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THÈMES CANADIENS

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THE UNEASY STATE OF CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS



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INTRODUCTION

TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF A DISORIENTING MOMENT IN THE HISTORY OF CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

RANDY BOSWELL

Randy Boswell is a journalism professor at Carleton University and a former senior national writer with Postmedia News who covered politics, science and culture while developing a unique specialization in stories about Canadian history. He has served as guest editor of numerous volumes of *Canadian Issues/Thèmes Canadiens* for the Association for Canadian Studies, including this present edition of the ACS's flagship publication.

At the present moment of extreme disruption in Canada-U.S. relations, with a trade war in full flame and the American president musing about annexing Canada as a "51st state," a storm-tossed Canadian mind searches for a place of mooring. My thoughts return to the days and weeks after the 9/11 terror attacks of 2001, hardly a time of calm waters in the world but a reminder of how Canada's metaphorical posture towards the U.S. was once "shoulder to shoulder" rather than "elbows up."

Remember the hospitality of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador towards so many stranded American airline passengers, the Canadians' instinctive act of friendship at the heart of the smash musical *Come from Away*. Remember how then-foreign minister John Manley was widely hailed - including in a *Time* cover story about Canada's "newsmaker of the year" - for so eloquently articulating in the midst of that epic

crisis this country's deep ties and unalloyed solidarity with the stricken nation to the south.

Elevated to deputy prime minister for his skillful management of the crucial Canada-U.S. file in those dark days - for his impressive ability to "orchestrate a transformative moment in Canada's history," as *Time* put it - Manley embodied the strong feelings of kinship and compassion so many Canadians felt at that time towards their bruised and bloodied American cousins. And their tragedy was ours, too: 24 Canadians died alongside those thousands of Americans on September 11.

As a reporter in Ottawa, I was assigned to write about this nerdy local politician's meteoric rise as a sterling symbol of Canada's bilateral bond with America, his portrait now seen "against a backdrop of Canadian and American flags in the centrefold of *Time* magazine's northern edition."

That was just one moment, and the swell of emotion didn't last long. Disputes about border security and a more serious rupture between Canada and the U.S. over the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 would follow. But that time in the wake of 9/11 was a reminder of other shoulder-to-shoulder episodes in Canada-U.S. history – most notably, the D-Day landings in Normandy in June 1944, with our two nations respectively helping to turn the tide of the Second World War at Juno and Omaha beaches.

Now, here in early 2025, a dark cloud of animosity hangs over the 49th parallel. Hockey metaphors abound – “we won't back down from a fight” – American-made produce is shunned at grocery stores and snowbirds in record numbers *didn't* flock to Florida, while others flew home early.

There is widespread agreement, despite the bump in national pride, that this is not good. And there is widespread dismay that the U.S. president could so quickly transform Canada's longstanding friendship with the U.S. (despite occasional differences) into a state of suspicion and even fear. We can only hope that this moment, too, is short-lived.

In this volume of essays, contributors were invited to share their thoughts and insights about the suddenly turbulent relations between Canada and the United States. More specifically, with the distantly historical War of 1812 as a reference point, it was noted that “since then, with some exceptions, Canada and the United States have maintained a long-standing relationship marked by shared borders, important commercial and cultural ties, and vital defence and national security partnerships... But with the reaction sparked by President Trump's incessant provocations, are we witnessing an

important shift in the relationship? What might this change imply for our economic ties, border security and other aspects of our shared future?”

The response from our stellar lineup of writers explores all of this and much more. This edition of *Canadian Issues/Thèmes Canadiens* offers a range of visceral reactions, probing reflections and thoughtful strategizing as Canada's new Liberal government under Prime Minister Mark Carney – along with provincial and territorial premiers reeling from the imposition of U.S. tariffs on Canadian exports – charts a course through choppy boundary waters.

Historian **John English**, professor emeritus at the University of Waterloo, retraces Canada's gradual integration into a U.S.-dominated North American economy and security sphere following the Second World War. English observes how the relationship brought prosperity and protection but also occasional “nationalist outbursts” whenever Canadians worried their country's identity and independence might weaken under the America's eagle's wing. Now, an era English describes as Canada's long trip down the “American road” has definitively “come to an end.”

Jack Jedwab, president of the Association for Canadian Studies and the Metropolis Institute, shares recent survey results showing a “record high negative view of the U.S.” among Canadians and a startling number of citizens – one in five – who say they genuinely fear the possibility of a U.S. military invasion. “What makes it all the more frustrating,” Jedwab notes, “is that over the course of Canada's history, it has been the United States that is widely seen as the country's closest ally.” It's a perplexing

moment, to be sure, one that has Jedwab and many Canadians asking: “Is that what friends are for?”

Colin Robertson, the distinguished former diplomat and fellow of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, states bluntly: “The tariffs are fracturing our economic partnership and forcing us to rethink what has been our most important relationship.” But the best response, he makes clear, is to transform this deeply challenging moment into a “historic opportunity to put our own house in order” – dismantling internal trade barriers, “re-thinking collective security with allies” and carrying out an array of other self-examinations aimed at creating a stronger Canada: “Greater self-reliance will give Canada resiliency.”

Journalist and think tank leader **Edward Greenspon**, the former editor-in-chief of *The Globe and Mail* and now co-chair of Deloitte’s Future of Canada Centre, takes a deep dive into Canadian history and reminds us that the federal election in April – so squarely focused on U.S.-Canada relations – was preceded by many other votes that turned on the same issue. But he warns against letting “nationalistic anger” blaze out of control. We need to work hard maintain access to the massive American market, he argues, even as we diversify our trade relationships and revitalize our economic strategies. “Our neighbour’s proclivity for arbitrary measures must be reconciled with our inescapable geographic location atop North America,” Greenspon cautions.

Political scientist and author **Dr. Debra Thompson**, the Canada Research Chair in Racial Inequality in Democratic Societies at McGill University, examines the cross-border impacts of Donald Trump’s

“war on woke” and how his government’s “outright assault” on diversity, equity and inclusion programs in the U.S. amounts to a “conservative counterrevolution” that is challenging recent advances made by a host progressive movements. “But Canadians are not simply reacting to the happenings south of the border,” Thompson warns. “A rising tide of home-grown, locally inflected, inextricably Canadian anti-DEI sentiment is already upon us.” From the so-called “Freedom Convoy” occupation of Ottawa in early 2022 to the “fracturing” of public support in Canada for immigration and multiculturalism, Thompson sees reasons for alarm in this country as Trump carries out his ideological purge in the U.S.

Former U.S. diplomat **David Rovinsky**, secretary of the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States, offers a “Trump’s eye view of Canada” that highlights the U.S. president’s fascination with “Gilded Age” American expansionism and protectionism more than a century ago. “Trump’s invocation of annexation may seem surprising,” Rovinsky writes, “but it is not without historical precedent. It is merely another facet of his broader nostalgia for late 19th-century American politics.” Trump’s “51st state” bluster is an echo, he argues, of the Manifest Destiny doctrine fueled by the notion that “U.S. territorial growth was inevitable and justified.” The level of danger facing Canada, Rovinsky observes, will depend on the degree to which “Trump weaponizes his expansionist rhetoric.”

Janice Stein, the Belzberg Professor of Conflict Management and the founding Director of the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto, emphasizes that in the face of the Trump threat to Canada’s industry and independence, the wisest strategy is “to look to the future and make

the investments in technology and productivity that will shape the next-generation economies.” While warning that it would be “foolhardy” for Canadians not to take Trumpian talk of a “51st state” seriously, she said the U.S. remains a vital market for Canadian goods and a key ally: “Our relationship with the United States will always be important to us.” But a primary objective for this country, she insists, must be to succeed in building greater trust in government and other public institutions to avoid the kind of undermining of democracy unfolding south of the border. “We see the price of failure when we watch, mesmerized in horror, at what is happening in the United States, our closest neighbour and friend.”

Journalist and author **Andrew Cohen**, an adjunct professor at Carleton University and a specialist in Canada-U.S. relations, closes our conversation with a modest proposal addressed directly to the U.S. president, and boldly titled: “An Appeal to Donald Trump: Join Us!” For any Canadian who has endured Trump’s unrelenting and uninformed bombast in recent months about taking over our country, the skewering that Cohen administers in the form of an earnest invitation for the U.S. to become part of Canada is wonderfully therapeutic. “As Canadians, you’ll inherit the Far North,” he tells Trump. “No need to take it from us, as you’ve been threatening. Now we’ll be one happy family, extending from the Gulf of Canada to the Sea of Gretzky.”

CANADA'S JOURNEY FROM PROTECTIVE PARTNERSHIP ON THE 'AMERICAN ROAD' TO FEAR, CONTEMPT AND CHAOS IN THE AGE OF DONALD TRUMP

JOHN ENGLISH

John English is a distinguished Canadian author and historian. He is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Waterloo, founding director of the Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History at the University of Toronto, and former executive director of the Centre for International Governance Innovation, a think tank devoted to the study of international affairs. He is also a former Liberal MP for Kitchener, Ont. (1993–97) who has written biographies of prime ministers Arthur Meighen, Robert Borden, Lester B. Pearson and Pierre Trudeau, among many other books.

Declining empires age badly. They fight wars they don't win. Erratic leaders promise to make the empire great again. They don't. Their neighbours suffer as they must.

As the United States ascended to astonishing economic prosperity and superpower dominance, Canada was a principal beneficiary. A British colony during Britain's imperial and economic heyday in the nineteenth century, Canada turned southwards in the 20th century. Although the first automobiles appeared in Europe, the workshops of Detroit produced the first affordable horseless buggies. Across the Detroit River in Walkerville – now a historic neighbourhood of Windsor, Ont. – Gordon McGregor realized that he could make a deal with Henry Ford and produce his cars for the Canadian market. Canada's 35-per-cent tariff stopped Ford from simply shipping cars made in Detroit across

the river. A branch plant automobile industry was born. By 1923 Canada was the second largest producer of automobiles in the world.

