American plutocracy, Canadian hypocrisy

Terry Glavin - The Real Story / Substack - 2026-10-26

Original: https://therealstory.substack.com/p/american-plutocracy-canadian-hypocrisy

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. . . and European incoherence. A crippling trifecta as democracy is besieged.

Oct 26, 2026

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Over the past several days I've been consumed by these questions: Isn't it about time the Europeans stopped dicking around and expropriated the $225 billion in Russian sovereign-wealth funds tucked away in that securities depository in Belgium? Isn't it long past time for President Trump to be told to mind his own business and get out of the way? And something has to be done about Elon Musk, but what? And does Canada's road to a new and better world really need to run through China, Qatar and Turkey?

For some tentative answers to those questions, stay tuned. For today:

I'm not just being contrarian about this. . .

As a Canadian of unapologetically patriotic inclination I take no pleasure in finding myself in conscientious objection to a great deal of the pent-up nationalism that has swept the country lately. After a decade of having the Trudeau government browbeating us into comprehending Canada as a shameful, racist colonial settler-state, it's no wonder we're all nationalists again. Even so. . .

It's a strikingly odd thing that the mass adulation of Prime Minister Mark Carney that has become a singularly weird feature of Canadian politics is as much as an American thing as anything else. Canadians absorb as much oxygen from the American media and entertaintment atmosphere as the Yanks do, and the American punditry and all the late-night funnymen can't get enough of our prime minister. They're besotted, and I get it. They'll cheer for anybody who can dare to stand up to the deranged American president and get away with it.

And good for Prime Minister Carney, I guess, as far as that goes, but let's at least be honest with ourselves. It would be political suicide in Canada at the moment to adopt any other posture towards Mad King Donald. But the Carney government should take care not to make wild claims about its own distance from Putin, his oligarchs and his enablers. We'll get into all that here today. It's overlooked and under-reported and ignored, and it's nasty.

Before we get into today's questions, here's one that's worth asking out loud, in the form of a thought experiment.

After his threats to acquire Greenland by military force, and after Denmark and several NATO countries found the spine to lay plans to ambuscade any American military incursion, President Trump backed down. His administration entered into a handful of harmless arrangements with Denmark that were there for the taking since the 1950s, and yet last week, Trump declared that Denmark, Nuuk and NATO "were nice enough to give us Greenland, despite all the bad talk. . . . We got it; we got Greenland."

Is it really beyond imagining that after his threats to exert economic pressure to make Canada the 51st American state and his wildly unpopular tariff harassment and trade belligerence, Trump might just decide to conjure a similarly fanciful and imaginary victory over Canada?

What happens to the Carney government's entire trade and foreign-policy raison d'etre if a slightly amended Canada-U.S. Mexico Agreement materializes overnight? Does all the Elbows Up frenzy-making just go poof?

A permanent Canada-U.S. rupture: Are you sure about that?

In the National Post on Thursday my focus was on U.S. President Donald Trump's unpardonable accomodation of Vladimir Putin's war of terror and conquest in Ukraine. The sanctions-relief lifelines the White House has thrown to Moscow are just the latest moral outrages.

Even worse are the plausible-deniability operations the Trump administration has been running in collusion with the ketamine-addled SpaceX commander Elon Musk over the throttling of Ukraine's Starlink and Starshield defences during the deadliest Russian barrages since the war began.

I barely touched on the multibillion-dollar backroom connivings involving Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff, Trump's co-founder of the World Liberty Financial stablecoin racket, with Putin's slushfund manager and personal envoy on foreign investment, the McKinsey & Company alumnus Kirill Dmitriev.

The thing is, this has been going on for a long time (see The Long March Of The Tyrants), and it's only now that the penny is at long last beginning to drop: In the war between the police-state bloc and the world's liberal democracies, Donald Trump is on the other side.

Mark Carney, however, wants to have it both ways. That's what his Davos "Middle Powers" formula has come to.

