

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MACDONALD-LAURIER INSTITUTE

INSIDE POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2020

The STRUGGLE for DEMOCRACY

The storm looming on the horizon

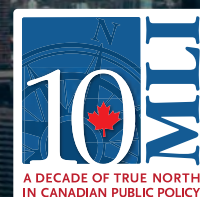
Also INSIDE:

Weaponizing
COVID-19

Rebuilding the
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Indigenous
economic progress

Fixing policing
in Canada





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THE MAGAZINE OF THE MACDONALD-LAURIER INSTITUTE

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From the editors

The world's attention may be rightly focused on the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet we must not lose sight of the equally important struggle for democracy that is taking place in many parts of the world – from Belarus to Hong Kong to even in the United States.

As part of our cover story, **Chris Alexander** explains why we need to support those fighting on the streets for democracy in Belarus. **Balkan Deven** turns his attention to growing uncertainty around the US presidential election. And **J. Michael Cole** explores the struggle for democracy against the Chinese Communist Party in both Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Yet, as noted by **Charles Burton**, Canada cannot go it alone in pushing back against authoritarian China. We must instead work closely with our allies in this fight. **Cole** also reminds us about the dangers of giving in to China's demands. Indeed, China and Russia have proven particularly adept at intimidation, disinformation, and influence campaign, as noted by **Pierre Jolicœur** and **Anthony Seaboyer** as well as **Marcus Kolga**.

Of course, even as we contend with these international challenges, we must also remain vigilant against the COVID-19 pandemic – or the next pandemic, as **Harvey Schipper** adds. Sadly, **Ken Coates** points to the untimely return of federalism in the midst of the pandemic following the recent Throne Speech.

We must also focus on rebuilding the economy, adds **Philip Cross**, at the same time that we must guard against a resurgence of COVID. **Cross** also explores the different cultural approaches by Canada and the US in combating the virus and enabling innovation. And **Linda Nazareth** looks at the impact that the pandemic will have on the auto manufacturing industry in Canada.

Other issues also demand our attention – from the US president's drug importation plan to how we should deal with Facebook's role in news, which are explored by **John Adams** and **Peter Menzies**, respectively. And, as noted by **Christian Leuprecht**, the Black Lives Matter protests have also given way to renewed interest in fixing policing.

Lastly, according to **Ken Coates** and **JP Gladu**, the oil and gas sector is central to Indigenous plans for their economic future. Yet Indigenous peoples are now increasingly afraid that their economic progress might be curtailed by the Liberal Party's Green plan, as noted by **Stephen Buffalo** and **Ken Coates**.

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How Canada's oil and gas industries assist in reconciliation

The oil and gas sector is central to Indigenous plans for poverty reduction, improved autonomy, employment and business development.

Ken Coates and JP Gladu

The Trans Mountain pipeline never seems to be too far from controversy.

A few months ago, the Supreme Court refused to hear Indigenous complaints about the consultation process, seemingly clearing the way for its construction. Companies moved thousands of kilometres of pipe into place, to be installed this year. But then insurers balked at the liabilities, backing away from the project. Major investors declared their intention to stay away from oil sands-related initiatives. And some Indigenous groups made it clear that they have not given up the fight against the project, promising broad civil disobedience if it proceeds.

The assertiveness and determination of Indigenous communities is hardly

new. But the messages being sent about the energy sector – and about a reconciliation that we claim to be seeking – are mixed, to say the least. In a country eager

impressive strides toward meaningful collaboration and partnerships.

The mining, forestry, and oil and gas industries are in some cases leading the way

The mining, forestry, and oil and gas industries are in some cases leading the way on reconciliation.

for evidence of the legal and political empowerment of Indigenous communities, all we need to do is look beyond the limited national interest in rural and northern developments and the preoccupation with protest and look instead at how Canada's resource sectors have made

on reconciliation. That's because resource projects are almost always in sparsely settled areas, and Indigenous peoples in northern and remote regions have precious few opportunities for economic development. So the projects are of crucial local importance.

Forty years ago, such an assertion would have been almost laughable. Indigenous rights were not well recognized, and communities had little leverage over governments and resource companies. Indigenous peoples fought, at great collective effort and expense, to convert treaty and Aboriginal rights into a viable and active authority – and it worked. Dozens of court victories – highlighted by the 2004 Supreme Court decision in *Taku and Haida* – along with well-crafted modern treaties, have made it clear that Indigenous peoples have a clear role in the country's economic development.

The oil sands firms launched numerous employment, training, procurement and collaboration arrangements. Even groups known for voicing long-standing concerns about the industry, such as the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, negotiated valuable business deals. When Trans Mountain was purchased by the Canadian government, some of these groups pushed for Indigenous ownership of the pipeline.

The controversy over the Coastal GasLink project is an excellent case in point. The initiative, tied to the LNG Canada plant near Kitimat, BC, is supported strongly by the Haisla Nation. And

also be said about broad and extensive Indigenous support for oil and gas and infrastructure development. Across large parts of Western Canada, in fact, the sector is central to Indigenous plans for poverty reduction, improved autonomy from Ottawa, employment and business development. Oil and gas, along with mining and forestry, are among the only substantial industries available to Indigenous communities in remote regions. Continued reliance on federal funding, a prospect reviled by many Indigenous peoples, stands as the only alternative.

Canada's efforts toward comprehen-



Oil and gas, along with mining and forestry, are among the only substantial industries available to Indigenous communities in remote regions.

It is not that Indigenous communities had completely ignored the oil and gas sector before that. Several dozen First Nations on the Prairies received payments for many years for energy produced on their lands. The returns were small when set against the potential, but the foundations for greater collaboration were built.

The rapid expansion of the industry in the 21st century – in Alberta's oil sands, in British Columbia's northeast fields and large shale deposits, particularly in the Montney region – changed industry dynamics. However, so too did the growing attention from environmentalists, who recognized Canada's political vulnerability to well-organized protests. The oil sands emerged as the poster child for unsustainable energy development, attracting a steady stream of celebrity critics and urban protesters.

But in a surprising and little-recognized development, Indigenous peoples have found a variety of ways to work successfully with oil and gas and infrastructure companies.

the pipeline delivering gas to the facility, Coastal GasLink, has been endorsed by the elected councils of all of the First Nations along the route – a remarkable achievement that took years of collaborative effort.

Public attention, however, focused largely on hereditary chiefs from the Wet'suwet'en First Nation, of which there was a relatively small group that were outraged. This vocal group attracted international attention to their protests even while their communities were sharply divided over the issue. Rather than seeing Coastal GasLink and LNG Canada as a potential example of practical reconciliation, the project is often seen as standing alongside Trans Mountain as a national symbol of Indigenous oppression. But most First Nations along the route have signed agreements with the pipeline company and stand to gain substantially from the arrangements.

Indigenous opposition to energy projects is real and substantial and should be respected. But clearly the same must

sive engagement and sustained models of reconciliation must continue beyond this. But there are profoundly important lessons to learn from how the Canadian energy industry has moved reconciliation forward in its own way, even if it's an area where few Canadians think to look.

It is far from surprising that there are significant concerns and protests; indeed, the country as a whole is divided on the economic future of oil and gas development. But the achievements of Indigenous communities, companies and governments in becoming one of the front lines of reconciliation in Canada deserve much greater recognition. ✱

Ken Coates is a Munk senior fellow at MLI and the author of the MLI report, *How Far We've Come:*

Indigenous Engagement with the Canadian Energy Economy. **JP Gladu** is the president and chief development and relations officer of Steel River Group and a former president and CEO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. This article was first published in the *Globe and Mail*.

Indigenous people fear Liberal green plan will sabotage their progress

A successful energy sector will help solve Canada's economic needs, environmental commitments and promises to promote Indigenous economic development.

Stephen Buffalo and Ken Coates

Canada's new minister of finance, Chrystia Freeland, has mused about the need to reinforce the green economy. The suggestion has some Canadians energized and excited; others are nervous and concerned. Count Indigenous Peoples in both categories.

Indigenous people understand and support taking steps to reduce the country's carbon footprint. At the same time, many Indigenous communities have worked exceedingly hard to carve out an appropriate place in one of Canada's most important economic sectors.

Since its election in 2015, the Trudeau government cancelled the Northern Gateway Pipeline, banned oil and gas exploration in the Arctic and oil tankers off the British Columbia coast, brought in complex environmental assessment processes, and appeared to actively discourage investment in the industry. Under great political pressure, the government also purchased the Trans Mountain Pipeline, supported the Coastal Gaslink Pipeline and allowed the Keystone XL Pipeline to proceed.

The Trudeau government is also committed to improving the economic and social well-being of First Nations people, albeit with an impulse toward government intervention. The Indigenous commercial transformation is closely associated with the natural resource economy, particularly mining, oil and gas. Government policy is putting at risk the impressive gains of recent decades.

The simple truth is this: If the promotion of the so-called "green economy" does not leave a prominent place for a prosperous oil and gas sector, federal policy could undo one of the most important examples of Indigenous engagement. The promises of governments past will turn hollow and meaningless if the oil and gas industry is not supported, leaving Indigenous communities to cope with the fallout from broken commitments.

leaders are not convinced of the reliability, efficiency and actual carbon footprints of non-renewable systems.

If Indigenous communities engage in the new energy economy, issues of investment funding come quickly to the forefront. The plan for many Indigenous communities has been clear: take the revenues from the oil and gas sector, purchase infrastructure and set up businesses, make commitments to new economy initiatives, and build sustainable economic viability.

The Indigenous commercial transformation is closely associated with the natural resource economy.

Indigenous communities support the move to a renewable energy economy and understand that there will always be a global demand for carbon-based energy products. Many First Nations have made major investments in solar power, "run of the river" hydroelectric projects, wind power and geothermal energy. Indigenous people understand that the future lies in multiple energy sources and a gradual, well-managed shift toward renewables.

The world will require oil and natural gas for decades. First Nations have considered all environmental aspects, both local and global, in making their decisions to invest in the sector and to support energy and related infrastructure development. Like other professionals in the field, many

Without steady and dependable revenue from oil and gas, it is difficult to imagine how Indigenous governments would fund a transition to renewable energy. Further reliance on government subsidies, which reinforce the paternalism of the past, would only add to government debt at a time when federal spending has surged.

Indigenous communities engaged with the oil and gas industry for solid reasons: to build prosperity, employment and business, to gain autonomy from the government of Canada, to secure a measure of influence over project decision-making, and to assert a prominent place

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Co-existing with COVID-19 while rebuilding the economy

The federal government never had an exit strategy beyond waiting for a vaccine or an effective treatment.

Philip Cross

Canada's economy is regaining its footing after falling off a cliff during the government-mandated shutdown of many sectors this spring. Real GDP rose by 5.0 percent in May and then 6.5 percent in June. This parallels back-to-back employment gains, with both output and jobs having recovered just over half of their losses.

However, there are troubling signs that sustaining the recovery will be difficult and uneven as many industries struggle to adapt to the new reality of co-existing with COVID-19. The recovery has been concentrated in those sectors that can most easily adapt to the requirements for social distancing. These include manufacturing, construction, and natural resources, which have the advantages of either working outdoors or relying heavily on capital equipment for production. Some services also have rebounded quickly, notably professional services (many of which can be done online) and retail trade.

