

# The West, Unfortunately, Is Getting the Democracies It Deserves



by Conrad Black

**At the earliest starting date** for a presidential campaign in memory, the United States is settling into what promises to be a lively and nasty presidential contest, with criminal indictments hanging over the leading personalities of both major parties. Most other important western countries are engrossed in unusual political dramatics, and we cannot fail to wonder if we have all temporarily lost our capacity for self government.

Readers are familiar with the limitations of the present administration, and the vagaries of the opposition. About half of Americans seem to be profoundly disappointed in the system, and most of the other half appears to like one of the main contenders and to despise the rest. The only plausible argument that can be made that a time of comparative good feeling and public satisfaction will return, is that it always has before.

The greatest cause for optimism in evaluating the American political scene today is that the United States has always possessed the genius of renewal. Except during the World Wars and the Cold War (most of the 20th century), the greatest danger to America has been from itself and that is the case today. It is not really conceivable that the United States will lose that contest, but it should be aware that it is happening.

Other Western countries are not faring much better. Canada has had eight years of a government that is almost entirely preoccupied with a hysterically exaggerated reaction to climate change, a confected guilt complex about past treatment of indigenous peoples, and an absurd preoccupation with gender issues. As I have written here before, we don't know enough to be taking drastic action on climate change.

Canada's sudden surge of conscientious official self-flagellation over native people reached its nadir with the false self-accusation in the United Nations that Canada ever attempted any form of genocide on the formerly-designated Indians. This is bunk, and while inciting a blood libel on Canada's founding peoples (French and British), the current government has failed to produce a policy that appreciably improves the condition of the aboriginal peoples.

The current prime minister, Justin Trudeau, has bandied about a false and outrageous myth about genocide, even the nebulous notion of "cultural genocide," while doing nothing as the

nationalists in Quebec, who cannot win a referendum to secede from Canada, are attempting to abolish the English language within Quebec, although it is the principal tongue of more than 70 percent of Canadians and nearly a fifth of the population of Quebec itself, as well as of the great majority of the 330 million people in the adjoining U.S.A.

The equivalent to this in the public policy debate of the United States is the continuing legacy of slavery. After what Lincoln called "the bondsman's 250 years of unrequited toil," followed by a hundred years of segregation, and now 60 years of the difficult but inexorable rise of African-Americans to equality, the whole process is now being exploited to revile whites as chronic and congenital racists.

And to imagine that the contemporary white population of the United States must pay astronomic reparations in accepting entire responsibility for the travail of the African-American people from the place of their origin to their present status. They are the only minority in the history of the world which has, albeit with great difficulty, by the act of the majority, progressed from forcibly imposed servitude to full equality. The present ransacking of American life to substantiate scatter-gun claims of "systemic racism" and "white privilege" is unjust to almost everyone.

In Canada as elsewhere, the gender arguments are surreal, but similar debates are taking place in other countries. There is no reasonable approach to this issue except that there are two sexes. Everyone must work out their own sexuality, including the right of adults to seek surgical alteration of their sex, but 95 percent of the public discussion of these issues, including its trans-sexual aspects, are ignorant claptrap.

In the United Kingdom, a country, which because of 950 years of relatively peaceful continuity from an untrammelled autocratic monarchy to an ornate and well-functioning, constitutional monarchy, is always respected for the stability

of its institutions, the standard of contemporary government is very undistinguished.

Boris Johnson, a flamboyant and endearing public personality, who had been a successful mayor of London and foreign secretary and won a substantial parliamentary majority to accomplish Britain's civilized departure from the European Union, and did so, became so erratic that he alienated almost all of his own parliamentary party.

The British Conservatives disposed of him with rank ingratitude and un-English indignity. In no important country in recent times was such a position of democratic strength so quickly and completely squandered, and never in the modern history of the British parliamentary system, has a leader whom the country owed some gratitude, been so inelegantly disembarked.

The current prime minister, Rishi Sunak, is a red Tory, a conservative who raises taxes and spends compulsively. His chief opponent, the leader of the Labour Party, Keir Starmer, is a vintage British leftist. Many of the great achievements of Margaret Thatcher in producing capitalist economic growth: a home-owning low-tax conservatism, has been replaced by conservatism in name only.

And Tony Blair's New Labour, a centrist party of restrained taxation, has been replaced by old Labour: soak the rich, pour money into the public sector, low growth. The United Kingdom is dialing back more than 40 years; it is not progress.

In France, President Macron is doing his best to try to undo some of the shackles of the French welfare state, and to get a realistic retirement age and work week. He is now into his second term and has spent most of his political capital to make only small and fiercely contested progress.

The overarching issue that seems to defy satisfactory treatment is the disruptive presence of militant Islam that is

threatening the world-renowned quality of life of La Douce France. Germany is in an inert state of self-examination, where the centrism of the traditional Christian and Social Democrats seems to be giving away to alternatives further to the left and right.

The outlook is murky in both countries. It is looking more hopeful in Italy, and even in Spain, despite separatist problems in Catalonia, where responsible conservative forces are gaining ground, as has just occurred in Greece. Practically all of Latin America is now in the hands of irresponsible leftists.

It is better in Japan, but in Israel, Prime Minister Netanyahu is being attacked, including by the clumsy American ambassador in Jerusalem, for trying to resurrect electoral democracy, and wrench it out of the hands of self-perpetuating, leftist judges interfering in every action of government, including military units in combat, and arbitrarily imposing a vague standard of conformity with the "reasonableness" of Jewish tradition, as subjectively defined by the left, in the absence of an Israeli constitution.

Great nations and distinguished peoples survive, and the efficacy and quality of their governments fluctuate. The West is the largest and most advanced bloc of the world's population, and it owes itself a higher quality of self government than it is now receiving. In democracies, for better or worse, we get the government we deserve.

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