In any case, the Trump administration's abdication demands some serious decision-making in the NATO capitals. I have a couple of suggestions, but there's the immediate challenge and the long-term predicament. Neither foretell a "permanent rupture" of America's relationship with Europe, or of Canada-U.S. relations.

I'm getting quite bored and annoyed with that line of rhetoric. There's no evidence for it, and a great deal of evidence against it.

Here's my case, from the Post:

It's likely enough that the Trump interregnum will not be followed by a return to the good old days when Carney's class of statesmen and investment bankers could pretend that democracies were flourishing in the neoliberal world they built. . . The Carney government is right. That world is gone. And good riddance.

In the meantime, there are decisions to be made, and the great peril is that if they're bad decisions, they'll foreclose the better options that a more ambitious, muscular, disciplined and principled politics would allow.

A Neo-Ottoman Caliph is Canada's new "strategic partner"

Carney's decision to include Recep Tayyip Erdoan's Turkey with the Qatari royal family and Xi Jinping's China among Canada's new "strategic partnerships" is making a bad turn even worse. It's exactly this kind of foreign and trade policy promiscuity that greased the skids for democracy's global retreat over the past quarter of a century. It's what produced Trumpism in the first place.

Besides, who really thinks a Canada-Turkey free trade agreement is such a great idea to start with? Setting aside the dubious "national interest" argument - is it really that smart to add Turkey to Canada's already-compromised supply chains? - why is Canada helping Erdogan realize his dream of transforming the Turkish republic into a semi-Islamist police state?

Just as Carney was leaving Istanbul over the weekend, thousands of journalists were protesting Erdogan's ruthless supression of independent media and oppositon voices.

Thousands rally in Istanbul and Ankara to protest against growing pressure on journalists

"We can no longer breathe." Thousands of journalists & free speech activists took to the streets of Istanbul on Saturday.

According to Freedom House, Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP), in power for a quarter of a century now, has turned increasingly authoritarian. Erdogan has consolidated power by amending the constitution and jailing opposition politicians and independent journalists. Now the Carney government looks to Turkey for a new military relationship. Turkey has just concluded a military alliance with Pakistan and the Saudis.

Erogan considers the genocidal terrorist group Hamas to be a legitimate political party and he dreams of the Holy Land returned to its status as a possession of the long-dead Ottoman Caliphate. Erdogan's Interior Minister, Mustafa Ciftci, offers up prayers that one day he'll rule Jerusalem as its governor. Do we really want to be drawing monstrous characters like these into Canada's system of "stakeholder capitalism"?

Once again, with feeling: The Americans are not our enemies

As I've insisting on pointing out, Donald Trump may be a lot of things, but he is not America, and Prime Minister Carney is wrong when he says "America is trying to break us so that they can own us." Public opinion polls consistently show that Americans are at best indifferent or opposed to their president's beggar-thy-neighbour "trade war" with Canada.

A Politico poll last month suggests that Americans are even more opposed to American tariffs on Canada than on Canada's reciprocal tariffs on the United States - 56 percent to 31 percent. Most Americans are on Canada's side.

When it comes to the war on Ukraine, President Trump had to defy his own Republicans in both Houses of Congress to finesse Putin's sale of diesel oil, and he further defied bipartisan majorities in Congress by suspending enforcement of the Lindsay Graham sanctions law, which was supposed to come into effect last weekend.

Americans are increasingly confused and disoriented by all this. As recently as July, a bipartisan survey

showed overwhelming American support for tougher measures on Russia. Among avowed Trump voters, 83 per cent supported stiffer sanctions targeting Moscow, only three points behind Democrats, who weighed in at 86 per cent. By October 14, a YouGov poll found that almost 40 per cent of American respondents figured that neither Russia nor Ukraine were owed sympathy in the war, or they were otherwise unsure what to think.

Even so, only four per cent shared their president's sympathies with Russia, and 57 per cent chose Ukraine.