Conversely, the recovery has lagged for many services that rely on face-to-face interactions with or between customers. Airline travel remains over 90 percent below its pre-pandemic peak, while accommodation and food, recreation, arts, and personal services languish about one-third below their normal level of business. Industries that rely on large crowds such as spectator sports, cinemas, and the arts likely will not recover significantly until after a vaccine is proven effective. Other industries such as restaurants and health

care will struggle to survive with higher costs for protective equipment and lower revenues due to social distancing, especially after the weather forces the closure of outdoor dining.

Compounding the difficulties, many of these sectors are made up of small businesses which do not have the access to capital that most large companies have to ensure their survival until a vaccine is available.

The return of nearly half the economy to something like normalcy reduces some

demand for government support represents picking the low-hanging fruit. Sustaining growth, reducing unemployment, and generating tax revenues will be more difficult as several service industries struggle to adapt and survive.

This unevenness of the recovery reveals the flaw in the federal government's reliance on record deficits to deal with the pandemic: it never had an exit strategy beyond waiting for a vaccine or an effective treatment. Extending generous income

The federal government is grudgingly admitting that its ability to transfer income support to Canadians is not unlimited.

of the demands on the federal government's \$350 billion deficit. Still, with large swathes of the service sector struggling with the pandemic, many companies and their employees continue to need government support. The federal government is grudgingly admitting that its ability to transfer income support to Canadians is not unlimited. Most obviously, the decision to wind down the Canada Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB) program and shift support to employment insurance or wage subsidies is a recognition that the cost of the CERB is unsustainable for even one full year (and forget about a permanent guaranteed annual income).

However, the initial recovery of economic growth and the related drop in

transfer schemes to individuals was a quick fix but ignored the inevitability that money would run out, and many companies will face bankruptcy before a vaccine arrives.

A more effective, longer-term solution would have involved working with service companies to find novel ways they could interact safely and confidently with customers as the virus was circulating, while ensuring the survival of those with viable prospects when the pandemic ends. Some companies, out of necessity, found innovative solutions. Governments – whose operations outside of hospitals were shielded from both the health and economic consequences of the pandemic – have

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COVID-19 and the untimely re-emergence of Canadian federalism

The imperatives of pandemic planning, preparation, and attentiveness must remain in place.

Ken Coates

There is nothing positive to say about COVID-19 and its impact on Canada. But the need for national mobilization and concerns about the safety of Canadians quickly pushed partisanship to the sidelines and convinced federal politicians and their provincial counterparts to cooperate. With the Trudeau government's recent throne speech, however, the political interlude and the commitment to collaboration is clearly over – and much too soon.

The throne speech delivered by the governor general and, equally, the response of the opposition parties and provincial governments to it, made it clear that partisanship and gamesmanship had re-emerged from the political fog of

“*The throne speech itself was what a friend used to refer to as a “nothing burger.”*”

the pandemic. The process started with the prorogation of Parliament, ostensibly called because the federal government was planning for a major reset of national policy to lead the country through the

post-pandemic recovery, but also clearly to forestall further discussion of the WE Charity controversy.

The throne speech itself was what a friend used to refer to as a “nothing burger” – a statement that neither inspired nor reassured a country yearning for both. It was followed by a prime ministerial address to the nation. Justin Trudeau urged attentiveness to a potential second wave of COVID-19, but much more to a restatement of the Liberal government's political agenda.

Over the following two days, the main political actors in Canada reprised their traditional roles. The Conservative Party and new leader Erin O'Toole decried the promise of greatly expanded deficits and protested the use of the pandemic to resurrect long-standing Liberal policy

priorities, from child-care and skills training to national pharmacare. These are, as O'Toole said, all initiatives worthy of debate but risky ventures given the fiscal disruptions of 2020.

The separatist Bloc Québécois promised to vote against the throne speech, which they complained intruded on Quebec's jurisdiction. The New Democrats demanded costly additions to the government's recovery and support plans. The willingness of NDP leader Jagmeet

The provincial and territorial premiers wanted promises of greater health-care funding. Alberta Premier Jason Kenney and Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe criticized the lack of attention to the crisis in the oil and gas sector. Concerns about national unity and Western separatism spiked yet again. With New Brunswick just out of an election, British Columbia in the midst of one, and Saskatchewan about to head to the hustings, the politics of Canadian federalism have re-emerged.

an attempt to return to normality in the most abnormal of times.

The re-emergence of traditional Canadian politics is premature. The country's public health officials sound cautious warnings. The prime minister's comments about a second wave, while different than that of Chief Public Health Officer Theresa Tam, seemed to encourage greater public vigilance while laying the groundwork for an acceptance of expansive federal social policy and support for the Liberal government.

Like other countries, Canada remains in the grip of a global pandemic with major questions unanswered about such fundamental elements as the availability of a vaccine, the safety of domestic and international travel, the imperatives of social distancing, and the risks associated with students returning to the schools, colleges, and universities. Equally, the justified and widely supported expansion in government spending after March 2020 increased the national deficit and debt, to the point where many commentators are worried about the scale of current and promised government expenditures.

Canada has some exceptionally difficult and important decisions to make in the coming months. Partisanship is uncalled for in these circumstances. Equally, this is not a time when the interests of political parties and federal-provincial relations take precedence over national priorities. Politics as normal is not, to put it simply, in the best interests of the country as a whole.

In this context, the throne speech and the federal and provincial responses to the speeches by the governor general and the prime minister assumed the country was ready to return to political normalcy. The reality is that the imperatives of pandemic planning, preparation, and attentiveness must remain in place. ❁

Ken Coates is a Munk senior fellow at MLI. This article first appeared in the Epoch Times.

“The re-emergence of traditional Canadian politics is premature.”



Above: The Governor General of Canada, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette, delivers the Speech from the Throne from the Senate Chamber, September 23, 2020.

(Sgt Johanie Maheu, Rideau Hall)

Singh to congratulate his party for forcing the country deeper into debt in return for support for the minority government is precisely the kind of partisanship that had been avoided during the first six months of the pandemic.

The political noise did not stop there.

September's political show has been like attending a staging of "The Mousetrap," the longest-running play in London's West End (which, incidentally, ran from 1952 until shuttered by this year's pandemic). Ottawa's episode was a case of mediocre theatre, with all the politicians playing their parts dutifully but without inspiration, adhering to familiar scripts while leaving the audiences disappointed. Few Canadians watching the events of the past week have been politically renewed or mobilized. It was, to be blunt,

For automakers, what might the pandemic fallout entail?

Driving less may be one of those shifts, and now might be a good time to start thinking through what that might mean for industries such as auto manufacturing.

Linda Nazareth

No, not everyone will work from home forever, but some people will. And no, not every single thing we buy will be chosen online then flung on our porches in a box with upward arrows, but some things will. With those two trends in place, it's time to consider what might happen to the auto industry, since fewer trips to the office or the mall will inevitably mean a need for fewer vehicles.

Car ownership, and commuting, are firmly entrenched in North American society. As of the 2016 census, 93 percent of working Canadians work someplace other than their home, and nearly 80 percent of them drove to get to it.

No surprise then that our highways are in a constant state of disrepair and complaints about commute times get louder every year, or at least they did pre-pandemic. Although it is not clear how many people will switch to doing so long-term, Statistics Canada estimates that 40 percent of the work force have jobs that can be done without leaving home and presumably most are doing them there for now, no car required.

As for online shopping, even those who were shy about going that route pre-pandemic have been giving it a try. According to the retail trade figures for June, on an unadjusted basis, Canadian retail e-commerce sales were \$3.2-billion or about 5.5 percent of total retail trade. If that does not seem like that much, keep in mind that the figure is 71 percent higher than it was a year ago, compared with a 3-percent gain for total retail sales.



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Above: Rush hour on Highway 407, north of Toronto, during the lockdown in April, 2020. Fewer drivers on the road a future shift?

With similar trends taking place in the United States (a country where last year motorists collectively drove the equivalent of 337 round trips from Earth to Pluto), analysts are starting to calculate what this might do to the demand for motor vehicles. Although no one expects the 64-percent drop in car usage the US saw during the height of the pandemic to continue over the longer term, the fact is that the number of miles travelled could be down enough to damage what is a key sector to the North American economy.

A new study by consulting firm KPMG attempts to put some numbers on it

in the US case by looking at how much “vehicle miles travelled” (VMT) could be down post-pandemic, and what that would mean for vehicle demand. Their research suggests that with more remote working and more shopping online, Americans will end up cutting their VMT by about 9 percent a year (the equivalent of driving 270 billion miles or 435 billion kilometres) even in a post-vaccine world. In turn, that would translate into a fall in car ownership from about 1.97 vehicles per household to

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What Canada's response to the pandemic says about Canada – and the US

*Canada was able to contain the virus in the short run
but its response is a sign of the country's shortcoming in the long run.*

Philip Cross

Crisises put the true character of a nation on full display. The coronavirus pandemic – both a public-health emergency and an economic catastrophe – is our greatest challenge since the Second World War. Each country has responded in its own way to these twin crises. What have these responses revealed about the values of Canada and the United States and their long-term outlook for growth?

Both countries shut down large swathes of their economies, creating the sudden and unexpected loss of jobs and incomes that the welfare state was designed to cushion. In Canada, aid programs to offset these losses were paid directly from government to households, breaking the monetary link between firms and employees, something that will take time to re-establish as the economy reopens. In contrast, the US government partnered with business, visibly relying on firms to help funnel money to individuals in the short-term and to develop a vaccine. The US understands that technological innovation is the only viable solution to both the health and economic crises.

Canada's response to the pandemic demonstrated a fealty to its founding principles of "peace, order and good government." Governments fully asserted their spending powers, pushing their deficit to 16 percent of GDP, the largest in the G7. Canada locked down more of its economy for longer than the US, while restricting the internal movement of its population to a degree that would be anathema to Americans.



The United States government responded with a mixture of intermittent direct government support to households and sustained aid to people indirectly via businesses. Help for individuals included one-time checks for US\$1200 mailed to most households at the start of the pandemic, supplemented by a top-up to unemployment-insurance benefits. Unlike in Canada, there were few programs targeting specific groups, such as the elderly, students, or low-wage workers. Meanwhile, extensive aid was offered to both large and small firms through a mixture of grants and loans.

Canada's stance overall was one of government generosity to persons and parsimony to businesses. The Trudeau

government lavished a variety of direct program payments on households while mostly offering complicated payment deferrals or loans to firms. Most notably, nearly one-third of all Canadians receive up to \$2000 a month directly from the federal government under the terms of the Canada Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB). The reception to these programs proves the point: Households were enthusiastic, firms were wary.

Canada's native suspicion and cynicism towards business was expressed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. When introducing a wage-subsidy program for firms, he offered a stern "word of caution" to businesses: "If you think this is a system

you can take advantage of or game, don't. There will be serious consequences for those who do." Trudeau unfortunately issued his warning to the wrong group. Firms in Canada largely ignored the wage-subsidy program. Meanwhile households flocked to the CERB program in twice the numbers the government forecast, taking advantage of a stunning lack of oversight. The very popularity of the CERB made its cost unsustainable, forcing the government to shift people to less expensive support programs by late summer.

In terms of the health crisis, Canada more successfully locked down its economy

In contrast with Canada's docility, a significant part of the US population resisted government dictates and acted in ways that helped spread the virus. While harmful in the short-term, this same rebelliousness helps fuel America's enviable ability to innovate. After all, "Technological creativity, like all creativity, is an act of rebellion" according to the economic historian Joel Mokyr. Creative destruction means overturning the existing order with disruptive innovations that challenge the status quo and upset the established order.