As the American century unfolded, Canada integrated more tightly with its neighbour. It kept some British spellings, supported a government broadcaster, and subsidized Canadian content, but its people and its politics ever more reflected its integration into the American economy and popular culture. Mary Pickford, born on Toronto's University Avenue, became "America's Sweetheart" and the first Hollywood millionaire. Later Canadian icons – Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, and Céline Dion – proudly retained their Canadian citizenship but made their homes in the United States. So did its greatest hockey players, Bobby Orr and Wayne Gretzky. Both eventually became enthusiastic supporters of Donald Trump with Gretzky – a

Mar-A-Lago hanger-on – gaining Trump’s nomination to be the first governor when Canada when it becomes America’s 51st state.

Occasionally, the United States snarled, much like American rapper Kendrick Lamar towards Canadian rival Drake, asserting that Canada and Canadians were “not like us.” Much earlier, in the first year of the Great Depression in 1930, the U.S. Congress enacted the Smoot-Hawley tariff, which effectively closed the American market to Canada, its greatest trading partner. Henry Ford denounced the tariff as “an economic stupidity,” but populist and nationalist forces triumphed.

Despite propinquity and similarity, Canadian and American leaders rarely interacted before the Second World War. Franklin Roosevelt ended American hesitation and Canadian reserve. Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, a Harvard graduate like Roosevelt and John D. Rockefeller Jr.’s most treasured friend, brought out the best in the American patrician, who detested Hitler and valued democracy. Congress passed Neutrality Acts between 1935 and 1937, but Roosevelt ignored their existence in 1938 at Queen’s University on Canadian soil. He assured Canadians that, “the Dominion of Canada is part of the sisterhood of the British Empire. I give to you assurance that the people of the United States will not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any

other Empire.”¹ For Canadians, it was the best of both worlds.

Roosevelt kept his word. He and King signed a joint defence agreement at Ogdensburg, New York on August 17, 1940, shortly after the fall of France. If Britain fell, Canada would be on the front line, and the United States would be there. In those times, Robert Bothwell has written, “King moved easily in Roosevelt’s shadow.”² In Roosevelt’s eyes, King was “just like us.” Canada benefited greatly from the friendship, and the declaration King and Roosevelt made at Roosevelt’s Hyde Park estate on April 20, 1941 essentially merged the two economies for wartime purposes, which meant nearly all purposes, until 1945. Bolstered by wartime expansion, Canada’s Gross Domestic Product more than doubled between 1939 and 1945. Thanks to continental economic integration, Canadians gained unemployment insurance, family allowances and government-backed mortgages, while its soldiers received generous benefits when they returned.³

Canadians noticed that the closer relationship with the United States had coincided with the transformation of Canada from depression poverty to middle-class prosperity, and the traditional Canadian doubts about the closer relationship diminished. There were nationalist outbursts in 1956 over American financial interest in a pipeline and again in the late 1960s when the Vietnam

1 Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Address at Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, August 18, 1938.” The American Presidency Project at www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-queens-university-kingston-ontario-canada.

2 Robert Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion: Canada and the World, 1945–1984* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 13.

3 Statistics Canada, Gross Domestic Product, Income-based, 1029–1960 at www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3610027601&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=1939&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=1945&referencePeriods=19390101%2C19450101.

War caused many Canadians to echo the virulent American criticisms of the war. The energy and foreign policies of Pierre Trudeau's governments also attracted strong reaction from American Republicans. Then came Brian Mulroney in 1984 pledging to open Canada for business again, serenading President Ronald Reagan on Canadian soil, and successfully winning an election in 1988 on the issue of free trade with the United States. Canadian ties with the U.S. thickened, and Mulroney gave glowing eulogies at the funerals of the American presidents with whom he had worked closely, Reagan and George H.W. Bush.

At the time, critics and supporters of the new trade agreement with the United States recognized the historic significance of the moment. Apart from King, Canadian prime ministers had avoided the warm embrace of the United States. However, King, unlike Mulroney, privately and publicly maintained a distance from the United States and rejected a possible free trade pact in 1948. At the last minute before the deal was announced, King recoiled and told senior official and future prime minister Lester Pearson, who was persistent in his arguments for an agreement, that "he would never cease to be a Liberal or a British citizen and if I thought there was a danger of Canada being placed at the mercy of powerful financial interests in the United States, and if that was being done by my own party, I would get out and oppose them openly."⁴ The agreement died.

History provides context, but each moment is unique. The second administration of Donald Trump is unlike any other for Canadians. Although Theodore Roosevelt and President William Howard Taft privately expressed the hope that Canada would join the United States in 1911, no American president has ever publicly declared that Canada is not a real country and should become the 51st state. Canada, Trump argues, should never have existed. He clearly believes that Canadians are "just like us" and prepared to welcome the enormous benefits becoming American would bestow, a belief confirmed by his contact with Canadians like businessman and television personality Kevin O'Leary, a Mar-A-Lago regular and former candidate for the Canadian Conservative Party leadership, and Conrad Black, Trump's admiring biographer. And around Mar-A-Lago, where Brian Mulroney serenaded Trump in 2017 with *When Irish Eyes are Smiling*, as he had Reagan in 1985, there are four million Canadians vacationing each winter, with some having bumper stickers proclaiming "My Canada Includes Florida." Familiarity bred confusion during Trump's first term. In his second term, it became contempt.

In 1985, when Mulroney sang to Reagan, 78 per cent of Canadians said they were "very proud to be Canadian," but when Justin Trudeau met Trump at Mar-A-Lago after his November 2024 election victory, only 34 per cent did.⁵ The Conservatives then had a 20-point lead in the polls campaigning on the slogan that "Canda is broken." Trump, the Bronx

4 J.W.Pickersgill and Donald Forster, eds., *The Mackenzie King Record, 1948–1948*. Volume IV ^ Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 367–8.

5 Jeremy Warren, "Fewer Canadians Feel Pride to be Canadian, poll suggests." January 8, 2025, www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/angus-reid-poll-canadian-pride-1.7425408.

bully and wrestling fan, spots weakness quickly. Soon after his inauguration, he struck.

Trudeau was a tempting target when he and Trump met at Mar-A-Lago. Trump taunted him at the dinner table, calling him Governor Trudeau and astonishing his guests by asserting that Canada should become “the 51st state.” Hovering nearby was Elon Musk, a Canadian citizen and the major architect of Trump’s victory through his funding and social media dominance. His disinterest in Canada had become disdain. On X, formerly Twitter before he purchased it, Musk declared “Canada is not a real country.” It was time for Canadians to accept their Manifest Destiny.

The “American road” that began with Roosevelt’s commitment to protection of Canada in 1938 had come to an end. There had been bumps along the way, but a menacing Donald Trump tore up the pavement. Roosevelt had been generous, despising Hitler and treasuring democracy. Trump was wantonly cruel, admiring Putin and threatening democratic values. Canada became America’s Ukraine, doomed to form part of the greater empire. As David French reported in *The New York Times*, “While talking to the press in the Oval Office, [Trump] once again called for Canada to become

the 51st state and then compared Canada’s bargaining position to Ukraine’s. ‘The expression I use is, ‘Some people don’t have the cards... I used the expression about a week and a half ago’ – referring to his infamous exchange⁶ with Ukraine’s president⁷, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, when he told Zelenskyy: “You’re not in a good position. You don’t have the cards right now.”⁸

Canadians have reacted to Trump’s actions with a new nationalism and, according to several polls, with a new pride in their country.⁹ There will be no Anschluss with Canadians cheering as the troops march in. But there is sadness mingled with fear. The romance that bloomed on a summer day in Kingston when a great American president declared his affection and commitment to Canada had many memorable and even inspiring moments. And then came Donald Trump.

Canadian balladeer Gordon Lightfoot, whose songs celebrated Canadian deeds and places and probed the depths of broken hearts, said it well in his biggest hit, *If You Could Read My Mind*:

*And I’ve got to say that I just don’t get it
I don’t know where we went wrong
But the feeling’s gone, and I just can’t get it back*

6 www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/what-trump-and-zelenskyy-said-during-their-heated-argument-in-the-oval-office

7 www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCFMForCmEY

8 David French, “Canada, May I Introduce You to Ukraine”, *The New York Times*, March 23, 2025.

9 Michael Sabe, “Canadian pride is on the rise in the wake of Trump’s tariffs threat,” February 6, 2025. www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canadian-pride-is-on-the-rise-trump-tariff-threat-1.7451987.

IS THAT WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR? EVOLVING RELATIONS BETWEEN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES AFTER THE SECOND COMING OF PRESIDENT TRUMP

JACK JEDWAB

Jack Jedwab is the President of the Association for Canadian Studies and the Metropolis Institute. Holding a PhD in Canadian History from Concordia University, he taught at Université du Québec à Montréal and McGill University. He has taught courses on the history of immigration in Quebec, on ethnic minorities in Quebec, on official language minorities in Canada and on sport in Canada. He has also authored essays for books, journals and newspapers across the country, in addition to being the author of various publications and government reports on issues of immigration, multiculturalism, human rights and official languages.

Canada and the United States “share much more than a border.” There are “special bonds that come when two nations have shed their blood together – which we have... America is deeply fortunate to have a neighbour like Canada... and... we have before us the opportunity to build even more bridges, and bridges of cooperation and bridges of commerce.”

