

As the New Administration Emerges, It Is Getting Hard for Canadians To See America as an Ally

By Conrad Black

These have been such action-packed days that it is hard to believe that it is only three weeks since Donald Trump was re-inaugurated to the presidency of the United States. It is clear that, contrary to some expectations, the Department of Government Efficiency is not just a gesture and the president and the doge of the DOGE (if we can have tsars why not doges?), Elon Musk, are serious about profound spending cuts.



Prime Minister Trudeau on December 9, 2024. Riley Smith/The Canadian Press via AP

It also appears that the president will get all of his nominees to important offices confirmed, and as of now the narrow margin in the House of Representatives does not appear to be as limiting a factor to what the administration can achieve legislatively as was widely thought. I suspected

that the otherwise inexplicable nomination of Matt Gaetz as attorney general was part of an understanding with the Freedom Caucus to be more receptive to the administration's program. The country awaits the "big beautiful bill."

Foreign policy is generally conducted *in camera* and it is often difficult to discern from the public posturing what is really afoot. These three weeks have demonstrated again the Americo-centricity of the country and its press in the interpretations that have been offered about the newly returned president's principal foreign policy initiatives.

On the 25 percent tariff impositions on Mexico and Canada and 10 percent on Communist China, the discussion has been almost entirely on the merits and risks of trade wars and the impact on the cost of living within the United States. No thought at all seems to have been given by the press or shared with the public about the impact upon the other countries involved. If Americans were polled, it would probably be a close race between the United Kingdom, Israel, and Canada of which was the closest and most reliable ally of the United States.

Canada almost certainly deserves that recognition. I have diligently attempted to find any reference in the American press to the debate that is now raging in Canada of who in the general election that will be held later this year will be the best qualified person to lead Canada against what is uniformly considered the oppressive bullying of the Trump administration. This is assisting the anti-Trump forces in Canada against the opposition Conservatives, one of the most pro-Trump foreign political parties in the world.

I expect that the tariff question will, as it should be, at least between the United States and Canada, be determined in private discussions between trade specialists. Mexico is another matter, it is not a fair-trading country, is in league with China to flood the United States with cheap goods and export unemployment into the United States through the North

American Free Trade Agreement, and has been complicit in the invasion that was conducted across the American southern border with the full complicity of the former administration.

The Mexican government is largely a joint venture of Marxists and gangsters. None of this could be said about Canada and presumably the administration is aware that in dealing with allies, careful weighting has to be given to grievances produced by underperformance, and the likely effect of treating an authentic and long-standing ally as a country undeserving of any goodwill.

I am confident that the president knows what he is doing and that the next phases of the tariff controversy with Canada will demonstrate that. It would assist in informed discussion in the United States if Americans understood that the almost unflappably stable and well-disposed population of Canada feels that it has been extremely shabbily treated by the United States and that the Canadian press are full of celebrations of what is generally called patriotism but is really anti-Americanism provoked by the tariff threat.

Americans may not care if Canada is an ally, but they should know that most Canadians at this point do not consider the United States to be an ally. This can all be smoothed down but Americans interested in foreign policy should be aware of the problem.

There seems to have been no coverage whatever in the American press of the controversy now raging in South Africa over the suspension of American assistance. The South African government is now legislating an expedited right to seize property from individuals on the basis that gives no guarantee of just compensation.

This is clearly the latest and most outrageous assault on the white community that largely built that country and whose racist government did not resort to such official racist

outlawry as the Ramaphosa government is now attempting. The Trump administration, possibly under the influence of former South African, Mr. Musk, is retaliating for this persecution of white South Africans and American domestic opinion should be aware of it and should approve it.

The president's Gaza comments last week have naturally incited a great deal of curiosity about his precise intentions. Most of the comment in the United States has been the usual reflexive anti-Trump criticism or a more sensible recognition that it would be advisable to wait for him to flesh out his proposals. Yet in the Middle East, the hardline Israelis have been jubilant, and the Arab powers relatively well disposed to the United States: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, however, reacted with alarm.

It is quite possible that the president, who is a much more sophisticated negotiator than his clangorous opening gambits sometime indicate, has acted to recruit the Israeli hardliners in order ultimately to deliver more than they would ordinarily be willing to concede, while generating such great uneasiness with the key neighboring Arab powers that they would be willing to make greater concessions on Palestinian issues than they were before the United States and Israel publicly envisioned the death and burial of the two-state solution.

The president knows that these are much more complicated issues than his undoubted talent for succinct and dramatic summaries of them would indicate. If the American national political press wishes to climb out of the deep well of distrust and incredulity that they have plunged into, they might make a greater effort to explain the subtleties of these complex issues.

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