Every major nation in the world, including Canada, wants to mimic the

for the innovation process. These policies emphasize government subsidies for research and development and education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Predictably, the results have been disappointing. Productivity has stalled for years, while no Canadian company has established a global brand since Blackberry over a decade ago.

The economic-growth theorist Edmund Phelps summarized the primacy of culture over policy when it comes to innovation: "Attitudes and beliefs were the well-spring of the dynamism of the modern economies. It is mainly a culture protecting and inspiring



Every major nation in the world, including Canada, wants to mimic the success of American technology behemoths.

and shut in its people, containing the spread of the coronavirus better than the United States. However, the cost of Canada's more extensive shutdown is unsustainable as firms struggle to deal with the growing backlog of bills and lagging revenues. The only viable near-term solution to the pandemic is the technological innovation of a vaccine.

Innovation is where the US thrives and Canada lags. The conundrum for Canada is that the very characteristics that helped contain the spread of the pandemic are the opposite of what is needed for innovation. Quebec's Deputy Prime Minister famously congratulated the population for its "obedience" to the lockdown and urged people to be "docile." Docility and obedience are admirable qualities in a dog but do not form the basis of an entrepreneurial culture. David Brown offered a devastating critique: "We've become a society of rule-followers and permission-seekers. Despite our can-do self-image, what we really want is to be told what to do. When the going gets tough, the tough get consent forms."

success of American technology behemoths such as Apple, Amazon, Alphabet, and Facebook. These firms have continued to thrive during the pandemic, and have contributed enormously to the astounding recovery of the stock market since mid-April.

While envious of US technology, Canada struggles to create its own culture of innovation. Part of the reason is the challenge that innovation presents to the established order – and in Canada entrenched interests are adept at using institutional power to resist change and preserve the status quo. The conclusion reached by the Canadian author Malcolm Gladwell is that "innovators need to be disagreeable," not in the sense of being unpleasant but "willing to take social risks – to do things that others might disapprove of." Americans are rather more capable of (in this sense) being disagreeable than Canadians, who are renowned for their politeness and conformity.

Canada's approach to innovation relies on targeting what bureaucrats believe is the supply of necessary inputs

individuality, imagination, understanding, and self-expression that drives a nation's indigenous innovation." The US excels at cultivating more of these characteristics than other country by encouraging competition in free markets, keeping taxes low, tolerating risk and failure, and displaying a relentless optimism.

The institutions opposing change often use the coercive power of the state (including laws, rules and regulations) to prevent new firms from entering existing markets or to slow the introduction of new products and technologies. These rent-seeking activities are doubly wasteful: managers of existing enterprises spend time seeking favors from government instead of enhancing efficiency, while innovative firms waste time overcoming costly barriers to their growth. In Canada, over half of the economy consists of either government itself or of sectors tightly regulated by government (notably in transportation, communications, agriculture and finance). Government bloat

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Onto the next pandemic

We now have an unprecedented opportunity to reframe our thinking of what a pandemic represents.

Harvey Schipper

As we emerge from our first encounter with COVID-19, we are beginning to take stock of where we stand and what we have learned. It has been a humbling, at times quite frightening, and at other times even hopeful experience.

We have largely balanced the scientific, cultural and political imperatives, and apart from the catastrophe of our long-term care structure, we have done pretty well so far. Our fair performance comes in spite of the fact that we appear to have starved a world-leading epidemic early warning unit, our Global Public Health Intelligence Network, born out of SARS, just in time to miss the early signs of COVID.

Regardless, our successes and shortcomings present learning opportunities. We must look to the future with the clear understanding that this type of event will happen again, though in a form and from a direction we cannot fully anticipate. Each pandemic is unique, finding and exploiting the vulnerable niches in our societies.

Canada is in a unique position to be a, if not the, world leader in preparedness.

We now have an unprecedented opportunity to reframe our thinking of what a pandemic represents, and in so doing, we can potentially create a revolutionary and science-driven health economy.

Here's what we need to do.

First, we must develop a workable, broader pandemic model that allows consideration in real time of parameters beyond narrow single pathogen factors. This model would include all-causes of morbidity and mortality, geographic, and social and cultural factors, physical infrastructure contributors, and economics. It will be essential to develop a common language, so that the same words have the same meanings across disciplines and communication with the public is clear and predictable.

We also need to implement an early warning system that is globally accepted and transparent. In the rush to finger pointing, we have lost sight of the fact that the new virus was characterized within weeks of first recognition, a quantum leap in our scientific capability. We may already be on the cusp, by virtue of modern genetics, of characterizing the population and organ-specific risks of new pathogens by their genetic makeup.

These technologies must be globally available and globally shared with clear procedures for notification.

Canada should lead in the advancement of global responsiveness and availability of essential tests and treatments. We need to push further innovations at the public-private-government interface with respect to intellectual property, financing and risk mitigation of new treatments.

To play a leadership role, we must also modernize our health care. This includes finding a public-private balance that drives innovation in health and wellness delivery. That means incenting systems to innovate and rewarding them for it. Government could have a role in rewarding novel health care innovations that produce effective outcomes for patients. Doing this will make our system more resilient, flexible, innovative, and responsive.

Moreover, Canada could pioneer the establishment of an international consortium of like-minded countries to provide the scientific, industrial, and financial means to respond to the next

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No crystal ball needed to know Trump's drug importation plan will flop

The concept of cheap drugs from Canada has never been anything more than a political hallucination.

John Adams

On the whole, we Canadians genuinely want what's best for our neighbors, friends and allies in the United States, particularly during these pandemic times caused by a virus that is blazing through cities and communities like the proverbial wildfire.

So, we are bemused and more than a little irritated that President Trump proclaimed recently that many of America's healthcare problems could be solved by importing cheap prescription drugs from Canada.

As a friend, here's a bit of advice: Please don't be fooled into thinking that medicine costs are going to shrink because neighbours to the north will provide inexpensive drugs by the truckload.

It's simply not going to happen and, for our sake and yours, it shouldn't. The United States has real problems – a COVID-19 death toll at more than 200,000 and rising, 40 million people out of work, and many schools unable to open for the fall. Shouldn't that be the focus?

There are at least three reasons politicians, Democrats and Republicans alike, should stop trying to deceive voters with these drug importation fantasies. The first is simply a matter of arithmetic.

The US population is nine times the size of Canada. We simply don't have enough prescription medications in our country to meet your demand. There are too many of you or too few of us. In fact, we don't even have enough to meet our own needs.

We face serious drug shortages and, thus, the Canadian government, health care providers, and patient advocates see serious



problems in sharing our limited supply just because Americans want drugs a little cheaper. Sorry, but we need those drugs intended for Canadians. The problem with health care costs is one that your country has to solve on its own. We recall those days when America was proud to be self-reliant.

Building on that, isn't Trump harping on the need to "buy American" and avoid imported goods. It is a bit hard to keep a straight face when he says "buy foreign" for prescription drugs?

In fact, there's no guarantee that drugs, if purchased from Canadian middlemen or others pretending to be Canadians, actually originate in Canada.

Our laws permit transshipments of medications from other countries. In the past decade, a growing percentage of drugs Canada imported came from Mexico, Russia and China, and isn't the US actively trying to reduce Chinese imports these days?

And that brings us to the issue of safety.

Quite frankly, when the United States is trying to cope with a public health crisis of a kind not seen in generations,

it is mind-boggling to think Americans would be willing to make things worse by importing drugs that may be ineffective or, worse, life-threatening.

Canada does not check and does not have the resources to verify that the medicines originating elsewhere and passing through our country are what they claim to be. Have you heard of fake drugs?

Last, it might be easy to forget that America's most daunting health crisis before COVID-19 was the growing opioid epidemic, and that crisis was made much worse by imports of deadly fentanyl coming through ports and international mail services.

The Border Patrol has its hands full defending you from that poison. Right now, the United States has a drug system that is the envy of the world for safety at a time when global drug counterfeiting and shipments of illegal, dangerous substances are booming.

Opening your system to potentially questionable imports will incur significant risk without a benefit (because, remember, Canada doesn't have the drugs to provide).

Again, speaking as a friend, we Canadians urge our American friends to seek real solutions to current problems and not to embrace empty promises. The concept of cheap drugs from Canada has never been anything more than a political hallucination.

For all the good reasons we can think of, please don't fall for fake news or phony solutions. ❄

John Adams is volunteer chair of Best Medicines

Coalition in Canada and president of Canadian PKU and Allied Disorders. He is a frequent author at MLI.

Penalizing Facebook to promote newspapers is a bad plan

News organizations in Canada have had 20 years to adapt to the Internet.

Their solution has been to shrink newsrooms.

Peter Menzies

Grab a seat and a bucket of popcorn: the Government of Canada and Facebook are about to go toe to toe in a fight over – get this – how to save print media.

Increasingly cash-starved Canadian newspaper publishers have been lobbying the federal government to invoke legislation that would force global giants Facebook and Google to pay for the use of their news content when it's shared on their platforms. They have found a champion in Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault who has signalled he is ready to, as it were, make the rich pay to keep the poor happy.

A preview of how this struggle may play out is already taking place in Australia where, led by Rupert Murdoch, Australia's publishers were first to convince their politicians to come to their rescue. Aussie legislation looks to impose a code of conduct on Facebook and Google and forces them to complete commercial agreements compensating news organizations for the use of their content.

According to Marketwatch, Australian Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said this is just about “a fair go for Australian news media businesses, it's about ensuring that we have increased competition, increased consumer protection and a sustainable media landscape. Nothing less than the future of the Australian media landscape is at stake with these changes.”

Facebook responded with a resounding “alrighty then” and announced it would no longer permit Australians to post news stories on Facebook or Instagram (which it owns).



While the publishers insist it's the tech companies, Facebook is quick to point out it is not a news service.

As it rightly pointed out, the platform has been delivering the publishers' products to vast audiences for many years for free, saving them hundreds of millions in distribution costs. In Canada, where it insists it doesn't want a fight, Facebook points to the \$9 million (enough to run a decent newsroom) it pours in to support jobs at Canadian Press and to its willingness to assist newspapers in transitioning to the 21st century.

Guilbeault, on the other hand, seems pumped for bare knuckles brawling.

He accused Facebook of “bullying” and insisted, in response to the Australian standoff, that he will not tolerate “any form of threats.” According to Susan Delacourt of the *Toronto Star*, Guilbeault – a former Greenpeace activist – sees data as “the new oil.” Tech giants, in other words, are every bit as scary as western Canada.

Regardless, the issue “at the heart” of this policy debate, says Facebook, is “determining the value exchange” between digital platforms and news publishers and who benefits or suffers when a news item is posted on Google search, YouTube or Facebook.

While the publishers insist it's the tech companies, Facebook is quick to point out it is not a news service and has never aspired to be one. Its purpose is to connect families and friends posting user-generated content such as pics of holidays and grandchildren. And as it notes, Facebook's news feed provides 2.3 billion organic referrals annually to content that has a value of almost AU\$200 million to the publishers whose product constitutes a mere 4 percent of Facebook's content volume. The equivalent values in Canada are, I'm told, as convincing, and the distribution value is “enormous.”

As communications expert Dr. Michael Geist pointed out recently on his blog, ripping off newspaper publishers is not among Facebook's sins and Guilbeault's threats to regulate the Internet as if it were a cable network are horribly misguided; dangerous, even.