This lovely tribute to the relationship between Canada and the United States was offered by none other than U.S. President Donald Trump at the outset of his first term in 2016. (*NBC News*, March 2025)

Nearly a decade later, the relationship between the two countries looks very different. Now in his

second term as U.S. president, the same Trump has on several occasions publicly expressed his interest in making Canada America’s “51st state.” As he puts it, “Canada and the United States, that would really be something... You get rid of that artificially drawn line, and you take a look at what that looks like, and it would also be much better for national security.” (*National Post*, February 2025)

Some might interpret his desire for us to be part of the United States as a peculiar form of courtship. After all, President Trump recently said that he loves Canada and Canadians (see Pereira, *ABC News*, March 2025). He really likes hockey icon Wayne Gretzky and our national anthem, which he has generously stated that we can retain (the

anthem, not Gretzky) in the event we join the United States. Presumably, however, *O Canada* would become our “state” song.

Trump’s sudden desire for Canada has not always been accompanied by flattery, as reflected by the following observation: “I deal with every country indirectly or directly; one of the nastiest countries to deal with is Canada. Now this was Trudeau – good old Justin, I call him Governor Trudeau – his people were nasty – and they weren’t telling the truth. They never tell the truth.” (Ingraham, March 2025). He thinks Canadians are nasty and yet says he loves them. Hmm.

How seriously are Canadians taking Donald Trump’s expressed interest to annex Canada? In short, very seriously. That’s what two-thirds of Canadians said in response to a recent Leger survey done for the Association for Canadian Studies (ACS-Leger, March 1–2, 2025). The Canada-U.S. relationship has deteriorated to the point where about one in five Canadians thinks that the United States might send troops into Canada if it refuses to become the 51st state (and 32 per cent say they don’t know).

Apart from the talk of annexation, the second coming of Trump has very ungenerously and unfairly modified trade arrangements with Canada via the introduction of various and varying tariffs, which will adversely affect Canada and wreak financial havoc on Canadians.

To be fair, Trump’s punitive tariffs targeted several countries other than Canada, and perhaps one might therefore conclude that it’s not personal. Nonetheless, there is a widely held view that the

Trump tariffs to which Canada is being subjected seek to render the country more dependent than others on the United States.

What makes it all the more frustrating is that over the course of Canada’s history, it has been the United States that is widely seen as the country’s closest ally. This has many Canadians asking: Is that what friends are for? The outcome of Trump’s actions is that Canadians are now expressing a record high negative view of the U.S. In the March 30–31, 2025 poll conducted by Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies, some 33 per cent of Canadians say they have a positive view of the U.S. The survey puts negative views of the United States at 58 per cent, a point *higher* than the rate of negative sentiment that Canadians harbor towards China (ACS-Leger, March 29–31, 2025.)

The record low level of positive sentiment towards the U.S. has resulted in the widest of gaps in the countries’ respective perception of each other. Americans continue to hold Canada in high esteem. As revealed in a February 2025 Gallup poll, some 89 per cent of Americans see their northern neighbour favorably, placing Canada above all other countries in that regard (Gallup, February 2025). The net outcome, though, is a record 66-point difference between how positively the countries view each other.

For the time being, Canadians are distinguishing the negative view of the United States as a country from their views of the American people themselves, with 38 per cent of these Canadian respondents holding negative views of their geographic neighbour and 50 per cent seeing Americans positively. Canadians’ relatively warm

feeling towards Americans is at risk of changing if the political and economic relationship between the two countries erodes further.

Despite the drop in good feelings on the part of Canadians toward the United States, the majority (53 per cent) acknowledge that there is more in common between the two peoples than with any others in the world. Still, Canadians insist on highlighting our differences, with some 78 per cent agreeing with the statement that they possess values that make them different from Americans. When asked what makes Canadians different, one might have expected references to universal health care north of the border and gun violence to the south. When surveyed about this, those things were indeed mentioned. And the more common differences cited by respondents have Canadians as more welcoming, friendly, compassionate and inclusive.

In sum, when compared with Americans, Canadians see themselves as members of a kinder, gentler nation (ACS-Leger, March 29–30, 2025). For many in Canada, the tariffs and threats of annexation feel very personal and existential, as though they are core challenges to the country's perceived way of life and identity. (See Table 1)

CANADIAN COUNTERMEASURES

At recent professional hockey games played in Canada, when Canadian and American teams were pitted against each other, it has become common to hear PA announcers ask fans not to boo the U.S. national anthem. An ACS-Leger survey reveals that a majority of Canadians oppose the practice of disparaging *The Star-Spangled Banner* (ACS-Leger, March 1–2, 2025). At present, in response to the

TABLE 1. PLEASE TELL US IN A FEW WORDS WHAT IN PARTICULAR MAKES CANADIANS DIFFERENT FROM AMERICANS.

Canadian are more welcoming/friendlier/compassionate	15%
Our kindness/politeness	14%
Canadian are inclusive/celebrate diversity/are multicultural	12%
Canadian respect civil rights/equality/we are open-minded	12%
Canadians are community oriented/united	9%
Guns laws/gun culture	9%
We are a proud nation/loyal to the country	8%
Canadian have better manners/are respectful	8%
Medicare/universal healthcare	8%

Source: Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies, March 29–30, 2025.

threats from the U.S. administration, Canadians' preferred course of action is to avoid travelling to the United States (66 per cent) and to buy more made-in-Canada products (79 per cent).

It remains unclear as to the extent to which Canadians will act upon these preferred strategies and, in the event that they do, what impact such action would have on the United States. (See Table 2)

PRIDE IN BEING CANADIAN IS ON THE RISE

Another effect of the trade war and annexation

TABLE 2.

	BOOING THE U.S. NATIONAL ANTHEM AT SPORTS EVENTS SENDS THE RIGHT MESSAGE TO AMERICANS	BUYING MORE CANADIAN PRODUCTS IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF RESPONDING TO PRESIDENT TRUMP'S PROPOSED TARIFF INCREASES	NOT TRAVELLING TO THE UNITED STATES IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF RESPONDING TO PRESIDENT TRUMP'S PROPOSED TARIFF INCREASES
Yes	28%	79%	66%
No	58%	12%	22%
I don't know / Prefer not to answer	14%	9%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies, March 1-2, 2025

threats from the United States has been a noticeable increase in feelings of pride about being Canadian. In the March 2025 survey, the sense of Canadian pride reached significant heights across the country, and even seems to have drawn out what might be described as the inner Canadian for a lot of Quebecers.

Over the past 12 months, pride in being Canadian has swelled from 80 per cent to 86 per cent, and

Quebec's expressed pride in being Canadian is now in line with the national average. As seen in the Table below, with few exceptions, the feeling of pride in being Canadian transcends all regions and demographics. (See Table 3)

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

It's difficult to predict what the future holds with regards to relations between the United States and

TABLE 3.

I AM PROUD TO BE CANADIAN	TOTAL	ATLANTIC	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
March 1-2 2025	86%	89%	86%	87%	86%	74%	90%
November 22-24, 2024	80%	91%	81%	80%	77%	84%	70%
May 17-20 2024	80%	93%	83%	80%	82%	80%	71%

Source: Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies, March 1-2, 2025, November 22-24, 2024 and May 17-20, 2024.

Canada. Are we in the process of some redefinition of the relationship that increasingly challenges Canada's political sovereignty? Is Canada destined for greater economic dependency on the U.S.? The

surveys shared above affirm a sharp decline in favorable views of the United States and a strong desire to retaliate. It all makes for an uncertain future.

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DEALING WITH ‘DESPICABLE DONALD’: FIGHTING BACK AND PUTTING OUR HOUSE IN ORDER

COLIN ROBERTSON

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Donald Trump is forcing the Canadian body politic – every level of government and every party – to recalibrate. There is the threat not just of tariffs and economic upheaval but, for the first time since the 19th century, of annexation. Yet the Trump challenge is also a historic opportunity to put our own house in order.

Greater self-reliance will give Canada resiliency. Greater self-reliance will provide strategic autonomy and allow Canada to play, once again, the helpful fixer role it used to do so well, and a role needed now more than ever in the world.

Pierre Trudeau once told me that every prime minister has three files that are permanently in his in-box: national security; national unity; and the

U.S. relationship. Mr. Trump dominates all three and, as the recent federal election demonstrated, Canadians are very much aware. Dealing with Uncle Sam will require patience, perseverance and, most importantly, a plan.

A plan will involve concurrent tracks requiring ongoing attention and constant adjustments, including:

- Fighting the tariffs;¹
- Dismantling internal trade barriers to create freer trade within Canada;
- Building the infrastructure to get our goods to market and improve our productivity;

¹ www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2025/04/03/canada-announces-new-countermeasures-response-tariffs-from-united-states#:~:text=On%20March%204%2C%202025%2C%20U.S.,the%20U.S.%20came%20into%20effect

- 'Getting right' coherence, coordination and collaboration between all levels of government;
- Diversifying trade and encouraging provincial governments to market their goods and services and attract foreign investment;
- Re-investing in defence and re-thinking collective security with allies.

FIGHTING BACK

The tariffs are fracturing our economic partnership and forcing us to rethink what has been our most important relationship. We now know this is not about coercing Canada to curb the small flows of fentanyl and illegal migrants or raising our defence spending, all of which we are doing. Rather it's a straight cash grab to pay for Trump's promised tax cuts and force business to manufacture in the United States. Unfortunately, we are probably going to have to adapt to a future of 'managed trade' with tariffs no matter who is in the White House or Congress.

For now, we have responded with counter-tariffs, targeting the Republican congressional leadership on whom Trump must rely to achieve his legislative agenda and his new best friends in the tech 'oligarchy'.

We can't change our geography so our primary goals must continue to be keeping our preferred access to the largest market in the world and to our binational security alliance.

