

A Return to Prosperity Would Foster Unity in Canada

By Conrad Black

It is illustrative of the decline in Canada's credibility as a durable and successful country that the essay section of the influential American political media aggregator RealClearPolitics recently ran a [column by John Dominguez](#), an investment banker in Virginia, laying out a strategy for the American absorption of Canada. His opening gambit reads: "While Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney shops his country to China and Qatar, Americans should revisit an idea the Founding Fathers first proposed: welcoming Canada into the Union."



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some problems with this. I have expressed some concerns about the prime minister's views on how to manage relations with the United States and China, but I don't think it would be

remotely fair to say that he is shopping Canada around as if for an alternate takeover to the “51st state” suggested by President Trump. Nor is it quite accurate to say that the Founding Fathers of the United States attempted to welcome Canada into the Union.

Gen. George Washington urged Canadians to join the uprising against the British, but Canada at that time had a French-speaking and Roman Catholic majority that was not enchanted with the American revolutionary Continental Congress’s [description](#) of Roman Catholicism as “a religion which had flooded England with blood and had spread hypocrisy, murder, persecution, and revolt into all parts of the world ... a bloodthirsty, idolatrous and hypocritical creed.”

These ungenerous sectarian reflections seriously undercut Washington’s call to Canadians to “unite with us in an indissoluble union.” Dominguez’s theory is that the American founders considered that the destiny of their new country was not only to the west but the north, and from the start the incorporation of Canada was seen not “as a conquest, but as a conclusion.” With astonishing flippancy—that nevertheless reveals Canada’s failure, for at least an informed part of American opinion, to establish itself as a permanent and legitimate entity—Dominguez holds the absorption of Canada to be “an imperative” that “would add trillions of dollars in productive capacity, secure America’s northern frontier, and strengthen its strategic posture. What better legacy for President Trump, a real estate developer turned president, than acquiring land for this country?” (That’s what they said about Greenland.)

Dominguez is not well known or particularly representative, and the fact that RealClearPolitics took his comments sufficiently seriously to publish them does confer some legitimate currency on his viewpoint. He doesn’t stop at the historical basis of the desirability of amalgamating with Canada, although it is entirely the real estate that interests

him and not apparently the 41 million inhabitants. He provides a tactical playbook on how to achieve his objective, and says the talk of Canada as a 51st state "misses the point." He recognizes the rightful discontent of Alberta, which he notes is so wealthy a jurisdiction that the acquisition of it would be an investment comparable to Nvidia.

Dominguez's analysis of the wealth of Alberta is correct, and his recognition of Alberta's grievances against the way the Canadian federal system has functioned recently is also correct. But his proposal that Washington invite Alberta to hold a referendum on becoming a territory of the United States is nonsense. In such circumstances, Alberta would simply have a referendum on becoming an independent republic and become probably the per capita wealthiest country in the world without income taxes and with Americans and Canadians flooding into it to take advantage of its enviable status. This would not materially advance the supposedly manifest American destiny of acquiring Canada.

As if he had made a profound discovery, Dominguez announces that the departure of Alberta would start the dominoes rolling and would be followed immediately by Quebec's departure from the Confederation. This is certainly a plausible scenario, but the United States would not gain anything from an independent Quebec. He then assumes that all the other provinces would follow suit. "The U.S. does not need to annex Canada in a single stroke," he writes. "Like a lion devouring a fat gazelle, America should absorb Canada one bite at a time."

This is a rather simplistic analysis. In the first place, the forces of continuity in Canada are stronger than Dominguez implies. (The United States had the Civil War, not Canada.) Very few Canadians would rather be Americans. Although Canadians are profoundly dissatisfied with the uncompetitive economic performance of the country in recent years, they expect to return to the standard of living they had become accustomed to over a century that equalled that of the United

States.

Canadians do not like U.S. crime rates, and are appalled at the desperation of homelessness, drug addiction, and the very visible dregs of American society. They would not welcome the adoption of the American attitude to firearms, the overwhelming role of money in American politics, and the corrupt prosecutocracy of [criminal justice](#) by which the United States has 5 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of its incarcerated people. Federal criminal cases are won by the prosecution in 98 percent of cases, 95 percent without trial; such is the bias against the defendants created by the constantly abused plea-bargain system.

If Canada does not regain its status as being 85 or 90 percent as prosperous as the United States, it could ultimately be susceptible to an overture from Washington, but it would have to be based on a U.S. dollar for every Canadian dollar—an outright bribe like that offered to East Germany by West Germany in 1991. Canada would not accept American gun laws, and neither would it accept America's 20 million worst welfare cases flooding into Canada.

If the United States packaged all this up and asked for a referendum, it would get a significant number of votes. But most Canadians would rather get back to building a better country than the United States—admittedly not a greater one, but still a country much more deserving of respect than John Dominguez gives it.

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