News organizations in Canada have had 20 years to adapt to the Internet. Their

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Without political will, the flaws of Canadian policing will never be fixed

As our society evolves on the issue of systemic racism, its various institutions are working to catch up – including policing.

Christian Leuprecht

There is a truism about society: As it evolves, so too does its view of what is right and wrong. Six decades ago, being forced by law to wear a seat belt was unthinkable; six decades earlier, only white men had the vote. Now, as our society evolves on the issue of systemic racism, its various institutions are working to catch up – including policing. But a historical legacy means there is a wide gap between society and policing on that front – and without meaningful commitment to systematic reform, that gap will continue to grow.

Police organizations bear some responsibility for that. Recent police interactions that led to death or injury have made this unequivocally clear, as have Black

Lives Matter protests and years of damning reports from national inquiries and internal commissions. In mid-July, the RCMP's independent watchdog admonished the Mounties for repeated “unreasonable use of force.” Police in Canada are governed by the National Use of Force Framework, which outlines when the use of violence is justified, and the type of force that is justified under specific circumstances, but more training, with an emphasis on de-escalation, is needed to reduce the propensity for violence.

But the responsibility for troubled civil-police relations ultimately lies with politicians. They set the framework, conditions and constraints for police to do their work – and they have set police up for failure.

Governments, after all, are responsible for public services, and increasingly, growing gaps in service delivery are left for police to fill. As a result of dwindling government support for broader social services, officers are often thrust into the role of expensive generalists, forced to take on more non-policing functions as public expectations grow accordingly. A lack of sobering centres, for instance, often means people are held in police cells until they're no longer intoxicated; a lack of women's shelters means victims often have to return to situations that are unsafe; a shortage of mental health beds and long wait times mean that police end up doing wellness checks (up to 40 percent of all police calls now concern mental-health issues). Police intervention during a crisis

is not nearly as useful as preventing it altogether, but that requires a wider suite of public sector agencies.

On the one hand, police are sometimes the only representatives of the establishment that remain in certain jurisdictions – and in that scenario, police become the adversary. As a result, with every shift, patrol officers are faced with the risk of imminent violence. That can allow an us-versus-them mentality to fester, which can manifest in racist attitudes, overt acts of violence or excessive force. Concerned about getting hurt, many officers deploy use-of-force to take control of the situation.

between 2007 and 2017, 15 studies and reports on the RCMP alone generated a broad expert consensus on what should be done: civilianization, or allowing non-policing Canadians to occupy senior leadership, management and oversight roles, while uniformed members run operations. This has long been the approach of the civilian-led Australian Federal Police, so why not here? Officers are not inherently business-savvy or steeped in administrative expertise; they learn management and leadership skills within the institution, which means they will manage the way they were managed. As a result, they lack

have an antiquated leadership model, too: new recruits start at the bottom, and work their way up the ladder. This is worrying, since the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians' 2019 annual report found that resistance to diversity and inclusion is strongest among the ranks of non-commissioned officers (NCOs), from which future uniformed cadres will be drawn.

But structures, mandates, compensation systems and rules governing employment are beyond police organizations' control. Change requires political leadership at the municipal, provincial and federal levels.



Police organizations generally drag their feet on civilianization, inoculate themselves from reform and protect their institutional privilege.

On the other hand, true community policing involves close connections and interactions with residents to build trust and credibility. Instead, police patrol in vehicles and are armed with more use-of-force options, which makes their relationship with communities more adversarial. Earlier this year, the OPP and RCMP were both faced with enforcing injunctions – in Tyendinaga in Ontario and in Wet'suwet'en territory in BC, respectively. In accordance with its Ipperwash Framework, the OPP showed up in civilian attire, made “every effort prior to understand the issues and to protect the rights of all involved parties,” and promoted and developed “strategies that minimize the use of force to the fullest extent possible.” In contrast, the RCMP arrived in paramilitary gear and employed aggressive enforcement tactics – reminiscent of actions previously taken in Kent County, NB, and High River, Alberta. Trust, once lost, is hard to regain.

There is a solution. In fact,

the experience to bring about the change needed to meet the public's heightened expectations.

Yet police organizations generally drag their feet on civilianization, inoculate themselves from reform and protect their institutional privilege. Exhibit A: The multi-decade predatory reality that culminated in a \$100-million settlement for a class-action lawsuit over harassment in the RCMP.

For the RCMP, some of these problems are legacy holdovers from being modelled on the Royal Irish Constabulary, a quintessentially colonial paramilitary paradigm that informed the Dominion's relationship with Indigenous people. That institutional DNA has many modern manifestations, including in the RCMP's ubiquitous command-and-control approach and its notorious shortcomings on accountability and transparency; this is learned behaviour, systematically socialized into every recruit.

In general, Canada's police services

In a democracy, the people should have the right to shape the parameters for police decision-making and service delivery. Yet politicians have shown that time and time again, they prefer to shirk their responsibilities, handing police chiefs and RCMP commissioners considerable discretion until their inevitable missteps, at which point politicians intervene only to replace them in the hopes that maybe this time, they've found the right person for the job.

But this is the definition of insanity – doing the same thing over and over again, expecting a different result. Canadians should hold politicians to account. For Indigenous and racialized Canadians, an overhaul of community safety is a long time coming. ✱

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A. Martskevich from Pixabay

The struggle for democracy in Belarus is our struggle too

Sanctions and other forms of economic pressure and public embarrassment need to hit Lukashenka and his clique hard.

Chris Alexander

Belarus matters today because democracy is literally hanging in the balance in that country. Belarusians have done their part: despite what the Lukashenka regime might claim, they bravely voted a dictator out of office. For weeks they have been demonstrating massively and bravely in favour of opposition candidates – culminating in the recent elections, which many observers see as one of the most blatantly rigged votes in modern European history. The protests and demonstrations have only escalated.

Now the ball is in our court. Do we in our (relatively) comfortable democratic pews care enough to do something? Can we forget COVID-19 long enough

to remember political freedoms? Do we really believe that every one of this planet's 200-plus countries deserves to have a government chosen by its people? Have we noticed that Russian President Putin and Chinese President Xi have been the first to congratulate Belarus' dictator on his "victory" – out of sheer terror that the next wave of democratic change could sweep their own authority away, without notice?

Finally, have we understood, at long last, that the fate of each and every democracy is bound up with the fate of all free and democratic states, as we ought to know as students of the Chinese Communist Party's 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre; Putin's 1999 rise to power; or Chamberlain's tragic 1938 dismissal of Czechoslova-

kia's *Sudetenland* dispute as a "quarrel in a faraway country, between people of whom we know nothing"?

In recent years there have too many "tragic dismissals." Hong Kong, Syria, Lebanon, Venezuela, Xinjiang, Tibet, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Mali, Iraq, Niger, République centrafricaine, Democratic Republic of the Congo; all have been written off as "faraway countries," "endless wars" or "insoluble conflicts." Has there been a serious international effort to release even one of these societies from its cycle of repression? Twin crises (Trump and Brexit) afflicting two of the world's oldest democracies have made everything harder, as have new online platforms feeding polarization, isolationism and disenchant-

ment in almost every body politic.

Democracy has always been fragile. According to the Center for Systemic Peace's Polity IV dataset, in 1946 only 29 percent of the world's governments were democratic, falling to 25 percent by 1976. By 2017, fully 57 percent were democracies, with 13 percent autocratic and the rest "mixed." Now this legacy is again in jeopardy: since 2006, Freedom House has recorded 14 consecutive years of decline in both the quantity and quality of the world's democracies.

Progress takes effort. In August, Belarusians chose a new president. By every honest measure, opposition leader Sviatlana Hyeorhiyeuna Tsikhanouskaya won a thumping majority. In defiance of the official line, over 80 polling stations gave credible reports of her victory; exit polls outside Belarusian embassies in dozens of cities showed similar results.

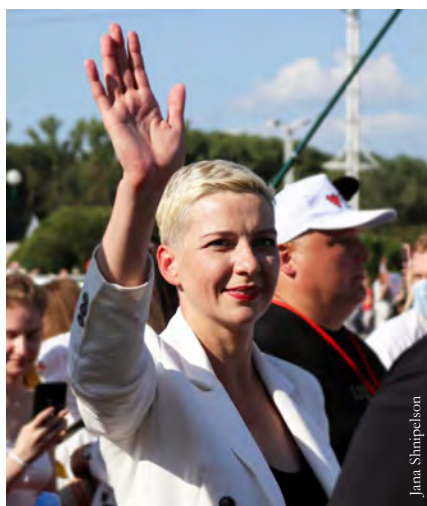
Authorities rushed falsified results into print, but no one is buying them. Security and military forces poured into the centre of Minsk and other cities, but thousands of protesters filled the streets anyway. Fear of Lukashenka's repressive power is ebbing.

Why now? There are two factors. First, Putin's 2014 invasion of Ukraine reawakened fears of Russian belligerence, even prompting Lukashenka to make his first-ever speech in Belarusian in a shameless bid to shed his image as a Kremlin toady. Ever since 2014, Lukashenka has been manoeuvring: making overtures to the US, EU and NATO while continuing to host massive Russian military exercises; releasing some Belarusian political prisoners, then harassing most of his 55 potential rivals for this year's presidential election. He arrested entrepreneur and blogger Siarhei Leanidavich Tsikhanouski (Svitlana's husband) on May 29, 2020.

Above: Sviatlana Hyeorhiyeuna Tsikhanouskaya; left: Belarusians take to the streets to protest Tsikhanouskaya's stolen election

Second, he has lost control of the script essential to every dictator's survival. In June, after 15 candidates were blocked, a trio of women formed "Female Solidarity" to lead the opposition to Lukashenka. In late July and early August, the largest political rallies in Belarusian history took place across the

*Belarusians knew
the election had
been stolen.
Demonstrations
began in Minsk and
elsewhere.*



country, involving hundreds of thousands of peaceful demonstrators supporting presidential candidate Sviatlana Hyeorhiyeuna Tsikhanouskaya. At one rally, two DJs played Viktor Tsoi's 1985 glasnost-era anthem "Peremen," whose chorus calls for "Changes! We are waiting for changes!" A local official tried to pull the plug, but the music played on; the DJs are now national heroes.

When official results were announced on the evening of August 9, they lacked any credibility. Over five elections since his original victory in 1994, Bat'ka (or "Father") Lukashenka had always polled within five percent of his first result. This time would be no different: 80.2 percent for Lukashenka and 9.9 percent for Tsikhanouskaya, as electoral authorities dutifully bluffed.

But this time was different. Belarusians knew the election had been stolen. Demonstrations began in Minsk and elsewhere. Over 3000 protesters were arrested; scores injured, some badly. Security forces used heavy tactics, including Czech-made concussion grenades. Internet service was throttled; journalists detained; intimidation ramped up. But everywhere Lukashenka's authority was in freefall, with human rights groups, political parties and labour unions settling in for a long fight whose outcome still hangs in the balance.

Belarus has long been a lynchpin of European history. For five centuries much of it was part of the Grand Duchy

of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. A brief independence after the 1918 *Treaty of Brest-Litovsk* was quickly snuffed out by the Red Army. On September 17, 1939, Soviet Russia – then a Nazi ally – invaded eastern Poland whose annexed territories formed 40 percent of postwar Belarus. The agreement effectively disbanding the USSR was signed on December 8, 1991 in a hunting lodge in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha forest, one of Europe’s last remaining primeval wildernesses, only eight kilometres from the Polish border.

stifling media freedom, harassing any and all opposition, and ruling by violence.