While posted in the U.S., I used to tell visiting legislators not to kid themselves. Ours is an asymmetrical relationship. We need the United States

more than it needs Canada. They take three-quarters of our exports and generate about one-third of our economy while we account for about one-sixth of their exports and about two per cent of their economy. We level the playing field through continual negotiation on trade agreements with dispute settlement.

I would also tell legislators that on almost any bilateral issue there are always more Americans who think like Canadians than there are Canadians.

Now we need to mobilize them to complement our current 'top-level' advocacy with a 'bottom-up' approach that asks Americans to lobby their own legislators to persuade President Trump to remove the tariffs. It's time to add a Team America component to Team Canada.

In practise, this means mobilizing Canadians to call their American customers, clients and friends and to tell them that the tariffs are hurting our mutual livelihoods, and that the disruption is going to make us all poorer.

Success will depend on Canadian business – small, medium and big – and Canadian labour, especially those who are affiliated to American counterparts like the Steelworkers, Teamsters and Seafarers, actively reaching out with their ask and in doing so posing some simple questions:

- Do Americans want to pay more for their gas and groceries because of tariffs?
- Do American farmers want to pay more for potash while losing Canada as one of their biggest markets?

- Do we really want to wreck our joint auto industry with a tsunami of tariffs every time a part crosses the border?

Success will depend equally on our provincial and local legislators. The premiers' involvement is critical. Many of them, notably Ontario Premier Doug Ford as chair of the Council of the Federation, are doing excellent work in their own outreach to their state-governor counterparts.

So, too, must provincial legislators, mayors and councillors. They are closer to the realities of trade in their constituencies, and we look to them to push local business and local labour to get involved and make the calls.

We should also enlist our expatriate 'star-spangled' Canadians living in the U.S, and the one million "snowbirds", who flock south, mostly to red states like Florida and Arizona. They need to tell their neighbours and those they buy services from that this is going to hurt them, particularly as more and more Canadians choose to spend vacation dollars elsewhere.

For this campaign to succeed we need thousands and thousands of individual voices making the case for lifting the tariffs. Our American friends need to contact their elected representatives, speak out at congressional town halls and talk with their neighbours. We need them to argue for growing the pie by taking advantage of what we already do well and making it more resilient. By making things together, we have created mutual prosperity and security.

Our current 'top-down' approach, which worked well in the past, was premised in the belief that our best and easiest entrée into the complex and cacophonous American political and policy system – a multi-ring circus of competing and conflicting interests – was through the administration and especially the president. Since Franklin Roosevelt, presidents whether Democrat or Republican understood the big picture and their attitude to Canada was mostly benign and, often, benevolent.

But now we must endure Donald Trump – a bully if not a wannabe autocrat – who could easily be cast as a Hollywood 'Despicable Donald' with his minions.

Alas, while Trump may behave like a cartoon character, he is still the president of the United States.

And, as president, Trump controls the narrative with his executive orders, and by moving fast and breaking things, he sows confusion and creates chaos, his preferred battlefield conditions. Trump works by feelings and gut instinct. As for trying to predict him, *New York Times* columnist David Brooks put it best: "We've got this perverse situation² in which the vast analytic powers of the entire world are being spent trying to understand a guy whose thoughts are often just six fireflies beeping randomly in a jar."

For now, the guardrails, checks and balances of American democracy are under strain as never before. The Republican party controls the legislative branch, with slim majorities in both the House and

2 www.nytimes.com/2017/05/15/opinion/trump-classified-data.html?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Senate. They are in thrall to and fear of Trump while the Democrats are still getting their act together. Until the pendulum swings back, we depend on the third branch of government, the judiciary, to uphold the rule of law on, for example, the legitimacy of using the demonstrably false claims against Canada as a source of fentanyl and migrants to justify “national security” tariffs.

Meanwhile, we must look to our own devices.

FREE TRADE WITHIN CANADA

We have begun to get our own house in order with the national government and premiers committing to eliminating internal trade barriers on procurement, accreditation and regulations reflecting the ‘narcissism of small differences’ between provinces.

GETTING GOVERNMENT RIGHT

The different levels of government need to better coordinate their industrial policies to maximize necessary improvements to our productivity and competitiveness. We have the capacity to be an agri-food and energy superpower. We should be guided by some basic questions:

- Do current regulatory policies help or hinder getting our resources – oil and gas, critical minerals, grains, seafood – to market?
- Is our current infrastructure – ports, grids,

pipelines, rail – fit for purpose?

- What level of government should lead?

Answers to these questions should guide our investments and enabling legislation.

This must also include another exercise in getting government right. The best model is that conducted by the government of Jean Chrétien in the early 1990s, which evaluated which level of government was best suited to deliver programs. It reduced the size of government by nearly a third, in contrast to the Justin Trudeau government, which grew government by a third.

Public confidence in governments and institutions is plumbing new depths³ in all democracies. Governments need to be more transparent in communicating information⁴. If to govern is to choose, it is also about our leadership explaining what our priorities should be, why we make certain choices and what they cost.

TRADE DIVERSIFICATION

We have long sought to diversify our trade but now it is imperative. Fortunately, there is broad support across party lines and with the provinces to achieve diversification.

Efforts must be ramped up, starting with our more than 50 other free-trade partners⁵, recognizing that

3 www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/trust-in-government.html

4 <https://globalnews.ca/news/10980946/disinformation-an-existential-threat-to-canadian-democracy-hogue>

5 <https://pfcollins.com/canadas-free-trade-agreements>

we are not utilizing the potential⁶ of these agreements. Working with our Trade Commissioner Service, the premiers and provinces need to step up. They are best equipped, working with their business communities, to market their goods and services and expedite closing deals, while never forgetting it is business that does business and that it is customers who create jobs.

Our key trading partners will see the value in collaboration as Trump is coming after them, too. So, better we hang together or, surely, we will hang separately.

RETHINKING COLLECTIVE SECURITY

While our preference must be to sustain and strengthen both NATO and NORAD with particular attention and investment in our Arctic frontier, Mr. Trump has made explicit his contempt for allies and alliances. It means we can no longer assume the U.S. is a reliable ally to deter the threats posed by China and Russia and others that reject our rules-based order. With fellow allies, including our Indo-Pacific partners, we must also reconsider our reliance on U.S. defence goods and services.

In the meantime, we need to look to new collective security and economic arrangements, as NATO was originally intended. Such an agenda would include currencies, foreign direct investment, industrial policies, defence production and procurement as well as trade. It is an agenda particularly suited to Mark Carney's experience where Canada

can play the role of helpful fixer.

ON NEGOTIATING WITH UNCLE SAM

Three things to keep in mind as we consider any new security and trade arrangement⁷.

First, as I learned when advocating for Canada on Capitol Hill, start every conversation by underlining our bona fides on defence and security, reminding Americans that 'we have their back', before moving the conversation to trade and our other issues. While we have work to do, American self-interest will encourage useful collaboration. The U.S. preoccupation with security also means that any conversation between leaders always starts with a discussion of global geo-politics. We are a G7 nation with a global network, but we need to invest in it and bring ideas and initiatives if we want to be a constructive player at the top table.

Second, know our ask(s) but be circumspect and careful about revealing too early our gives and takes. With Trump it is all about the art of the deal, based on us giving and him taking. If Trump wants his USMCA renegotiated let him, not us, put it on the table. Meanwhile we should keep close with our Mexican partners, whose experience with the 'yanqui' gives them innate caution.

Third, the Americans will push us to move in lock-step on China as we did with EV tariffs. In the English debate PM Carney identified China as Canada's biggest security threat. Yeah, we need

6 <https://international.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/corporate/transparency/reports-publications/chief-economist/impacts/2022-09-ceta-trade-benefits>

7 www.bbc.com/news/articles/c14xydjzn5eo

our eyes wide open as we “coexist,” “compete,” “co-operate,” and “challenge.”⁸ But we also have to engage with China on climate, pandemics and proliferation as well as trade and people-to-people ties.

Finally, we will need to exercise strategic patience; continuing preparation and ongoing advocacy with American allies works to our advantage. The polling after Trump’s first 100 days suggests he is overreaching and that he is not immune from the political laws of gravity, especially when it comes to the economy. So ragging the puck, a time-honoured negotiating tactic, could work to our advantage.

LOOKING FORWARD

The tariffs have unified Canadians as never before. Our vociferous response to Trump’s delusion has given Canada more U.S. media coverage than ever. Given our declining dollar, it’s an opportunity to launch a ‘Visit Canada’ tourism blitz and show Americans who we are.

We need to emphasize, as political leaders have done, that our quarrel is not with the American people with whom we are friends, allies and

neighbours, but with Donald Trump, whose behaviour is downright un-American. ‘Despicable Donald’ is as much a threat to them as he is to us and our democratic allies.

Ours is more than a trade war. It’s an attempt by Donald Trump to reorder the rules-based order into a great concert of powers where the big dictate to the rest. For Trump, it is an attempt to restore American primacy as the AI-enabled manufacturing hub with Canada as a source of resources, including water.

We can avoid this fate by actively pushing back and mobilizing our U.S. allies while at the same time putting our own house in order. This includes creating free trade within Canada, trade diversification and rethinking our collective security arrangements with like-minded partners.

Developing Canadian strategic autonomy, based on a strong economy, will also enable us to play a more useful role internationally. It is a fight worth having.

8 www.cbc.ca/news/politics/garneau-kovrig-spavor-1.6190100

NATIONALISM AND CONTINENTALISM: THE TRUMP CHALLENGE IS BRED IN THE CANADIAN BONE

EDWARD GREENSPON

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Canadians have hotly debated relations with the United States in just about every decade since Confederation. It's a staple of our national conversation.

We joined together as a country in the wake of their civil war, their Fenian raids, and their 1866 abrogation of a 12-year-old Reciprocity Treaty that had sparked an extraordinary boom north of the 49th.