Canada needs to climb down from the high horse it's been riding

It's perfectly sensible - and this would be true even if Trump had lost the 2024 presidential election and he was just another of many embarrassing American memories- that Canada should widen its circle of trade relationships and military cooperation with other democracies, especially in Europe. These would be good policies even if the upcoming midterm elections in the United States end up radically diminishing MAGA's influences and severely curtail Trump's ability to throw his weight around.

It's a bit perilous but otherwise all to the good that Canada is starting to summiteer around measures to more closely integrate with our fellow democracies in Europe - no matter how foolishly the outreach has been branded as a bid for European Union "associate membership." It's all to the good that Canada is investing in NATO's ultimate defence by supporting Ukraine, which just happens to be the front line in Putin's westward-facing imperialist warmongering.

But please, let's not pretend that the Trump family's intimacies with Putin and his oligarchs and the creepy Kushner-Witkoff contrivances with Kirill Dmitriev are any more stomach-turning than the Liberal Party's own collusions and collaborations with the Chinese Communist Party over the years. And let's not forget that Canada was totally on board with rehabilitating Vladimir Putin long before Trump came along.

The Liberals' habit of courting tyrants did not stop with last year's ouster of Justin Trudeau, who had almost singlehandedly turned the Liberal Party of Canada into the political wing of the Canada-China Business Council. Before the hostage-taking of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, the Trudeau government encouraged every effort by Beijing's United Front network in Canada to interfere in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections to the Liberals' advantage. Trudeau made Trump's much-studied and well-documented election collusions with Moscow look like bylaw infractions.

The Liberals' deeply embedded inclinations to happily accommodate authoritarian regimes persist in the elaborate, multi-faceted strategic partnership Prime Minister Carney concluded in January with Xi Jinping. See especially Carney-China deal full of Trojan Horses on police and propaganda.

But it doesn't stop there. As I pointed out in the Post, Trudeau's first foreign affairs minister before Chrystia Freeland upturned the applecarts was Stephane Dion, who distinguished himself by loudly advocating the restoration of full diplomatic relations with Khomeinist Iran. Dion mocked his own party's campaign promise to bring in a Magnitsky Sanctions law, and he argued for an open-arms embrace of Vladimir Putin's Russia and a lifting of all sanctions on Moscow.

Who's leading Canada out of the "permanent rupture"?

The greasy Bao Damin, Dominic Barton, that's who. Sorry for the impertinence, but this is the guy Carney has rehabilitated and appointed to lead Invest Canada's objective of pulling Canada out of the American orbit. Conveniently, that project was already Barton's big idea in the Liberal brains trust long before we

could use Trump as an excuse.

Barton was the Asia chairman and then the worldwide boss of Màiknx, McKinsey and Company, the scandal-wracked global consultancy that played such a crucial role in facilitating the eclipse of the world's liberal democracies and the long march of the tyrants, including Vladimir Putin's Russia, over the past 25 years.

And now Barton is leading Mark Carney's elaborate, whole-of-government effort that relies for its entire organizing principle on the proposition that the Canada-U.S. disaffection is "permanent."

It's a reasonable judgment that the damage the Trump presidency has done to the United States' foreign relations may take a generation to overcome. But that's a separate matter from the prospects for a rapprochement in the Canada-U.S. trade relationship.

A primer on McKinsey's unseemly global influences under Barton's command: The New York Times' reporters Walt Bogdanich and Michael Forsythe's How McKinsey Has Helped Raise the Stature of Authoritarian Governments. Bogdanich and Forsythe wrote a thick book on it all: When McKinsey Comes to Town: The Hidden Influence of the World's Most Powerful Consulting Firm.

My own investigations of the Canada-specific implications: Dominic Barton and the Damage Done, Part 1 and Part 2.

This is where things get really nasty. Some of what follows will be familiar to the Real Story's longstanding paying customers. Most of what follows hasn't seen the light of day in any Canadian news media.