As a result, this quirky, profane, hockey-playing former Communist youth activist and border guard, who rose from the obscurity of a collective farm to become Europe’s longest-serving dictator, has paved the way for newer autocrats and would-be strongmen from Putin and Yanukovich to Orbán and Trump. Belarus has been a petri-dish for repressive tactics in the age of unscrupulous capital markets; wilting independent media; self-serving digital platforms; and weakened values-based alliances. When I first visited

isolation. As many democratic leaders as possible should join the presidents of Poland and Lithuania in calling for the real results of the vote to be respected. European Commission President Ursula van der Leyen has made a strong start with her August 10 statement. All concerned today about growing Chinese and Russian belligerence in the world should be adding their voices to hers, while treating Svitlana Tsikhanouskaya as the president-in-waiting she has truly become. As the repression continues, sanctions and other forms of economic pressure and public embarrass-



Belarusians are now articulating a clear European and global vocation for themselves. They are sick and tired of Lukashenka’s hidebound, retrograde paternalism.

Today Belarus is on democracy’s new frontier: bordered on the north by Latvia, Lithuania and the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad; on the west by Poland; on the south by Ukraine; and on the west, by Russia’s Pskov, Smolensk and Bryansk oblasts.

Belarus is a huge country – larger than the three Baltic states combined; two-thirds the size of Poland; and one-third the size of Ukraine, the largest country entirely in Europe. By the simple logic of geography, Belarus ought to be sharing prominently in the benefits of European integration. Forty percent of Ukraine’s trade is today with the EU, only 25 percent with Russia. In Belarus this trend is reversed: about half of its trade is with Russia; only 25 percent with the EU and Ukraine. Why?

The short answer is falsified elections and the KGB. By using every strong-arm trick in the book, Lukashenka has rigged votes, made corruption the norm and dissent a punishable offence. His state security agency is the only one to preserve the KGB label, signalling a commitment to

Belarus in 1995 to accompany Canada’s first ambassador, then presenting credentials to Lukashenka, Minsk seemed to be a fragment of the old Soviet empire, frozen in aspic by Lukashenka and his nomenklatura cronies.

All that has changed. Belarusians are now articulating a clear European and global vocation for themselves. They are sick and tired of Lukashenka’s hidebound, retrograde paternalism, his broken promises and his recourse to violence. They want a stronger, richer, more connected country, not a laboratory for neo-Stalinist dystopias.

Tsikhanouskaya’s platform promised only three things: new, truly free and fair elections; a two-term limit for presidents; and release of all political prisoners. Despite all the obstacles still in the way, my hunch is that people across Belarus – from Vitebsk and Gomel to Mogilev and Brest – are ready to sacrifice a great deal to put Lukashenka’s legacy behind them.

They will not succeed without support. Our primary goal should be to alleviate remaining fears and break Belarus’

ment need to hit Lukashenka and his clique hard, where they hurt most. As Donald Tusk, President of the European People’s Parties, put it: “We see a rejected President who has declared war on his own people, the President who has systematically broken the law and order of his own country.”

There are also things that we, as defenders of democracy, should not do. We must never yield to the powerful temptation, whose flames are fanned by Russian propaganda, to think of Belarus as part of anyone’s “sphere of influence.” We must not condescend to Belarus – by seeing it through an outdated Tsarist, Cold War or post-Soviet lens. We must not report the delusions or fabrications of dictators – such as the results so far published by Belarus’ Central Election Commission – as fact; in most cases, they deserve only to be ignored. We need to avoid clichés such as “Lukashenka is the last dictator of Europe”: even if he goes, Putin, Orbán, Erdogan

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Canada should start thinking about contingency plans for all eventualities following the US November elections.

The coming crisis in the US (and what Canada should do about it)



istock + Renée Depoers

Balkan Devlen

In the midst of a pandemic, faced with record high budget deficit and government debt, unsure about the prospects of a quick economic recovery, beleaguered by an ongoing ethics scandal that led to the resignation of a senior minister, and potentially facing a vote of no-confidence when the Parliament returns in late September, American politics is perhaps the last thing in the mind of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Maybe you are not interested in American politics but American politics is interested in you, to paraphrase Trotsky, and this is particularly the case for any Canadian leader. Our deeply integrated economy and close defence and security cooperation, not to mention the fact that Canada shares the world's longest undefended border with the United States, mean a Canadian PM would need to keep an eye out for any potential

The US is heading into a once-in-a-generation political crisis; Canada should be prepared for such a scenario.

trouble brewing south of the border.

Unfortunately I have bad news. The US is heading into a once-in-a-generation political crisis; Canada should be prepared for such a scenario and our government should start thinking about contingency plans for all eventualities. Let me explain. There are at least three ways in which such a crisis could come about.

A contested election

Although this is generally discussed in the media as Trump not accepting defeat, it is also easy to imagine a scenario where Biden wins the popular vote but narrowly loses the Electoral College. A recent wargame exercise by Transition Integrity Project that included several former senior politicians and policy-makers gamed such a scenario, along with more popular scenarios where Donald Trump refuses to accept the results, contests them in key battle states, Republican and Democratic state legislatures side with one candidate over the other, and court challenges all the way up to the Supreme Court.

The bottom line is that such a contestation can and probably will go on for weeks if not months, creating deadlock and paralysis in the machinery and institutions of government while a pandemic rages on, polarizing the society further and putting additional strain on America's democratic traditions and institutions. Low-level

political violence is very likely (e.g., rival protesters clashing in the streets) and there is a very small but greater than zero chance that different law enforcement agencies will take different sides.

Chaotic transition

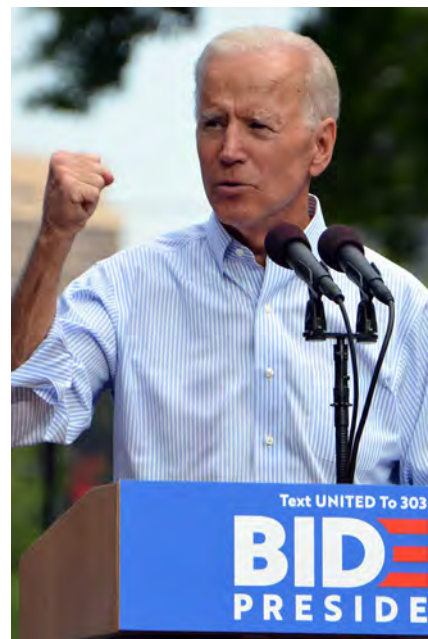
Even if there is a clear victory for Biden and Trump's attempts to contest the election do not bear fruit, Trump will use the transition period to do as much damage as possible

have less bandwidth to go after Trump and Co. after the election). Also having studied authoritarian leaders over the years, I believe – mixing lyrics/metaphors a bit here – they rarely go gently into the night but rage, rage against the machine (that put them out of power). I am fairly confident that if Trump is forced to concede, this will be the path he will choose. How much damage he can do requires a different analysis if things move in that direction.

All of this is bad news for Canada. Political instability in the US and the economic uncertainty it engenders will further tank Canada's largest export market just when we are facing unprecedented economic difficulties. Paralysis or chaos in the US federal government will exacerbate the existing tensions about border reopening and trade disputes or trigger new ones. An increase in political violence in the US could lead to a surge in irregular border



A dragged out dispute over the election results could lead to the emergence of rival centres of power.



before leaving office on January 20, 2021. This can include military action abroad, hollowing out federal institutions, ramming through controversial executive orders, issuing blanket pardons to the members of his administration, trying to negotiate immunity from criminal charges for himself and his family, stonewalling Biden's transition team and withholding information from them, etc.

Why do I think that will be the case? My expectation is based on what we know about Trump's personality (e.g., he hates being humiliated, is very quick to take offence, and never accepts responsibility for failure) and the political incentives to do so (e.g., bogging down the new administration with so many problems and fires to put out that it will

Delegitimized Presidency

A surprise Trump victory and a reluctant Biden concession will not mean that the Democratic base (particularly its more far-left wing) will accept the results. Remember those "Not my President" placards and marches after Trump was elected? Think about them but much bigger this time around, coming at the heels of Black Lives Matter protests and the ensuing riots in some cities. Mass demonstrations challenging the legitimacy of Trump's presidency, claims of voter suppression, and demands for Trump's resignation would be the result. Trump will react very harshly by sending in the federal law enforcement or perhaps even the US military, arguing that this is an insurrection.

crossings, forcing Canada to make difficult choices about border security. A dragged out dispute over the election results could lead to the emergence of rival centres of power with competing claims of legitimacy and even a military intervention – an event with an exceedingly low probability but not unthinkable, putting Canada in an impossible position. Who do we recognize as the legitimate authority if there are competing claims? What about NORAD?

What can we do? To be frank, not much except bracing for impact. However even if Canada cannot do much to alter the trajectory the US is on, bracing for impact – that is trying to minimize exposure and reduce vulnerabilities as much as possible – will still be much better than doing nothing and

having to face the full force of the crisis.

How can we brace for impact?

First, the Canadian government should wargame the hell out of this crisis and its multitude of variants if they are not already doing so. Wargames, also known as serious games, such as the matrix games used in the Transition Integrity Project mentioned above, were always popular with the military but now are having a renaissance in policy, academic, and business communities. They

disruption of trade and border issues to strategic level concerns about NORAD and national security.

Second, the government should discreetly reach out to other like-minded states and allies, who would be sharing similar concerns about a prolonged political-legal crisis in the United States. Being able to share information, coordinate policy, and if needed develop a concerted action with other allies would provide a buffer and some degree

for failing to live up to some lofty ethical criteria. It is the behemoth next door that Canada cannot afford to alienate. We do not have meaningful leverage to affect the outcome of such a political-legal crisis in American politics. We would have to live with whoever comes out victorious in this contest regardless of how we feel about him. So a prudent, cautious policy should be the order of the day. Simply put, Canada cannot be the cheerleader for Biden in the aftermath



Whatever the outcome of this crisis, existing fissures and cleavages within American body politic are not going to disappear anytime soon.

are low-cost, can be put together relatively quickly, and when done right could provide valuable insights about the dynamics of decision-making under uncertainty. They are good at highlighting vulnerabilities, testing robustness of different policy responses, and finding blindspots.

The Department of National Defence naturally has experience with a variety of wargames but there are existing wargaming capabilities within other government agencies from Global Affairs Canada to Public Safety Canada, from various intelligence agencies to the federal government's own foresight shop, Policy Horizons. Analytical games work best when they are done with a diverse set of stakeholders and repeated under different scenarios. Federal and provincial governments should start to organize them and run various scenarios from local/provincial concerns about

of protection for Canada. It is also a good long-term hedging strategy. Whatever the outcome of this crisis, existing fissures and cleavages within American body politic are not going to disappear anytime soon and those would continue to have repercussions for America's international behavior. Those who are thinking that if Biden wins everything will be "back to normal" are just deluding themselves. Canada should start looking for ways to reduce its exposure to the tumultuous currents of American politics and build strategic, diplomatic, and economic buffers and redundancies.

Lastly, the government should resist the temptation to pontificate and choose sides in the run up and the immediate aftermath of the US elections. Moral grandstanding is Trudeau's siren song but it would be disastrous in this case. The US is not some far away state that the PM could chastize

of a contested election lest we are forced to live with Trump for four more years. The PM's first and foremost job is to protect the Canadian national interest, whatever one's personal preferences and wishes are.