At least half-a-dozen of our elections (and arguably more) – 1891, 1911, 1930, 1962-63, 1988 and now 2025 – have revolved around dealings with our only land neighbour (and, in earlier times, Great Britain as well). Trade policy usually served as the trigger, but defence issues have also figured prominently.

For significant chunks of time, either the nationalists or the continentalists have been the

ascendant force in Canadian politics, their debates often framed as starkly existential choices between sovereignty and prosperity. (The internationalists rarely provoke the same heights of emotion, perhaps because all Canadians are internationalist in one way or another.)

Donald Trump brings greater menace and chaos to this familiar tableau. He has turned the Canada of 2025 into an angry and anxious place but, at least for now, a more united one. The sharp sense of betrayal felt over his tariffs and "51st state" trash talk has lit a fire under nationalism while sending continentalists scurrying to the sidelines.

The question now is how long and far will the nationalistic anger burn and whether it is more likely to lead to shutting options down or opening new possibilities. History shows that when Canadian nationalism gathers steam, its policy

vapour tends to last a decade or more. Channeling its animal spirits will be a major task for our leaders.

Nationalism can, of course, be a force for good or bad. On the positive side of the ledger, it fosters national identity and solidarity. On the negative side, it has an historical habit of mutating into protectionism and populism or, even worse, jingoism, nativism and irredentism.

Canada's periodic displays of nationalism have, like the country itself, generally expressed themselves in moderate terms. But they have been highly consequential to our politics, nonetheless.

In the years following the 1866 abrogation by the U.S. Congress of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854, Canada's first prime minister was among the many pushing Washington for some form of reinstatement. It was not to be, and so John A. Macdonald eventually pivoted, as we would say today, toward the protectionist and immensely popular National Policy with which he remains identified today. His National Policy was not, however, an unmitigated success story. In a fashion similar to recent years, the late 1800s were characterized by the Canadian economy falling further and further behind the U.S. juggernaut.

It took until 1891 for the real showdown to occur between the reluctant but now fully engaged nationalist and his free-trading Liberal opponent, Wilfrid Laurier. The aging prime minister campaigned as the 'Old Man' defending the 'Old Policy.' If you didn't get the anti-continentalist drift, he threw in the 'Old Flag' (Union Jack) for good measure.

Macdonald prevailed in a closely fought contest, sending an enduring message for future party leaders of all stripes: nationalism packs a more powerful political punch than continentalism. By the time he became prime minister in 1896, Laurier had tempered his continentalism, at least for a time, in favour of a nation-building form of nationalism.

How to reconcile Canada's nationalist versus continentalist impulses without straying too far in either direction is a storyline that repeats itself every generation or so. Mackenzie King quietly and effectively pursued continentalist policies from 1935 forward. But when his government considered a free trade agreement in the 1940s, the unhappy history of past efforts still rang in his ears. As with conscription, it would be free trade if necessary but not necessarily free trade.

The formal deed was finally done by Brian Mulroney a century after the 1891 election. Commentators still aren't settled on the lessons of the 1988 free trade election: on the one hand, Mulroney won a Parliamentary majority and secured approval for his continentalist approach; on the other, he could only muster 43 per cent popular support and was lucky the Liberals and New Democrats split the nays.

What is perhaps more telling is how the most unabashedly continentalist prime minister in our history conceived of free trade through a nation-building lens rooted in openness. Its *raison d'être* was not just to sell goods to the U.S. but to deliver shock therapy to a moribund Canadian business sector and force it to become, as demonstrated best by the wine industry, globally competitive.

The nationalist-continentalist debate is almost always nuanced in that Canadian leaders know they must pay attention to both the political mood of the moment and the longer-term performance of the economy. Voters treasure their sovereignty and their prosperity. Our attitudes resemble that famous witticism about the desire of sovereigntists for an independent Quebec within a strong and united Canada.

When Canadian nationalism does well up, like today, it generally enjoys a long shelf life. At the turn of the 20th century, successive U.S. administrations treated Canada similarly to today's tariffs and territorial designs. Teddy Roosevelt's bullying in his successful prosecution of the 1903 Alaska Boundary dispute led one historian to write that "the ruthlessness of his actions left a heritage of Canadian bitterness."

The bitterness left an after-taste that contributed to the defeat of Laurier's second attempt at free trade in the 1911 election. Even a decade later, Canadians were in no mood.

The same long tail materialized when Canadian nationalism was stoked by Richard Nixon's imposition of tariffs – more politely called import taxes – in 1971. With the U.S. at war in Vietnam and reeling from a spate of domestic assassinations, Canadian public opinion was already in an anti-American mood.

Pierre Trudeau, who harboured a lifelong antipathy toward nationalism of all kinds, would, like Macdonald before him, quickly come to appreciate its political potency. Even though the Nixon tariffs lasted just four months, they spawned a good

decade worth of initiatives, such as the Foreign Investment Review Agency, the creation of Petro-Canada, a clutch of Canadian content regulations and, ultimately, the divisive National Energy Program. Yet in the tradition of nuance, Trudeau did not abandon continentalism altogether. The Auto Pact provided a model for his government to enter into quiet negotiations with the U.S. in 1982 aimed at creating four similar sectoral agreements.

Of course, the best-known response to Nixon's shock came with the Trudeau government's 1972 Third Option paper, one of the most famous pieces of non-policy in the country's history and a rallying cry even two generations later. It is largely remembered for its call to reduce reliance on Canada-U.S. trade by diversifying exports to Europe and Japan.

It is, in fact, badly mis-remembered. The Third Option constituted more than a single fix. The first option was to maintain the status quo with the United States and the second to double down and deepen integration. The preferred third option consisted not just of trade diversification but the adoption of an industrial strategy to strengthen the Canadian economy so our goods and services would be in greater demand everywhere.

Which brings us to the present. Canada's new Liberal government led by Mark Carney, in partnership with provinces, business, labour and others, will need to channel the current nationalistic wave into concerted acts of nation-building. Our inspirations lie in such past achievements as rural electrification, the near-instant creation of wartime defence industries and the post-war nation-building trifecta of the Trans-Canada pipeline, the Trans-Canada highway and the St. Lawrence

Seaway alongside construction of new mines, new dams, new campuses, new suburbs and more. We didn't vent; we built – abundantly.

Today, we find ourselves in need of a renewed building blitz. Donald Trump has reminded us of the folly of having 77 of 100 export eggs in a single basket and that the best people to rely on are ourselves. There are three ways to grow our economy: at home with such measures as lowering internal trade barriers and developing and attracting talent; in the world through diversifying our export mix, both in terms of markets and products, and; on the continent by securing as much access as possible to the nearby and dynamic U.S. market.

To succeed, Canada will need to pursue a two-track strategy. Track 1 consists of the medium-to-long-term need to reduce our dependence on U.S. markets. Meanwhile, Track 2 requires us in the short-to-medium term to protect Canadian workers and businesses by retaining as much access to U.S. markets as can be reasonably secured.

Here's where the nuance comes in. Our neighbour's proclivity for arbitrary measures must be reconciled with our inescapable geographic location atop North America. We must defend access to continental markets even while seeking to diversify into new ones, the latter being more politically and less economically compelling.

One way or another, fortifying Canada will require attracting massive investments from domestic and

foreign sources, something Canada has not been good at in recent years. A new case for capital has to be developed.

In the early going of Trump 2.0, our political leaders over-indexed on calls to impose dollar-for-dollar retaliation and threats around such leverage points as electricity, oil, potash and critical minerals. The media forecast the ballot question in the April 2025 federal election as who could best “take on Trump” – not deal with Trump, manage Trump, come to terms with Trump, even get the better of Trump. Fighting became as important as winning.

Now strategy and political adroitness must kick in. The country is well served to the extent current nationalist sentiments contribute to resilience for the rough waters ahead. But to the extent they may constrain political leaders from necessary policy compromises, disappointment lies ahead. As with past Canadian leaders, the new Liberal government will need to reconcile the nationalistic mood by putting nation-building in an open Canada at the heart of our tariff response. That means getting behind the modern equivalents of seaways and highways, pipelines and DEW lines – AI and IP. The point is to prevent the welcome outbreak of pride and patriotism from becoming a blocking agent, such as with foreign investment in the 1970s, but rather an accelerant to getting things done.

The reason we study the past is to help us make better decisions in the present. Fortunately, we have 16 decades of experience to draw on.

THE WAR ON WOKE AND THE (HOMEGROWN) BACKLASH AGAINST DEI IN CANADA

DEBRA THOMPSON

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U.S. President Donald Trump's outright assault on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is one of the hallmark features of his second presidency. The first barrage of executive orders – issued in the early days and weeks after his January inauguration – terminated all federal DEI programs, suspended public servants in those offices, revoked President Lyndon B. Johnson's executive order from 1965 that prohibited discriminatory hiring practices for federal contractors, recognized male and female as the only two sexes, and threatened to investigate private sector DEI initiatives for compliance. A second wave pledged commitments to

“ending radical indoctrination in K-12 schooling,” “keeping men out of women's sports,” “eradicating anti-Christian bias,” “designating English as the official language of the United States,” and “restoring truth and sanity to American history.”

