

With America in decline, this is Canada's time to shine

As the U.S. suffers through its first period of outright decline since the Great Depression, this is our chance for Canada to be an important and positive world leader

by Conrad Black



This is the time Canada has awaited for 350 years: the United States has momentarily subsided into a state of juvenilism and self-flagellation. Instead of wallowing in our own tears every time unmarked graves are discovered and prancing around gas-lighting and virtue-signalling over nebulous questions of climate change, and claiming to be a post-national state, we should take advantage of the first time in our history when we are not preoccupied with the Americans. We should resume the upward rise of Canada in the world, not out of any spite for the U.S., but to fulfill our long-perceived destiny and serve

the common interests of the West.

As anyone who knows anything about the history of Canada is aware (and too few Canadians are), apart from settling and building Canada, the great struggle of this country has been to maintain its independence from the Americans, and more recently to have any serious *raison d'être* independent of the U.S. That is not because of hostility to the U.S., or because being a part of the United States would be a pitiable fate. By most measurements, the United States is the greatest nation in the history of the world and those Americans, undoubtedly the great majority, who still honour their flag and their anthem are rightfully proud of their country. But there was always the feeling in Canada, from the times of Samuel de Champlain, that something different and in some respects better, though not as grand, could be done here, partly because of the unbroken British connection, partly because of the French fact, but mainly because of the propensity of Canadians to be sensible, peaceable, tolerant and comparatively prosperous.

Louis de Buade de Frontenac repelled an American attack on Quebec in 1690. Guy Carleton, with the help of the French-Canadians, repulsed the American revolutionaries in 1775 and the following years. General Isaac Brock and others narrowly prevented the Americans from taking over Canada in the War of 1812. And for the following 50 years, the United States was walking on eggshells trying to manage the crisis of slavery and of the Union, culminating in the noble but terrible Civil War (1861-1865). Thereafter, while there were occasional annexationist noises, Canada was enjoying the challenges and pleasures of nation-building and the United States did not wish to go from its Civil War into combat with the British Empire over Canada and therefore left us alone. By the beginning of the 20th century, Canada had made its point and was welcomed as an inoffensive and commendable kindred spirit by the Americans. Yet the challenge continued: the United States almost tripled in population between the Civil War and

the First World War and regularly ran eight per cent annual GDP growth rates. Canada kept pace with this despite our comparative lack of a mystique, and without the genius of the spectacle that the Americans have always possessed, which in some ways makes Canada's achievements even greater than the unheard of rise of America, with which we remained in lock-step.

here has never been anything like the huge numbers of volunteer warriors Canada sent to the world wars, even though we were ourselves under no threat. We were one of the four or five most significant allied powers in the Second World War, and a valued ally in the Cold War. Canada has never been involved in anything other than a just war, never been on the losing side, never sought anything for itself except the defence of freedom and always fought with distinction. Throughout this time, the assurance of our national security has come from the United States, ever since President Franklin D. Roosevelt said in Kingston, Ont., in 1938 that the United States "would not stand idly by if Canada were attacked." (This was the origin of that endlessly invoked expression.) This position was formalized with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949, with Canada as a co-founder; NATO has gone on to become the most successful alliance in the history of the world.

It is doubtless its extraordinary originality and adaptability that has enabled the United States to launch itself into a time of utter silliness and mindless nonsense. Under the current administration, the United States has hurled open its southern borders to a flood of unskilled and largely desperate people who are rarely proficient in English and take jobs away from hard-working Americans, usually Blacks and Hispanics, who are in the country legally. At the same time, the country's police departments have been subjected to a fiscal and public-relations assault that has produced a tremendous jump in violent crime; and huge money supply increases have arguably

caused inflation to reach eight or nine per cent, if gasoline and building materials, especially lumber, resume their rightful share of the consumer price index.

China has effectively proclaimed itself to be the world's most powerful and best-governed country, while the United States has invited United Nations human rights authorities, influenced by those sterling upholders of the rights of man – China, Russia and Iran – to rate America's performance on matters of racism. The fact is that the United States has made the greatest and most successful effort of any country in the history of the world to raise up long-wronged ethnic minorities. This notoriously proud and often boastful country, which has spent centuries telling the rest of us about its "exceptionalism," is going through this time of dangerous absurdity, as some sort of national primal scream therapy, to exorcise what is left of its slave-holding guilt. It will pass quickly. In the meantime, all the haters of former president Donald Trump may celebrate the disaster of the last six months since their electoral wishes came true.

This is not an irreversible Spenglerian decline and the United States does not have a death wish. Because of the confluence of a number of non-recurring political and sociological events, this great country, which has long been so well self-pleased, is indulging in the often-useful habits of confession and repentance, but is carrying them to unjustifiable fits of self-reproach. This is a time when the world should contemplate what it would be like if Western, ultimately Judeo-Christian, values, the Western languages and alphabet and the whole civilization of the West, including popular culture and the free market economy, all ceased to be pre-eminent, and the system most admired and aspired to in the world. If the totalitarian Communist regime in China were to become the model for the world's political and economic system, the long night of its oppression would produce a new Dark Age, which, in the words of Winston Churchill, would be

“made more sinister and more protracted by the lights of perverted science.”

Europe is exhausted, the United States is momentarily a neurotic version of President Richard Nixon’s famous “pitiful helpless giant,” and our turn has come to acquire national self-confidence and pride, not arrogance or complacency. We should enhance our Armed Forces, which is the best form of technological and economic stimulation, and the fast track to gaining influence in the wobbling Western alliance. We should stop agonizing over confected gender issues and mawkishly sensationalized Native questions. Canada can be a positive influence in the world, but only if it is strong, innovative and distinctive. As the U.S. suffers through its first period of outright decline since the Great Depression, this is our chance for Canada to be an important and positive world leader. We must not squander it.

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