In short, a crisis after the November elections is overdetermined. There are multiple routes to get there and a lot of stars need to align just right for it not to happen. Furthermore, such a crisis – whatever shape it takes – will continue until at least early to mid-2021. Canada should be prepared for such a scenario and our government should start thinking about contingency plans for all eventualities. This is one foreign crisis we cannot afford to ignore. ✪

Balkan Devlen is a senior fellow at MLI and a "Superforecaster" for Good Judgment, Inc., a geopolitical forecasting consultancy based in New York. Part of this article first appeared in Hindsight 20/20.

Hong Kong's national security law assault on media

Canada should state its strong disapproval of Hong Kong's move against a reputable media organization.

J. Michael Cole

Early in the morning of August 10, officers from a new police unit created to enforce the new National Security Law imposed by Beijing on the former special administrative region of Hong Kong took Jimmy Lai, owner of the *Apple Daily* newspaper, into custody. Within hours, his two sons, as well as senior management at Next Digital, were also taken into custody. As the arrests took place, a large contingent of police officers raided *Apple Daily*'s headquarters in the city. Lai's right-hand man, Mark Simon, who is reportedly abroad at the moment, has also been put on a wanted list.

Sources told the *South China Morning Post* that Lai was arrested for "collusion with a foreign country, uttering seditious words, and conspiracy to defraud." This was the third wave of arrests since the new law came into force on June 30. Besides the arrests, six Hong Kong individuals who are currently abroad have been placed on a Wanted-for-Arrest list.

Lai doesn't fit the description of the type of individual whom, Hong Kong authorities assured us, were to be targeted by the new law – a "handful" of teenagers who "threatened stability" in the city. Instead, Lai, along with the senior management at his media empire, headed one of the very few remaining media in Hong Kong that, in recent years, have continued to criticize government policy and the Chinese Communist Party.

The arrests undoubtedly are meant to send a strong message to any would-be critic of the CCP and its lackeys in Hong



People distribute *Apple Daily* outside Tin Shui Wai Station in Hong Kong, August 2020.

Kong, and could very well spell the demise of *Apple Daily* in the city (the newspaper and its television network are also present in Taiwan, which is rapidly turning into the last bastion of free speech in the "Greater China" area). No doubt Lai, who travelled frequently, was also targeted because of his ability to speak truth to power, at home and abroad. He was, beyond doubt, a thorn in the CCP's side.

If there was any doubt about the reach of the new national security law, this is it: nobody is safe. Indeed, pro-democracy leader Agnes Chow was recently put under arrest. And we can expect that other senior figures in the pro-democracy camp will be taken into custody in the days and weeks to

We can expect that other senior figures in the pro-democracy camp will be taken into custody in the days and weeks to come.

come. Even speaking to foreign reporters – who in recent months have found it increasingly difficult to obtain work visas to remain in the city – or foreign NGOs,

Iris Tong VOA | commons.wikimedia.org

many of which are now looking to relocate elsewhere in the region, could now lead one to be accused of “collusion with a foreign country.”

In a matter of weeks, Beijing has succeeded in completely co-opting the pro-establishment camp and elites across the territory: media, large corporations, banks and universities have all gone silent, or have become complicit in what can only be described as a hostile takeover.

At this point, we do not know what

to the rest of China, a demonstration of its intolerance for any challenge to the CCP’s will, and an example, to the rest of China, of the unruliness and “chaos” that such (“Western”) freedoms supposedly engender. Gradualism is over; now, in one fell swoop, the charade has ended, and with it the possibility that Hong Kong could serve as an example of a possible future China, one that is more open, more liberal, and perhaps even democratic. Those dreams, for the time being, are no more.

of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control, have had little, if any, deterring effect on the willingness of the CCP and Hong Kong authorities to silence dissent and skewer the pro-democracy movement. In fact, it is possible that this escalatory move is in retaliation for international responses.

If that is indeed the case, then the international community must take a close, second look at its strategy to influence decision making in Hong Kong and Beijing, and find other vectors by which to hit



Left: Jimmy Lai Chee Ying, owner of the *Apple Daily*; above: Mr. Lai, in blue in the doorway, is arrested, April 18, 2020; below: Mr. Lai leaves the West Kowloon Law Courts Building, September 3, 2020.

(Photos: commons.wikimedia.org)

“Beijing has succeeded in completely co-opting the pro-establishment camp and elites across the territory.”

fate awaits Lai and others who have been taken away under the new law, whether they will be tried in Hong Kong courts or be spirited into the Kafkaesque “legal system” in the Mainland. What is certain is that most are facing years – and in some cases a lifetime – of imprisonment, conceivably without any possibility of bail.

Today’s move makes it clear that China’s experiment with a more liberal special administrative region is over. Hong Kong now serves as the opposite example

Lai’s arrest doesn’t exactly come as a surprise. Beijing has long regarded him as the mastermind of an alleged conspiracy (comprising “foreign elements” which inevitably are part of such constructs by closed political systems) to cause instability in Hong Kong. Those suspicions had already led to harassment and physical attacks against Lai and his media. His arrest is nevertheless proof that international opprobrium, as well as US sanctions, such as those announced under the Department

those responsible where it hurts the most. Canada, like other democracies, should state its strong disapproval of Hong Kong’s move against a reputable media organization, and work with like-minded partners in providing assistance – and political asylum, if necessary – to those who are now targeted by this new white terror. ❄

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If the Czech Republic can do it, so can we

The Czech Republic actions stand in stark contrast with the moral cowardice that many more powerful countries have displayed in their interactions with China.

J. Michael Cole

“Vicious in nature.” “Twisted.” “A rule-breaker who is trampling on diplomatic civilization.” “Evil deeds.” “Political hooligan.” One could be forgiven for thinking the target of such opprobrium was some tyrant who had violated the very tenets of international law. Who was this miscreant? Had he threatened neighbors with military invasion? Was he the architect of a network of concentration camps? A mastermind of ethnic cleansing? A despot who has cracked down on his own people?

Meet Miloš Vystrčil, president of the Senate of the Czech Republic. Vystrčil, the second-highest politician in the Central European country, had landed in Taiwan recently as head of a high-level delegation.

This visit is all the more poignant because Vystrčil’s predecessor, Jaroslav Kubera, was originally meant to lead the delegation before dying suddenly of a heart attack in January. Soon after his passing,

Kubera’s family revealed that the Chinese embassy in Prague had sent him a threatening letter over the visit. (Kubera also reportedly told his wife not to eat anything at any function organized by the Chinese embassy, which suggests that he feared poisoning.)

So, what had Vystrčil done that had led Chinese Communist Party mouthpieces to describe it with such over-the-top criticisms.

Above: Miloš Vystrčil, president of the Senate of the Czech Republic, meets President Tsai Ing-wen at the Presidential palace in Taipei, September 3, 2020.

(Mori / Office of the President | commons.wikimedia.org)

What was his “despicable act,” according to Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian?

Vystrčil is from a democratic country in Europe with a long, proud history of standing up to foreign invaders – Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union – and authoritarianism. In September, he visited another vibrant democracy in East Asia, which has a similar

fumes and threatens, and when all this fails, Beijing consoles itself by pointing out that the transgressor is small and insignificant. (Why all the noise, then?)

Indignant, the Chinese regime simply cannot accept that the visit to Taiwan was the Czech Republic’s sovereign decision, and not, as it claims, part of US-led machinations to “engage in a new cold war against China.”

is possible to stand up to China. It is in stark contrast with the moral cowardice that many more powerful countries, like Germany (or indeed Canada), have displayed in their interactions with China. None of this is because doing so is in any way illegal, but simply because we allow Beijing to dictate our foreign policy and to threaten us whenever we indicate that we



The Chinese regime simply cannot accept that the visit to Taiwan was the Czech Republic’s sovereign decision.



Far left: Jaroslav Kubera, former president of the Senate of the Czech Republic, seen here in Prague in 2019, was posthumously awarded the Special Great Qingyun Medal for continuing the friendly relations between Taiwan and the Czech Republic and for adhering to the values of Taiwanese and Czech democracy.

Left: President Václav Zeman accepts the Medal on his behalf.

(David Sedlecký | commons.wikimedia.org;
Wang Yu Ching / Office of the President | commons.wikimedia.org)

history of subjugation, authoritarianism, and threats from an annexationist regime next door. Those shared experiences have created a special bond between the peoples from both countries, one that has also been accompanied by vibrant trade, investment, and tourism.

What irks the CCP is the fact that years of attempts to buy, penetrate, co-opt, and influence the Czech Republic had failed to prevent flourishing ties between the two democracies and the visit by Vystrčil. Similar threats have also failed to deter Zdeněk Hřib, the Prague mayor who has also defied China on Taiwan. The CCP cannot countenance that “a small, remote Central European country” would not abdicate. It

Misleadingly, Beijing also contends that the visit by a sitting official violates the so-called “one China” principle – a principle that only exists in Beijing’s Orwellian view of the world and which should not be confused with a country’s “one China” policy. As the world slowly awakens to the risks and costs of embracing authoritarian China, more countries will be willing to engage Taiwan, an economic powerhouse and frontline state in the brewing battle of ideologies that pits the CCP and other despotic regimes against a fledgling alliance of democracies.

Among small and medium powers, the Czech Republic is bravely leading the way and showing the rest of the world that it

may want to explore our sovereign right to act otherwise.

With Vystrčil’s delegation’s interaction with the miracle that is Taiwan, we should collectively ask ourselves, *If small Czech Republic can do it, why not us?* Undoubtedly China will threaten, and my even retaliate against certain individuals and companies. But its game is up. Its ability to hit back is far more limited than it lets on. Meanwhile, the Czech Republic will survive. In fact, it will continue to prosper. And so can the rest of us. 🌸

J. Michael Cole is a Taipei-based senior fellow at MLI in Ottawa and the Global Taiwan Institute in Washington, DC.

America shouldn't go it alone in containing China

A US-led international effort would not only serve American interests vis-a-vis China, but also reinvigorate its relations with many key allies, including Canada.

Charles Burton

While its agenda has been caustic and divisive, one thing the Trump administration has gotten right is in recognizing that the People's Republic of China poses a serious threat to the principles of fairness, reciprocity and justice in international relations.

US leadership on this issue is sorely needed, given the absence of consensus among Western nations on how to rein in China's appalling violations of established norms of trade and diplomacy, including its audacious territorial expansion into the South China Sea and elsewhere.

Back in 2017, it was unlikely that Washington would have been able to rally much of a coordinated international response. China's sophisticated manipulation of corporate business interests through its extensive political influence operations in Western capitals, alongside deep uncertainty among US allies of America's commitment to them, would have prevented such collaboration.

But China's image has suffered in the wake of COVID-19, which has hardened views in the West. Its initial coverup, its use of false narratives to shift blame about the origins of the pandemic, and its exploitation of the crisis to make political gains around the world (its unseemly "mask diplomacy" in Europe, its crackdown in Hong Kong, its territorial grab across the Sino-Indian border) have clarified the threat posed by Beijing.