Though only a few of President Trump's executive orders primarily focus on DEI, his administration's anti-DEI agenda permeates many of his directives, initiatives, threats, and reprimands. DEI's undoing in the United States has been a long-term strategy of conservative activists seeking to reverse the legislative victories of the civil rights movement,

who, until recently, had taken their fight against voting rights and affirmative action to the courts. Project 2025, a policy agenda devised by a coalition of conservative organizations, called for ending DEI programs, policies, and mandates across a range of federal departments and ancillary contracts, rules, regulations, and grants. Nearly all the recommendations from conservative activist Chris Rufo's (2025) *Counterrevolution Blueprint*, which recommends that "the U.S. should strip left-wing racialism from the federal government and recommit the country to the principle of color-blind equality," were implemented within the first two months of the second Trump presidency. The United States Department of Education launched an "End DEI" online portal for members of the public to report "concerning practices" of DEI in local schools and school districts with a press release that quoted Tiffany Justice, the co-founder of the right-wing organization Moms for Liberty, which has successfully advocated for book bans and against LGBTQ rights across the country (USDOE 2025). In a matter of months, President Trump has accomplished what Republican activists have sought for decades.

This is not simply a backlash against progressive social movements such as #MeToo and Black Lives Matter, both of which gained prominence during the first Trump administration. Instead, it is a conservative counterrevolution, and at its core is the belief that certain political institutions have been ideologically captured by the left. "Ideological capture" is a process that conservatives believe has taken decades. It accelerated during the Obama presidency, undoubtedly because of what the first Black President represented to his supporters and detractors alike, and was cauterized while Joe Biden sat in the Oval Office. The underlying claim

concerning ideological capture is that "left-wing race, gender, and woke ideology" is deeply embedded in the "deep state" of the federal public service, especially in policy areas pertaining to health and human services, education, the arts, justice, and labour; that higher education is a bastion of left-wing intolerance where liberals guard and control the task of indoctrinating the next generation of elites; and that "radical woke ideology" permeates all government business, from the procurement of contracts and the funding of research to foreign aid to the mundane daily tasks of government bureaucrats, such that extraordinary state action is required to undo and reset American institutions so they are stripped of the system of left-wing patronage.

The effects of this iteration of conservative redesign are predictable, because we have been here before; this is a 21st-century version of 19th- and 20th-century patterns. When Black Lives Matter gained widespread support in the summer of 2020, some argued it was a Third Reconstruction (Joseph 2022). Much like the period of Reconstruction following the U.S. Civil War, and the civil rights movement's challenge to racial segregation in the 1960s, this was a moment of upheaval, in which Black Americans and their allies demanded a new, more inclusive and egalitarian formulation of American democracy. And just as before, these movements for and moments of racial justice have now been overthrown by a revival of the period of Redemption, in which regressive forces deploy the power of the state to rewrite American history, resuscitate racial and gendered hierarchies that were damaged but not destroyed, and revert to a deeply unequal status quo.

In Canada, we are beginning to witness direct spill-over effects from the tsunami of anti-DEI attacks from the executive branch. Canadian researchers with American-funded grants have been asked by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget if their work is connected to diversity, equity, and inclusion, includes issues related to climate or environmental justice, or whether it takes “appropriate measures to protect women and to defend against gender ideology” (Friesen 2025). In addition, rumblings in Corporate Canada suggest that there is pressure to align business priorities with Trump’s anti-DEI crusade, or to otherwise rebrand, roll back, or eliminate DEI programming (Thompson 2025; Williams 2025).

But Canadians are not simply reacting to the happenings south of the border. A rising tide of homegrown, locally inflected, inextricably Canadian anti-DEI sentiment is already upon us.

The Freedom Convoy, which seized downtown Ottawa in January and February 2022, was an early symptom of a peculiarly Canadian politics of grievance. Initially a protest against the COVID-19 vaccine mandates, the convoy was galvanized by an appeal to freedom from government overreach and an intense hatred of then-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The Canadian Anti-Hate Network’s (2022) reporting on convoy organizers also revealed histories of Islamophobia, antisemitism, racism and incitements to violence. The convoy was an early and extreme outburst that represented a wider sentiment – the “left” had gone too far, not just in its approach to managing the pandemic, but also in its concessions to “social justice warriors,” its weaponization of cancel culture, its haughty elitism. According to a report commissioned

by the Public Policy Forum, young Canadians identified COVID-19 vaccines and public health policies as the most polarizing issue in the country, followed closely followed by politics and the role of government, race and racism, human rights, equity and access issues, and gender and sexual identity (Ling 2023, 24).

A more specific targeting of DEI was bound to follow. In November 2024, the Standing Committee on Science and Research heard from several professors about how DEI narrows the talent pipeline seeking federal research funding. Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre agreed with controversial culture warrior Jordan Peterson’s claim that racism had been imported to Canada from the United States, arguing that Canadians should abandon hyphenated identities and must “put aside race, this obsession with race that wokeism has reinserted.” The Conservative Party’s campaign strategy in the April 2025 election was to increase the salience of those issues that define the so-called culture wars (Kaufmann 2024), though the resignation of Trudeau, whom Conservatives dutifully dub as “woke,” threw a wrench in those and other campaign plans.

Because the backlash was incubated elsewhere but bred in Canada, it is both inflicted with Canadian cultural moorings and facilitated (or obstructed) by Canadian political institutions. Take the nature of ideological polarization, a key battlefield in any contemporary manifestation of the culture wars, as an example. In the United States, the vast literature on affective polarization suggests that the growing emotional, social, and political distance between political party elites and their supporters can make it more challenging to build bipartisan

consensus and lower trust in political institutions and democratic processes (Shah 2025). Democratic norms such as institutional forbearance and mutual toleration (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018) emerge from the tension between conflict and consensus, and democratic institutions must enable political elites to balance the former while building the latter. Unlike Americans, however, there's mixed evidence that Canadians are becoming more ideologically polarized. Richard Johnston (2023) demonstrates that while Canadians' feelings toward political parties have become more polarized, these sentiments are not necessarily negative. Moreover, the way that ideological partisanship has become akin to a form of identity politics in the United States simply doesn't resonate in the Canadian context.

When Trump took office in 2016 and popular scholarship scrambled to explain white working-class resentment (Hochschild 2016; Vance 2016; Metzl 2019) and the tide of right-wing populism that swept the globe, public support for immigration and multiculturalism remained consistently high in Canada. Often referred to as "Canadian exceptionalism," political scientists argued that Canada avoided the trend that led to Brexit and the election of President Trump because of geographic happenstance, distinct immigration, citizenship, and multicultural policy regimes, and the configuration of the electoral system (Banting and Kymlicka 2010; Bloemraad 2012, Triadafilopoulos and Taylor 2021).

The consensus surrounding Canadian exceptionalism is now fracturing. International students were somehow scapegoated as bearing responsibility for the country's housing affordability crisis as it came into sharp public focus in 2023. The Liberals responded to public pressure by capping international student visas and reducing immigration targets. Although President Trump's more recent call for Canada to become "the 51st state" and the tariffs he has imposed on Canadian imports are deeply unpopular with the vast majority of Canadians, only 45 per cent of Canadians dislike his executive order that bans anyone who is not biologically female at birth from participating in women's sports and approximately 76 per cent of Conservative voters and 49 percent of Liberal voters like the decision (Kishchuk 2025).

Trump's attacks on Canada's economy and sovereignty have, at least temporarily, unified Canadians and bolstered Liberal support ahead of April's election, in which the Mark Carney-led party won a minority mandate with a slim advantage over the Conservatives in the national popular vote. Only time will tell the extent to which the war on woke – whether homegrown or borrowed from the United States – will turn anti-DEI backlash into regressive public policies.

TITRE DU TEXTE - NOM DE L'AUTEUR

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A TRUMP'S EYE VIEW OF CANADA

DAVID J. ROVINSKY

David Rovinsky lives in Burlington, Vermont. He retired after a 22-year career in the U.S. Foreign Service, during which he served in Brazil, Paraguay, the Philippines and Kuwait, and taught at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. He holds a Master's degree in political science from Université Laval and a doctorate from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. He is currently the Secretary of the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States.

Donald Trump has made various statements about Canada, beginning on November 25, 2024, when he first announced his intent to impose a 25-per-cent tariff on all Canadian goods entering the United States. His justifications for these tariffs have shifted: at times, he frames them as a bargaining tool to force Canada into discussions on border security, immigration and drug smuggling; at others, he cites the American bilateral trade deficit with Canada, the need to accelerate the scheduled 2026 review of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), or even as leverage to pressure Canada into meeting NATO's two-per-cent-of-GDP defence spending target. Most provocatively, he has called for the United States to annex Canada and admit it as a single state. Analyzing Trump's rhetoric is challenging, as it often appears to be the erratic outbursts of a social media-savvy demagogue. However, beneath the bluster, elements of a broader view of Canada emerge.

Border security, the drug trade, trade imbalances, and military spending are longstanding issues in U.S.-Canada relations. The two nations routinely engage in diplomatic consultations on these topics, and a simple U.S. request for talks would likely have sufficed to bring Canada to the table. The policies Trump demands of Canada are not inherently unreasonable in a different context, and Canadian commentators often acknowledge that addressing these matters aligns with Canada's national interest irrespective of American pressure. However, Trump's approach is characterized by his signature petulance, a negotiation style reminiscent of Nixon's "madman theory" – the idea that projecting irrationality can be an effective diplomatic strategy.

But does Trump's rhetoric reveal a deeper perspective on Canada, and if so, will it translate into policy over the next four years? His statements on Canada must be understood alongside his past remarks

about purchasing Greenland from Denmark and reestablishing American control over the Panama Canal Zone by force. This worldview echoes the Gilded Age, particularly the presidency of William McKinley, when the United States raised tariffs and used the Spanish-American War to annex Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. This period of expansionism was rooted in Manifest Destiny – the belief that U.S. territorial growth was inevitable and justified. The idea of acquiring Canada was a recurring theme in American political discourse from the American Revolution through the aftermath of the Civil War, influencing the formation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867 as a defensive measure against U.S. annexationist ambitions. As late as 1911, U.S. House Speaker Champ Clark argued that a U.S. – Canada reciprocity agreement was the first step toward annexation – an assertion that likely contributed to the agreement’s failure, helping Robert Borden’s Conservatives win that year’s Canadian federal election.

