW.UBCPRESS.CA

However, the chemistry between a politician and an audience is unpredictable. This is the problem with relying on a leader's image to carry a party. The strategy can backfire. The Liberals came to depend too much on having a popular leader, at the expense of having any clear party brand. Harper is no ball of fire on TV, but at least we know what he stands for.

8. Can the Liberal party's current problems be traced back to the Turner period?

Yes, partly due to the personalities, and partly due to the principles:

- Personalities: The Liberal Party has been characterized by leadership rivalries. The Turner/Trudeau rivalry mutated into the Turner/Chretien rivalry and later the Chretien/Martin rivalry.
- Principles: Being, arguably, centralist hardline (the 1982 constitution, subsequent constitutional deals and referenda on separation, the sponsorship scandal included) has resulted in Quebec leaving the party behind.

9. Are the Liberals finished as a political force in Canada?

No. The pundits were saying the same thing in 1984 when the Liberals were reduced to 40 seats, but Turner brought the party back.

There are many Canadians who are centrist and balanced in their political views and feel more strongly about the Liberals now than they did when their presence on the political scene could be taken for granted.

This interlude should allow the Liberals to organize – as Turner did between 1984 and 1988 – and allow the emergence of a new generation of leadership. It also comes down to money: business interests and the wealthy are likely to support the Liberals, a more palatable alternative government, than they are the NDP.

Excerpts from the Introduction and Conclusion

“John Turner’s generation was the last to grow up before the advent of television. His middle-class upbringing in pre-war Ottawa was shaped by family, school, and the Catholic Church. They imbued residual Victorian values of duty, honour, and public service, then cast him into an exemplary role in a rapidly changing modern world. Turner played by the rules and excelled. He won a Rhodes Scholarship in the late 1940s, became a successful lawyer in Montreal in the 1950s, a rising star of national politics in the 1960s, and a powerful Cabinet minister in the 1970s. His resignation as minister of finance in 1975 was a serious blow to the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau. Everyone said he was simply preparing, waiting, for the next step: some day, some day soon, he would be prime minister.”
— from the Introduction

“Turner’s glorious opposition to free trade during the 1988 election offered Canadians an alternative to wholesale continental integration. He lost that battle but won an enduring place in history by making the case for a more independent Canada. The leading anglophone Liberal of the late twentieth century, John Turner deserves to be remembered for more than the frustrations he encountered in the final chapter of his career. His destiny was elusive: his legacy, substantial.”
— from the Introduction

“And so it came to pass. Trudeau’s 1968 ascension to the leadership was a triumph of image over the experience and organization of other candidates. The same approach worked for him in national elections -- so well, in fact, that he had little need for the Liberal Party electoral machine in subsequent campaigns. Trudeau came across very well on television, not least because he displayed contempt for it. Turner was his generation’s star apprentice in the Liberal art of managing a heterogeneous federal state through brokerage politics, but, as the celebrity figurehead of an imagined nation, Trudeau proved to be more electable. His vision of Canada, which puzzled Turner, was of a piece. Like Jean Baudrillard’s simulacrum, it was a perfect copy of a non-existent original, yet no less influential for its detachment from reality.”
— from the Conclusion

“There was yet another way in which the Trudeau legacy plagued Turner. Trudeau, a charismatic figure with a bold vision, established a model of leadership against which Turner compared poorly. The events of 1984 suggested that, though Canadians wished to get rid of Trudeau, they wanted to replace him with another Trudeau insofar as they sought a forceful, engaging television performer. Turner was not that type, although initially he was represented as that type. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the media mythologized him as a suitable celebrity replacement for Trudeau. When it became evident on his return that the myth was inflated, the media blamed him rather than themselves for the gap between promise and performance.”
— from the Conclusion

TWITTER: @UBCPRESS
FACEBOOK: UBC PRESS
WWW.UBCPRESS.CA

EXCERPTS

“Curiously, Turner was also cursed by his good looks. A widespread suspicion of the establishment man in post-1960s popular culture underlay journalists’ perception of Turner as a myth in need of debunking. The new cultural ideal was the anti-hero who projected an ironic tone, cynicism about traditional moral verities, and self-consciousness about role playing in a game. Turner looked the part of the modern hero, opening himself up to ridicule as a Roger Ramjet type in an era when Ratso Rizzo was seen as more authentic. The private Turner was self-aware with a rich sense of irony, but he took public service too seriously to show this side of himself on television. The importance of not being earnest was lost on him.”

— from the Conclusion



UBC Press

.....
celebrating
40 years

.....
thought that counts

TWITTER: @UBCPRESS

FACEBOOK: UBC PRESS

WWW.UBCPRESS.CA

MILESTONES

John Napier Turner

Canadian track champion, 100 and 200 yd. events, 1948

Rhodes Scholar, British Columbia, 1949

Stikeman Elliott, Montreal, 1954-1962

MP for St. Lawrence-St. George, 1962-1968

Minister without Portfolio, 1965

Acting Registrar General, 1966-67

Registrar General, 1967-68

Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, 1968

MP for Ottawa Carleton, 1968-1976

Minister of Justice, 1968-1972

Minister of Finance, 1972-1975

McMillan Binch, Toronto, 1975-1984

Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, 1984-1990

Prime Minister, 1984

MP for Vancouver Quadra, 1984-1993

Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, 1984-1990

Miller Thomson, Toronto, 1990-present



UBCPress

.....
celebrating
40 years

.....
thought that counts

TWITTER: @UBCPRESS

FACEBOOK: UBC PRESS

WWW.UBCPRESS.CA

ENDORSEMENTS



UBC Press

celebrating
40 years

thought that counts

There is much in this biography that I witnessed personally – from John Turner’s friendship with my father to his very successful tenure as finance minister; from his leadership of the Liberal Party to his integrity, his belief in the political process, and his love of country. There is also much that I viewed only from afar. The insights to be gained from reading this book will be important to anyone interested in the events and debates that were defining moments in the evolution of postwar Canada. John Turner’s is a life well worth knowing and this fascinating book is well worth reading.

– The Right Honourable **Paul Martin**

This is an important book, presenting not only a former prime minister but also a man who was at the centre of many of the defining issues of the 1980s in Canada, including Meech Lake and the free trade debates. The narrative is compelling and contains rich new material of interest to scholars and general readers alike. Clearly John Turner is a man who found himself in the right place at the wrong time – brought down partly by personal failings, but more significantly by a combination of bad luck and the deliberate acts of rivals.

– **Brooke Jeffrey**, former Liberal adviser and author of
Divided Loyalties: The Liberal Party of Canada, 1984-2008

A fascinating and compelling political biography of an exceptional Canadian, scrupulously researched and elegantly written. John Turner had a profound impact on our political history, and the telling of his story illuminates our past, helps us understand our present, and sheds light on the challenges of the future.

– The Honourable **Irwin Cotler**, Member of Parliament,
former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

TWITTER: @UBCPRESS
FACEBOOK: UBC PRESS
WWW.UBCPRESS.CA