

# Why the Long Tyranny of 'Wokeness' Is on the Way Out

By Conrad Black

The neutral-to-positive reception given President Trump's video address to the Davos conference last week confirms that the long tyranny of wokeness, political correctness, affirmative action, aggressive restraints in the name of combating climate change, and militancy ostensibly on behalf of diversity, equity, and inclusion, is finally crumbling into dust, where many of us have been claiming it belonged.



People march across the Cambie Bridge while chanting and cheering during the Global Climate Strike protest in Vancouver on Sept. 15, 2023. The Canadian Press/Ethan Cairns

Historians of the future, but starting quite soon, will make learned inquiries into why Western society suddenly collapsed in a temporary but profound orgy of self-criticism frequently descending to collective self-hate.

By high standards of conduct, we are all sinners, and all sane and reasonable people sometimes feel guilty about their own conduct and the conduct of collective entities where they are members, such as their country or occupation, or the organization that employs them. In general, Western civilization, as it has developed since World War II, has operated on a consensus that the preferable political system is a democratic state in which governments are chosen in free elections, and the population enjoys freedom of expression, assembly, and religious, political, and other beliefs.

In the postwar period, those beliefs were concentrated in the countries that described themselves collectively as the Free World, which was challenged both competitively and at times by infiltration and threat of aggression by totalitarian communism, in particular by the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. The Free World was led by the United States as the world's greatest economic and military power. In the American strategy of containment, elaborated in the years following World War II after the Soviet violation of the agreements over liberated Europe that had been made by the U.S., British, and Soviet leaders (Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin), the Western Alliance pledged military resistance to aggression but avoidance of the initiation of aggression against the Soviet Bloc or China.

The Free World, in fact, included a good many despotisms, such as Spain, Portugal, much of Latin America, South Korea, at times Greece and Turkey, and many countries in Africa and the Middle East. But most of the countries named, and many others, did in fact become authentic democracies in the course of the Cold War. China, meanwhile, detached itself altogether from the Soviet Bloc and, in economic terms, ceased to pretend to be a communist country though it continues as a totalitarian dictatorship.

As all readers know, the containment strategy was completely successful: The Soviet Union disintegrated without violence,

international communism collapsed, a number of the countries that had involuntarily been members of the Soviet Bloc have become genuine democracies, and there has been a comparative reduction in armaments levels and spending by the major powers. The West enjoyed, by any measurement, the greatest and most bloodless strategic victory in the history of the nation-state.

There was speculation by reputable political scientists such as Francis Fukuyama that political development had reached its ultimate stage of sophistication with the triumph of Western democracy. And to the credit of the Western democracies, and particularly the United States, there was a minimum of triumphalism. The Russian leaders Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin were treated with uniform respect, and for a time Russia was invited to join the G7, making it the G8. But as relief and contentment settled upon much of the world in quiet celebration of the end of the long and often brutal division between groups of states led by the two superpowers, the ant-like movements of other forces were already starting to disrupt the newly serene political climate.

Exhibiting a talent for improvisation that few would have expected from the old left that had been so completely defeated in the Cold War, it vacated the ideological battlefield and opportunistically crowded aboard the accelerating bandwagon of climate concern. The old left took over this movement and deftly converted it into a battering ram with which to assault capitalism from a new angle in the name of saving the planet. Conservation became faddish and psychologically agreeable to those who wished, whether from naive altruism or the ravages of hypocrisy, to palliate materialism and temper the pursuit of mere lucre.

From this comfortable attitude through degrees of alarm and anxiety to the now-familiar cries of imminent world flooding, skyrocketing temperatures, and the self-inflicted torment of mankind vastly transcending the experiences and imaginations

of the authors of the Old Testament, was a short step and a brief time in coming. Almost all of our Western governments—to the sidesplitting amusement of principal ecological offenders China, India, and Russia—began piling costs and inconveniences upon ourselves to reduce the use of fossil fuel.

It was thus refreshing to skeptics such as myself and almost reassuring to the tired and confused climate warriors of Davos to hear the president of the United States denounce the “Green New Deal” as “the Green New Scam” in [his speech on Jan. 23](#). Since the climate movement is in fact a wild exaggeration and to some extent an outright fraud, and electorates upon whom it has been inflicted are in revolt against its unnecessary costs, it is not too early to say that that crisis is passing. In Canada, meanwhile, there arose an inexplicable and wildly extreme theory that Canadian authorities, both colonial and post-Confederation, deliberately, and also out of gross negligence, inflicted terrible physical harm on our indigenous peoples and set out to deprive them of their culture. These charges were never substantiated, but they escalated steadily into lurid claims of surreptitiously disposing of the corpses of native children who died in Christian residential schools from criminal action or negligence. Almost none of any of these allegations have been supported by serious evidence, and yet the former chief justice and the outgoing prime minister saddled the Canadian people and their European ancestors in this country with the charge of cultural genocide, which does not exist in fact and is really cultural assimilation, which was never officially attempted in this country.

At the same time in the United States, as if in vengeance against the ultimate triumph of white America, activists gave birth to new permutations of the legacy of slavery. The proportions of slavery were alleged to have been grossly underestimated, and although the United States has made a greater and more successful effort than any society in history to raise up a formerly forcibly servile minority to a level of complete equality, it suddenly was accusing itself of new

charges of racist oppression.

Both the United States and Canada, in their media and their public discourse, and especially in their academies, put themselves in the dock of “systemic racism.”

The very success of our societies made them vulnerable to charges of moral arrogance and forgetfulness. But the charges were excessive, and in the same measure that it is normal human nature to be self-reproachful, it is also normal eventually to tire of self-reproach—particularly when after atonement and due consideration, the reproach can safely be judged excessive. That is where we have arrived, and the entire diversity, equity, and inclusion, and environment, social, and governance tangle of authoritarian guilt infliction is now coming apart like a giant scaffolding in a hurricane.

All of it—the green terror, the wokeness, the bunk about racial privilege, and the attempted enforcement of un-meritocratic outcomes—has been pulverized every day by the new majority of the United States. And as in most things, more slowly and more gently, but no less surely, that movement will be emulated in Canada and is already underway.

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