Annexationist rhetoric was historically more common among American conservatives, whose nationalism had an expansionist bent. Canadian conservatives of the time, in contrast, were staunch monarchists who valued Canada’s place in the British Empire and were therefore wary of American republicanism. However, a faction of free-market liberals argued that economic realities favored North American integration. The most famous articulation of this view came from historian Goldwin Smith in his 1891 book, *Canada and the Canadian Question*. Smith contended that Canada lacked a sustainable economic foundation as an independent nation, arguing that its economic structure had a north-south orientation better suited to integration with the United States. He also

dismissed Canada’s linguistic duality as untenable, predicting the assimilation of French Canadians. For Smith, Canadian sovereignty was an artificial construct propped up by British colonial ties, and annexation would free Canada from London’s geopolitical constraints.

It is unclear how much direct knowledge of Canada exists within Trump’s inner circle or who informs their perspective on Canadian affairs. There are documented connections between Trumpists and elements of Canada’s far-right, as seen during the 2022 Freedom Convoy protests and trucker occupation of downtown Ottawa. There was also an evident antagonism between Trump and former Liberal prime minister Justin Trudeau, fueled by their clash at the 2018 G7 Summit and broader ideological differences between Trumpian conservatism and the Canadian liberal elite’s “Laurentian Consensus.” However, Trump and his advisors have demonstrated an acute understanding of which button to press to unsettle Canadian political discourse. It is as though someone at Mar-a-Lago had studied Margaret Atwood’s *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, in which she observed, “Canadians are forever taking the national pulse like doctors at a sickbed; the aim is not to see whether the patient will live well but simply whether he will live at all.” They may also have come across Richard Rohmer’s 1970s novels *Ultimatum and Exxoneration*, which depict U.S. attempts to dominate and annex Canada, and recognized the psychological fault lines they were probing.

So far, Trump has refrained from directly exploiting Canada’s most sensitive political issue: national unity. His closest allies in Canada are conservative provincial leaders in Saskatchewan and Alberta,

provinces whose economic ties to the United States rival those with the rest of Canada. Alberta Premier Danielle Smith met with Trump at Mar-a-Lago before his inauguration and reportedly sought assurances that Alberta would receive more favorable treatment under his tariff policy. Trump obliged by keeping tariffs on Canadian energy at 10 per cent instead of 25. Yet he could have gone further – had he exempted Alberta oil entirely, he might have baited Ottawa into imposing an export tax that would have inflamed national unity tensions. Likewise, Trump has avoided engaging with Quebec, despite its unique status within Canada. Only recently did right-wing Quebec nationalist Mathieu Bock-Côté argue that Quebec should pursue independence – an outcome he already supports unconditionally – if the United States annexed Canada. Thus far, no one in Trump's camp has attempted to court the Parti Québécois, despite its current polling strength and its pledge to hold a third sovereignty referendum if it wins the 2026 Quebec election.

The resignation of Justin Trudeau and the rise of Mark Carney as his successor as prime minister – a status confirmed in Canada's late-April 2025 federal election – have added a new dynamic to this equation. Carney's polling strength stemmed in part from the perception that he is well-equipped to handle Trump's aggressive trade and foreign policy maneuvers. His background in finance and central banking positions him as a leader who can navigate the economic turbulence that a second Trump presidency may bring. Carney's victory in the Trump-centered election campaign underscores how deeply Canadians are attuned to the potential disruptions emanating from Washington.

Trump's invocation of annexation may seem surprising, but it is not without historical precedent. It is merely another facet of his broader nostalgia for late 19th-century American politics. While unlikely to materialize as a concrete policy, his rhetoric has the potential to continue to disrupt Canadian politics, particularly if he chooses to stoke regional tensions in Alberta or Quebec. The extent of this destabilization will depend on how, and whether, Trump weaponizes his expansionist rhetoric in the years ahead.

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‘OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES WILL ALWAYS BE IMPORTANT TO US’

JANICE STEIN

Renowned as one of Canada’s most respected national and international experts on world politics, Janice Gross Stein is the Belzberg Professor of Conflict Management and the founding Director of the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and a member of the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario. She is an Honorary Foreign Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She was the CBC’s Massey Lecturer in 2001 and an inaugural Trudeau Fellow. She was awarded the Molson Prize by the Canada Council for an outstanding contribution by a social scientist to public debate. She has been awarded Honorary Doctorate of Laws by five universities around the world. In 1996, Stein became a University Professor, the highest honour the U of T accords its faculty.

Janice Stein offered her insights on the past and present state of Canada-U.S. relations in an exchange with guest editor Randy Boswell.

Q.: Considering the history of Canada-U.S. relations, how would you characterize the present upheaval since U.S. President Donald Trump took office in January 2025? Are we, in fact, experiencing a watershed moment - a historical rupture?

A.: I would not describe this as a historical rupture if we take a longer view of the relationship that formally begins after the Civil War (1861-65) in the United States. Canadians at the time of Confederation distinguished themselves from those south of the border by maintaining their

loyalty to the Crown. As part of his government’s protectionist National Policy, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald imposed tariffs to support the development of Canadian industry and the country engaged in a conscious and deliberate effort at nation-building by constructing national railways that ran east-to-west rather than north-south. There were, in other words, long periods of deliberate strategies to distinguish Canada from the United States. And the U.S., too, at times, pursued protectionist policies, when President William McKinley (1897-1901), whom President Trump is known to

admire, imposed tariffs. In the 1960s, a Canadian nationalist movement defined itself in part by being “not American.” Around the same time, however, that began to change with the creation of an integrated auto sector. Then, in a historic election in 1988, Canada voted for Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, who strongly supported free trade with the United States. For almost 40 years, Canada has moved steadily towards integrating its economy with that of the United States. Both countries lowered tariff barriers and investment and trade flowed across borders. It is this last 40 years that President Trump has disrupted.

We are indeed facing a rupture, but it is far from the first time in our history that we have deliberately reduced our connections to the United States.

Q.: Are there lessons from Canada’s past that should be guiding this country’s approach to the present turmoil in its relations with the U.S.?

A.: Economies have changed so significantly in the last 40 years that strategies that succeeded in the past are at best metaphorical guides to the future. Manufacturing has declined in both countries – as it has in all developed economies – agriculture has been commercialized, the service sector has grown exponentially in both economies as a source of income and exports, and technology is dramatically reshaping the service sector, as well as the agricultural and resource extraction sectors. President Trump’s use of tariffs to bring back 20th-century manufacturing jobs to the United States makes little sense. It is a backward-looking nostalgic strategy. Canada needs to be wary of investing to protect jobs that technology will make obsolete in the next decade or two. Rather than looking back, Canada needs

to look to the future and make the investments in technology and productivity that will shape the next-generation economies.

Q.: There are two main, interrelated challenges facing Canada: the Trump-imposed tariffs that many other countries are dealing with, as well, and which threaten Canada’s economy; and Trump’s repeated references to Canada being annexed as a “51st state,” a territorial threat also faced by Denmark (Greenland) and Panama (Panama Canal). How do you view these particular challenges, and – more specifically – how seriously do you view Trump’s talk of annexation through economic coercion?

A.: The repeated discussion by President Trump of Canada as a “51st state” – a discussion which began in his last term – shows that this is no passing fancy. Rather, it is something that the president continues to think about. What is remarkable is that Canada becoming a 51st state would so clearly favour the Democrats rather the Republicans electorally. In a recent article in *The Washington Post*, Paul Kane – who, with experts, modelled the impact of Canadian voters – found that Canadian voters would have changed the results of the last U.S. presidential election. If political gains are not the animating force of the president’s obsession, then it can only be economic gains that are motivating him – access to Canadian critical minerals, water and other resources that Canada has and which the United States needs and wants. It would be foolhardy for Canadians not to take the implied threat seriously.

Q.: Both main political parties in Canada appear to agree that the best strategy in the present moment

involves firm retaliation against U.S. tariffs and simultaneous strengthening of trade and security relations with Europe and other countries around the world. Could you briefly explore how you think Canada's next government should confront the ongoing challenges posed by a Trump-led United States?

A.: We have just come through an astonishing election campaign where the fortunes of Canada's two principal parties reversed dramatically in the face of the economic threat from the United States. Canada's leaders will now have to be deliberate, careful and cool as they calculate how much Canada can realistically diversify. Geography is a powerful magnet and the pull from a southern market that is dynamic, productive, innovative and nine times as large as ours will remain. Our relationship with the United States will always be important to us – we share a continent and we are part of the Americas. We can and should do more with our friends in Europe and our partners in the Indo-Pacific – the fastest growing region of the world. We do need to be clear-eyed, however, about how much we can diversify our economy beyond North America in the next decade.

How should Canada's next government confront the challenges posed by a Trump-led United States? Canada cannot, as Prime Minister Mark Carney acknowledged recently, prevail in dollar-for-dollar retaliation. The asymmetries in the size of the two economies are simply too great. But Canada does have assets – our uranium, our potash, our critical minerals, our energy – that are vitally important to the United States in the short and medium term. There are also sectors of the U.S. economy – the auto sector, most notably – that will be severely

disrupted by tariffs because supply chains are so tightly integrated. Canada's leaders need to be focused and deliberate as they put in place strategies that have two separate but related objectives. First, tariffs can be used to create incentives for the United States to come to the table to negotiate a renewal of the Canada-U.S.-Mexico trade agreement, CUSMA. Ideally, we will not be the first, or the second, or the fifth country to reach an agreement. Strategic patience will be a tremendous virtue. Second, and more important, the tariffs can be used to buy time as we reform our economy, seek foreign investment outside U.S. capital markets, and enable investment in the technologies that will be fundamental to the economy of the future. This should be the highest priority of the new government.