There is also growing recognition of China's strategy of spurious trade embargoes

and "hostage diplomacy" to pressure middle powers like Canada, Australia and others. China blatantly uses coercive measures to force smaller countries to comply with the PRC's many demands, such as allowing Chinese state acquisition of mineral and energy resources around the world, removing national security restrictions on the export of sensitive technologies, installing Huawei 5G

*The US alone
has the means
to take on China
unilaterally.*

equipment into national telecommunications networks, and tolerating zero criticism of Chinese state behaviour.

With little change in China's recent behaviour, Western policies of appeasement have now been discredited. This presents an opportunity for the US to assert, once and for all, that it is not a declining power. Yet, as Washington reshapes its engagement with China, it needs to start including middle powers in the negotiations. Limiting the engagement to bilateral fora between the US and China has inadvertently given Beijing free rein to exploit power imbalances with smaller countries, weakening the global network of alliances and institutions meant to uphold democracy, justice and peace.

This summer, 19 prominent Canadians urged Ottawa to effectively nullify the *Canada-US Extradition Treaty* by not extraditing Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou to the US. They hoped this would lead to the release of Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, both of whom remain in Chinese jails under appalling conditions without due process.

A more effective strategy may be found in confronting China's aversion to multilateral challenges to its actions. A US-led multilateral coalition to enforce effective measures against bullying by China toward any member nation would significantly undermine Beijing's divide-and-conquer strategy. China would never dare subject a US diplomat-on-leave (which is the case for Michael Kovrig) to such abuse, and that is the point. The threat of being singled out for Chinese economic retaliation (or worse) inhibits allies from, for example, following Washington's lead in implementing Magnitsky sanctions. It also makes it difficult for lesser powers to adopt a more robust response – more aligned with the US – to China's increasingly aggressive international behaviour.

The US alone has the means to take on China unilaterally. American allies who now see China for the bully that it is may be motivated to confront it, but individually, they lack the wherewithal to stand up to China. A US-led international effort would not only serve American interests vis-a-vis China, but also reinvigorate its relations with many key allies, including Canada.

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Beijing moves the goalposts for ‘healthy’ Sino-Canadian relations

The CCP will always exploit weakness in its opponents, while using maximum propaganda to shift the blame for failure squarely on its opponents.

J. Michael Cole

With Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou back in a Vancouver court, another chapter in the geopolitical saga between Canada and China has commenced. However, China’s erratic actions leave little doubt that, no matter what happens next, Canada-China relations will remain strained.

Initially after Meng’s arrest on a US extradition request and China’s subsequent kidnapping of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, Chinese authorities had suggested that a “prisoner swap” could lead to the release of the captured Canadians. Zhao Lijian, a spokesman for China’s ministry of foreign affairs, suggested that Beijing could be amenable to releasing Kovrig and Spavor if Meng were set free.

While the Trudeau government rightly declared that they will not indulge in that kind of debased hostage diplomacy, the fact remains that the Liberal government is facing considerable pressure to do just that. An open letter signed by a wide-range of elites arguing for the release of Meng, economic and political coercion from China, and a cadre of prominent ex-Liberal elites are all weights on the scales against Trudeau’s better instincts.

This pressure, combined with persistent weakness in the face of abject Chinese aggression, suggests that Ottawa would prefer if things just “returned to normal.” They would restore the bright and sunny ways of the early Trudeau government, where free trade with China was a laudable goal and cooperation with



Even if Canada were to capitulate and release Meng, there is no reasonable path to return to “normalcy.”

the PRC was seen as constant, predictable, and productive.

However, for those who have lived under the shadow of China’s “rise,” it is a well-known fact that one constant to how the Chinese Communist Party conducts foreign relations is that nothing is ever constant. Even if Canada were to capitulate and release Meng, there is no reasonable path to return to “normalcy.”

China’s envoy to Canada, Cong Peiwu, made that clear in an interview published in Montreal-based *La Presse*, with a warning that the release by Canada of Meng

Wenzhou would not result in the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor.

Cong leaves little doubt that a prisoner swap is out of the question. “The reason for their detention is completely different,” he observed. “Therefore, the two issues should be treated separately.” In fact, Cong signaled that Meng’s release was now a precondition for the resumption of healthy relations between Canada and China, adding that Canada’s arrest of Meng made it an “accomplice of the United States.”

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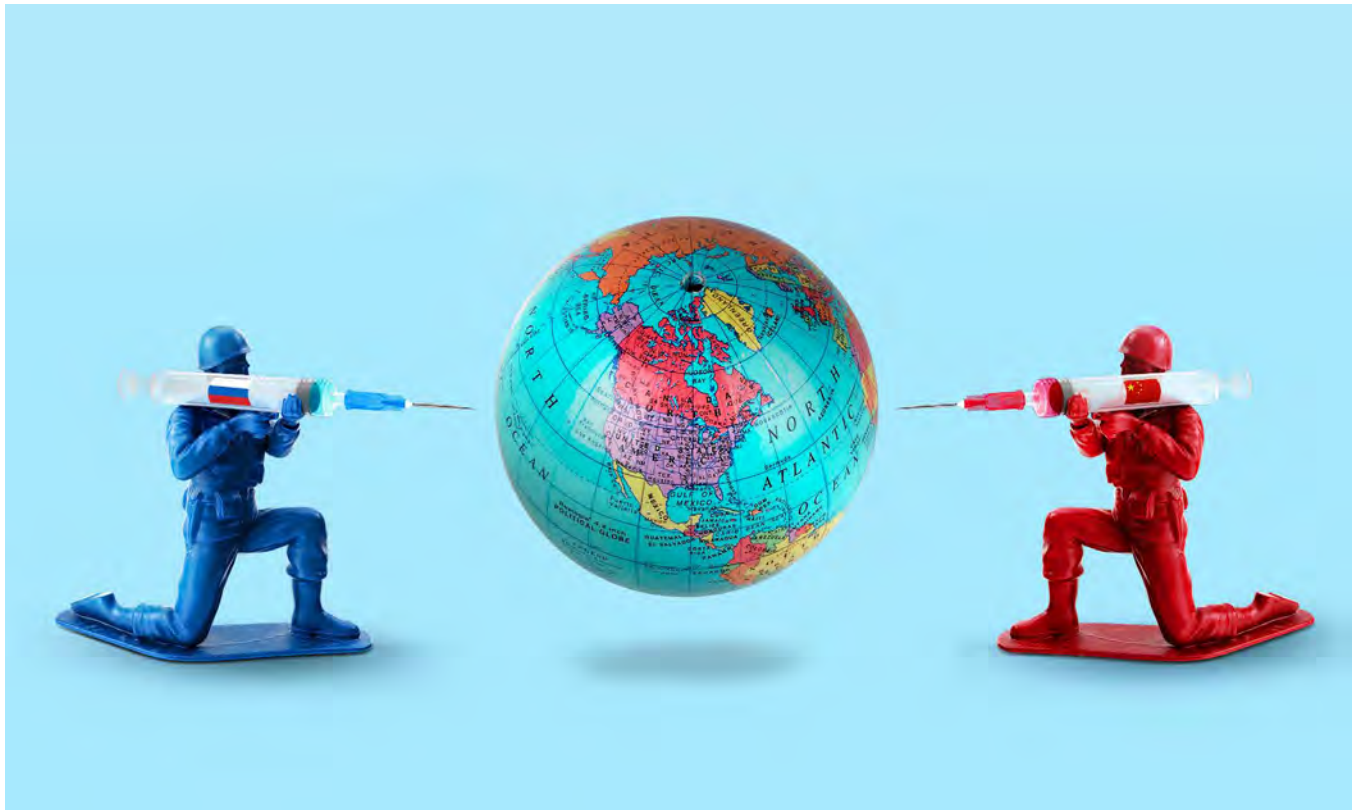


Illustration: Renée Depocas (morning brew | Al Le)

Comparing the weaponization of COVID-19 by China and Russia

China and Russia are exploiting the pandemic to increase the spread of propaganda and disinformation domestically and abroad.

Pierre Jolicœur

Anthony Seaboyer

China and Russia's leaders have openly weaponized the COVID-19 crisis for political gain and to advance their preexisting agendas. President Xi and President Putin have set their own personal interests of consolidating power and eradicating dissent over the health and even lives of their own citizens, and in the process losing what little soft power, based on reputation and trust, they may have had. Both countries show striking similarities in how they have weaponized COVID-19 in the information space to achieve political agendas.

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*China and
Russia – among
other countries –
weaponized the
COVID-19 crisis for
political gain.*”

This article offers a brief comparison of how both China and Russia – among other countries – weaponized the COVID-19 crisis for political gain

by exploiting the crisis for propaganda campaigns towards other powers as well as using COVID-19 to justify a drastic increase in influence operations on their citizens.

From the beginning of the outbreak, first Beijing and later Moscow spread disinformation to hide cases and downplay the threat of the virus to their own citizens. China was aware of the human-to-human transmission of the virus as early as December 2019, but chose to hinder the spread of any information about COVID-19 and even denied its existence. Instead of sharing information about the virus with the WHO or even its

own citizens, the regime arrested doctors who initially raised alarm about the illness, even as the cases of the new virus increased dramatically.

Russia has a similar strategy of hindering information flow about the virus in Russia. Three doctors “fell” from hospital windows in two weeks alone. One of the three doctors had become famous for posting a video online explaining how insufficient the hospital supplies of protective gear are and that he had been forced to continue working in the hospital as a doctor even after testing positive for COVID-19.

medical workers. Media coverage of their generosity was then exploited to support ongoing propaganda campaigns claiming that either China or Russia had to come to the help of the West in the absence of EU or NATO support on this issue. At times China but certainly Russia needed the PPE resources for themselves but propaganda victories were prioritized over the health of their own citizens.

Counter to Russian and Chinese narratives, the EU has actually invested considerably in helping its member states. Individual EU member states have also been very effective in

Both countries are suspected (for good reason) to have drastically under-reported both domestic cases COVID-19 infections as well as related deaths. China has gone even as far as to ban online gaming with foreigners as well as chatting online with foreigners in an effort to reduce the spread of information. Both countries have also introduced sweeping surveillance measures on communication and gatherings in which protest against insufficient health care resources to fight COVID-19 and related measures could be expressed. Russian citizens are required to apply online if they want to travel more



Russia's COVID-19 disinformation campaigns are aimed at worsening the impact of COVID-19 in the EU.

China and Russia are not only guilty of spreading disinformation domestically. They also use narratives related to the virus in their ongoing information operations against the West aimed at creating panic and intentional confusion about the virus. Chinese agents have, for example, spread text messages and social media posts that falsely claimed the US president was “locking down the country.” Russia’s COVID-19 disinformation campaigns are aimed at worsening the impact of COVID-19 in the EU, in order to generate panic, sow distrust in Western government institutions and create the impression that Russian and its authoritarian political system are better suited to deal with the crisis. They are even produced in English, French, German, Spanish and Italian languages in order to better target foreign audiences.

In order to generate goodwill, both China and Russia have offered assistance to other countries dealing with the viral outbreak, such as by exporting personal protective equipment (PPE) for frontline

helping each other cope with the virus; for example, when Germany flew ICU patients from Italy, France and Spain to German hospitals for treatment. At the same time, both China and Russia spread the false narrative that democracies are too weak to save the lives of their citizens and only “strong countries” like Russia and China are able to deal with the virus. Ironically, Russia is one of the countries in the world that is currently experiencing the fastest growth of its epidemic.