Q.: Much concern has been expressed in recent years about a growing embrace of authoritarianism around the world and a corresponding decline in faith in democracy and its institutions. How much do you think this phenomenon is shaping the current tensions in Canada-U.S. relations?

A.: The retreat of democracy and the turn to authoritarianism should be of deep concern to Canadians. Authoritarianism threatens everything Canadians hold dear – our values, our culture, our educational institutions, our society, our politics, our economy, and, of course, our rights. The most powerful antidote to authoritarianism is restoring trust in our democratic institutions. And a big part of restoring trust is persuading Canadians that government works for them, that it can deliver services effectively and efficiently, that it can patrol our borders, and that it can protect them at home and abroad. It is no accident that Mussolini, the fascist leader

in Italy in the 1930s, promised to make the trains run on time. Our trains have not been running on time – and we have not, incidentally, built the next generation of high-speed trains. Our new government has to focus on improving the daily lives of Canadians and showing them why and how government matters to them. This is a tall order but, this time, we cannot afford to fail. We see the price of failure when we watch, mesmerized in horror, at what is happening in the United States, our closest neighbour and friend.

AN APPEAL TO DONALD TRUMP: JOIN CANADA!

ANDREW COHEN

Andrew Cohen is a best-selling author, an award-winning journalist and an adjunct professor of journalism at Carleton University. His seven books of history, biography and commentary range in subjects from Canada's constitutional politics to national character and Arctic exploration. His latest book is *Two Days in June: John F. Kennedy and the 48 Hours That Made History*. Between 1997 and 2001, he was *The Globe and Mail's* correspondent and columnist in Washington, D.C. In 2016-2017, as a Fulbright Scholar, he held the Fulbright Visiting Chair in Canada-U.S. Relations at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington.

Dear President Trump,

In the 100-plus days since you took office, you have been around the world without leaving home. My, my, you are busy – brokering peace in Ukraine, rebalancing the international trade system, ending foreign aid, imagining Gaza from the River to the Riviera, reclaiming the Panama Canal, painting Greenland red, white and blue.

What is most audacious, though, is your promise to make Canada the 51st state. You raised the idea after your election, and you generously shared it with Justin Trudeau at Mar-a-Lago in December. You even called him governor! He appreciated the promotion and your avuncular interest in his political future.

You should know, Mr. President, that Canadians are thrilled with your invitation. To think that we,

the Shy Dominion, could one day join the Great Republic! It's humbling. Some Canadians have always wanted to become Greater America, and it's easy to see why. As they sing in *West Side Story*, "Life is all right in America!"

Canadians have long envied so much about your country – Hollywood, jazz, rock 'n' roll, baseball, hot dogs, Howard Johnson's, Marilyn Monroe and Taylor Swift, Mount Rushmore and the Grand Canyon, the Secret Service, the Washington Monument. Everything is bigger and better. Canada is dull. You win a television game show here and the grand prize is a toaster; in America, it's a Cadillac. As kids in Montreal, we had Smarties, Fanta and Place Ville Marie; we wanted M&Ms, Coca-Cola and the Empire State Building. We had *The Beachcombers*, you had the Beach Boys. We had Mackenzie King, you had Martin Luther King, Jr. Enough said.

We so envied you, we copied you. The National Park Service and Parks Canada; the Great Society and the Just Society; the Flatiron Building in New York and the Gooderham Building in Toronto (truth be told, ours was first).

But much as we wanted America – dazzled by your geography, your history, your personality – you never seriously wanted us. It’s flattering – touching, really – that you do now.

But because we admire you, Mr. President, we must tell you that annexing us is a mistake. We are a progressive, moderate country of activist government, state regulation and political correctness. We are expanding our social welfare state (dentalcare, pharmacare) while you want to shrink yours (Social Security, Obamacare). Until Canada’s population recently overtook California’s, there were more Americans thinking like Canadians in the U.S. than there were in all of Canada. More dangerously, we would add 52 seats to the House of Representatives, equal to those California has now. Most would be held by Democrats, who would control the House for a generation.

You know that, Mr. President. We think that when you speak of the 51st state (which you’ve also repeated since Mark Carney became PM) you’re just being your shrewd, mischievous self. We suspect that you don’t really want us. What you want is our water, oil and gas, critical minerals. We’re not offended that you aren’t interested in hockey, curling, Anne Murray, poutine, Newfoundland, black flies and winter. It doesn’t hurt our feelings. Well, maybe, a little bit.

But here’s another way to look at it, Mr. President:

Rather than our joining you, why don’t you join us? The more you consider it, the better it sounds. It makes so much sense, you’ll be disappointed you didn’t think of it yourself. (Don’t worry, we can keep this idea between us and let you announce it on Truth Social.)

Why join us? Well, for starters, you would take on the character of Canadians. You’d become smaller and weaker, sure, but kinder and gentler. You will be modest, unassuming and uncomfortably polite. Not necessarily nice, because we aren’t always nice; hockey is more violent than baseball, especially the fighting. Rest assured, you won’t become wallflowers. You’d still be free to shout, curse and rant. In response, we’ll “tsk” and disapprove “with respect”. Instead of defiant, your default position, you’ll be deferential. In no time you’ll be saying “please”, “thank you” and “sorry” even when the other person is at fault. You will be calmer, almost Zen. UnAmerican, yes, but your blood pressure will thank you.

As Canadians, your people will also be less violent. A hard trait to lose, I know. After all, you were born in blood in 1776 and you’ve been bleeding ever since. You lost more of your own in the Civil War than in all your foreign wars combined. We have never had a civil war, revolution, insurrection or much in the way of riots or civil disorder. You’ll have fewer guns (you have 400 million among 348 million people). No right to keep and bear arms, so that will take some adjustment. But don’t worry, Mr. President, in Canada we won’t be mugging, robbing and killing you as much, so there won’t be a need for them. Bad things do happen in Canada, but they happen less often.

When you become us, you become one with our less complicated past. Rather than settling the West and killing and displacing native people, you can say you did it our way, which wasn't genocide. Same with slavery, which we rejected and became Harriet Tubman's Promised Land. Won't it be a relief not to have to answer for that anymore, or feel guilty, either, which is good because you never apologized for it? We will introduce you to reconciliation and land acknowledgements.

You'll look at life differently as American-Canadians. Politics and religion don't mix here. Guns are not sacrosanct. Neither is the military. Pot is legal everywhere, not just in some states. Hot-button social issues are less hot. We reject capital punishment but allow abortion and medically-assisted death. (It's becoming so popular an elderly friend in Alberta reports that she and the husband attended a lively workshop at the seniors' centre to learn their options, and the place was packed. They can't wait.) As Canadians, you should also know, we're fine with stem-cell research, same-sex marriage and transgender rights. Join us, and the angst over these all goes away.

You won't love our economy. Taxes are higher. Prices are higher. You'll be less wealthy. You will notice that consumers here are different, which means cheap, which is why Nordstrom failed. Target wasn't even enough of a bargain for Canadians. If you fail here, well, we say, you can fail anywhere. Hudson's Bay, our iconic department store, is failing, just like Macy's. The Bay was killed by Americans, but may be saved by the Chinese. You don't like our few chartered banks, but who needs Chase Manhattan and Bank of America when you have the Bank of Commerce and Bank of

Nova Scotia? More Canadian prudence and fewer bank failures.

You won't have to worry about all those tariffs on us; you can raise revenues through our national sales tax. You won't have to worry about health care, either, which is free and universal. And because we accept vaccines, we had one third of the deaths (per capita) of your country during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have less chance of an outbreak of the diseases you worry about (though, like Texas, there are rising cases of measles in Ontario.)

The real benefits for you, Mr. President, will be in military and foreign affairs. Worry not about spending US\$892 billion on defence as you do now; in Canada, our army is the size of a constabulary, and we practice pinch-penny diplomacy. We don't worry about threats from anyone, because, who wants to invade us? Indeed, with your joining us, the greatest threat – you – disappears. A win-win for everyone, Mr. President.

Unlike you, we get along with everyone. We are the world's nice guy, the boy scout, the helpful fixer and honest broker. We put middling in middle power. We were once the world's leading peacekeepers, and now you can be, too! There isn't a club we haven't joined. Everyone loves us, we Canadians, and they'll love you, too.

Something else. As Canadians, you'll inherit the Far North. No need to take it from us, as you've been threatening. Now we'll be one happy family, extending from the Gulf of Canada to the Sea of Gretzky. With our land and your icebreakers, we can keep the Russians and Chinese out. And, most of all, you won't need Greenland.

But you know the biggest attraction of joining Canada, Mr. President? It's what's in it for you, personally. You can become prime minister in a few weeks. Our campaigns are shorter and cheaper, and we count the votes and announce the result immediately. No one challenges them. Keep winning and you can govern forever. Really. No term limits, here! No fussing over a third term. As prime minister you set the date of the election. Up here, like FDR, you can run and run and run. Mackenzie King was in office 22 years, Pierre Trudeau 16 years, and others, including Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau, around a decade. And, hey, if you want to be King of Canada, that's possible, too! Persuade your friend King Charles III to abdicate, and his crown is yours. I don't think he'd mind losing Canada, which he rarely visits anyway. Another thing: you can pack the high court with your appointees, no Senate confirmation needed. Here you can be dictator not for a day, as you threatened, but for as long as you want.

Go for it, Mr. President. Seize the moment. This is your time. This is your opportunity for immortality. Join us and you'll be celebrated and venerated, now and forever, as the sovereign of the greatest union the world has ever seen: The United States of Canada.

Your faithful servant,

Andrew Cohen