Similar approaches have also been introduced to reduce the flow of “unauthorized” information by – even more strictly than before – trying to censor any critical citizen commentary of the response to the virus or even the threat the virus poses. Russian and Chinese testing, at least initially, was denied to citizens in an effort to statistically keep the number of affected people low; this was done to create the impression of health care systems sufficiently equipped to deal with the crisis, in contrast to how they described Western democracies dealing with the crisis.

than 100 meters away from their door step. China had famously quarantined whole cities, enforced compliance with drones and even physically looked doors to apartment buildings with infected citizens.

The similarities in the approaches of both China and Russia are striking. The leadership of both countries are exploiting the pandemic to increase the spread of propaganda and disinformation domestically and abroad, crushing dissent and normalizing a range of extreme surveillance measures to control their citizens by tracking and restricting their movements – measures being watched with great interest by authoritarian leaders in an increasing number of countries. ✱

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The long and poisonous tentacles of Kremlin intimidation

Threats of violence against critics and activists should be taken seriously by all Western governments.

Marcus Kolga

The world has yet again been shocked by a brazen attempt to poison and kill another opponent of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The poisoning of Alexei Navalny fits a bloody pattern of assassination and intimidation that has been growing for nearly 20 years.

Targeted for his highly effective reports exposing corrupt Russian officials and oligarchs, Navalny is the latest victim in a long line stretching back to 2006, when former FSB agent, Alexander Litvinenko, was poisoned with radioactive polonium in a London hotel by two Russian agents. Litvinenko became an enemy of the Putin regime after he exposed a plot by the FSB to blow up a group of apartment buildings southeast of Moscow in 1999.

Russian opposition activist and journalist Vladimir Kara-Murza was poisoned in Moscow in 2015, shortly after pro-democracy leader Boris Nemtsov was savagely gunned down steps from the Kremlin. In a coma for several weeks afterwards, Kara-Murza barely survived and endured years of painful rehabilitation, only to be poisoned once again in 2017.

In 2018, Russian GRU military intelligence agents employed Novichuk – the same KGB developed toxin used against Navalny – to poison the former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Salisbury, England, which resulted in the death of an innocent bystander who was inadvertently exposed to it.

Designed to inflict horrific and highly visible suffering, the Putin regime uses poisoning both to kill opponents and intimidate critics.



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Yet living abroad
does not guarantee
the safety of
Putin's critics.”

Putin's KGB-style targeted poisonings and assassinations have forced several leading critics of the regime into exile – including political and human rights activists, journalists and environmental leaders, many of whom now live abroad in hopes of avoiding a fate similar to that of Navalny. That list includes Garry Kasparov,

Above left, clockwise: Vladimir Kara-Murza; Sergei and Yulia Skripal; Alexei Navalny; Alexander Litvinenko.

(Rafael Saakov, VOA via commons.wikimedia.org; via bbc.com; Evgeny Feldman, Novaya Gazeta via commons.wikimedia.org; Natasja Weitsz, Getty Images via theguardian.com/uk)

environmental activist Evgenia Chirikova, Mikhail Khodorkovsky and countless others. Personal safety may also force Navalny to remain in exile, perhaps fulfilling the objective of his would-be assassins.

Yet living abroad does not guarantee the safety of Putin's critics or make them immune from the Kremlin's intimidation, nor does it protect critics of the Kremlin living in the West. Kremlin propaganda agents have worked to radicalize portions of the Russian speaking community here in Canada over the past years and have attacked critics of the Kremlin, including myself, using Kremlin outlets, including the crypto-Stalinist, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*.

A toxic mix of both automated and radicalized trolls flood online comment sections of the pieces that I write about the Putin regime. The accusations range from the deeply ominous to absurdly hateful: I was accused last year of being a “demon, Satan, Ukrainian, evil Jew,” in an email from a Mosocw-based IP that ended with, “Evil scum, die!!!!!!” and signed by “Avtomat Kalashnikova.”

In May of this year, York Region Police investigated violent threats that were sent to me by a radicalized pro-Kremlin extremist. When offered to press charges, I declined, with the understanding that my rage-filled interlocutor had himself been victimized by Putin’s propaganda into becoming a tool of it.

Incessant trolling, intimidation and

threats are part of the cost of being a critic of the Kremlin – as well as the regimes in China and Iran. These incidents serve as lessons that the Russian government is actively working to silence and intimidate critics both at home and abroad, whether through direct action or through proxies; some through economic incentives, while others through psychologically manipulative propaganda.

Threats of violence against critics and activists should be taken seriously by all Western governments. The threat posed by the Russian government’s efforts to strategically encourage emotional and extreme nationalist reactions to criticism of the Putin regime in Russian speakers through propaganda is very real; lives may even be at risk.

Thankfully, the Canadian government does occasionally act to protect us from foreign regime intimidation and information warfare. In 2018, Canada expelled a number of Russian government propaganda agents – a move shockingly characterized by some as “un-Canadian.”

The tentacles of poisonous foreign repression and intimidation are long and dangerous. Yet we must remain vigilant in order to ensure that the threats don’t escalate into violence against Canadians who are critical of foreign governments in Russia, China, Iran, and any other regime that engages in mass human rights abuses and corruption. ❁

Marcus Kolga is a senior fellow at MLI and founder of *DisinfoWatch.org*.

Liberal Green plan (Buffalo, Coates)

Continued from page 6

in the national and international economy. Progress has been dramatic, and First Nations were on track for even more impressive improvements.

It is important to talk of a Canadian green economy, even if there are questions about how it will occur. The oil and gas sector and renewable energy production must co-exist and will, undoubtedly, be key parts of the investment portfolio of many Indigenous communities. A successful Canadian energy sector, operating on some of the highest environmental and social standards in the world and with strong Indigenous participation, is part of Canada’s best and most practical solution to its economic needs, environmental commitments and promises to promote Indigenous economic development. ❁

Stephen Buffalo is president of the Indian Resource Council and a senior fellow at MLI. Ken Coates is a Munk senior fellow at MLI. This article first appeared in the *Calgary Herald*.

Rebuilding the economy (Cross)

Continued from page 7

little understanding of these challenges and a woeful track record of identifying or developing innovative solutions.

Now we see the benefit of producing a full federal budget and not just a snapshot of the current (abysmal) state of government finances. Crafting a budget with a fiscal plan for this year and next would have forced the government to think through its strategy to deal with the virus and how to transition from expensive income transfers to households to more sustainable long-term support for companies. Instead, many households and businesses face the prospect of less government support just when programs that deferred mortgage and rent payments are ending.

The massive challenge of finding how the economy and COVID-19 can co-exist still waits to be fully addressed. ❁

Philip Cross is a Munk senior fellow at MLI and the former chief economic analyst at Statistics Canada. This article first appeared in the *Epoch Times*.

Automakers (Nazareth)

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1.87 vehicles. That may not seem like a huge adjustment, but in practical terms it would translate into 14 million fewer cars on the road, and by extension, a lessened need for car production.

Given that so much of Ontario’s manufacturing base is centred on motor vehicles and parts, that is not good news, particularly if the Canadian patterns of driving mirror that of the US. Keep in mind, too, that there is evidence that demographics are against car ownership, and that younger generations are less in love with car culture than older ones to begin with. Throw in some tepid growth as business crawls back after the pandemic and unemployment stays high, and it is not an encouraging picture ahead.

Of course, fewer cars on the road will absolutely have some benefits, to the environment to start, as well as in terms of reducing the costs of constant road repair. And the number of accidents – and deaths – will absolutely go down as well. After

the first month of lockdown in California, a study by the University of California, Davis, found that as a result of lower traffic volumes on highways, collisions had fallen from an average of 1000 a day in California to 500, with crashes involving injury declining from 400 to 200. In dollar terms, they estimated that the savings to the state was about US\$40-million a day.

The pandemic is, unfortunately, not yet over and it remains unclear to what extent people will be returning to the workplace or to the mall. Still, it is probably time to realize that we are not going to completely turn the clock back to the world as it was before March 2020. Driving less may be one of those shifts, and now might be a good time to start thinking through what that might mean for industries such as auto manufacturing. ✱

Linda Nazareth is the host of the Work and the Future podcast and senior fellow for economics and population change at MLI. This article first appeared in the Globe and Mail.

Pandemic responses (Cross)

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sharply curtails the parts of the economy in which entrepreneurs can innovate, while fostering a culture that reinforces the status quo rather than rewarding disruption.

Canada's response to the pandemic helped contain the virus in the short run but it is a sign of the country's shortcoming in the long run. While the US has been engulfed in economic and social turmoil this year and is having difficulty controlling the virus, the forces behind this apparent chaos also sustain its culture of creative destruction. Over time, disagreeableness trumps politeness when it comes to the creation of innovation and economic growth. ✱

Philip Cross is a Munk senior fellow at MLI and the former chief economic analyst at Statistics Canada. This article first appeared in the National Review.

Next pandemic (Schipper)

Continued from page 13

pandemic. While no middle power can do it all, a collective can.

In support of internationalizing our health economy, we would do well to identify and reinforce areas of our strength in respect to global health threats. It could be the production of medical technologies, or the manufacture of essential drugs, or the bridging of distance and cultures. Whatever the form of our comparative advantages, we ought to establish them early in this process.

Canada is uniquely well-suited to leading this health economy project. Our biological and medical sciences expertise is, on a population and expenditure basis, world leading already. We just don't capitalize on it. Also, our diversity both provides the test bed for new interventions and links to other countries that no other country can match. Moreover, as a middle power with a track record of trust and success in forging new concepts for global well-being (such as UN peacekeeping and our founding leadership of the World Health Organization) we have specific advantages in terms of engaging the international community.

What would be the effect of all this? If nothing else, we will transform what is now considered a 15 percent cost sink to our economy into an economic engine of world-leading potential. It will create high value, sustainable jobs. It will attract risk investment to realms of enormous human promise. And ultimately, an unavoidable by-product of these efforts would be a next generation health system and resilient readiness for the next pandemic. ✱

Harvey Schipper is a professor of medicine and adjunct professor of law at the University of Toronto. He is the author of a recent MLI commentary, How pandemic modelling failed policy-makers, and how to do better. This article was first published in the Hill Times.

Facebook and journalism (Menzies)

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solution was to reduce the size and quality of their newsrooms. Thousands of journalists lost their jobs and readers – with a whole world of online news to choose from – went elsewhere. The best of them worked hard to sustain some semblance of quality. But in general most have stared, frozen, at the Internet as if it were the lights of an oncoming semi-trailer and only a few have shown anything like the innovation and imagination required to survive. The harsh truth is that they just haven't been very good at adapting to change and have run out of money. Facebook, meanwhile, invested heavily in the opportunities the Internet created and made billions.

If journalism is to be a public good, government policy should be designed to support its future and not, as Guilbeault appears determined to do, its past. ✱

Peter Menzies is a senior fellow at MLI, a former newspaper publisher and past vice-chair of the CRTC. This article first appeared in The Line.

Belarus (Alexander)

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and other would-be strongmen will be left, longing to pull the ladder of democracy up after them. Finally, we must never underestimate the potential of Belarus, a country in the heart of Europe, to flourish, to put venality and autocracy aside, and to rejoin the company of free nations once the fetters of fear, isolation and repression have been removed. In short, we must persist.

Every one of us can empower and amplify Belarusian voices: start with Twitter, by discovering a Belarusian news outlet or by writing your MP. As a key champion of a free, democratic, reforming Ukraine, Canada has an additional reason to stand with Belarus in these hours of need. Wayne Gretzky's grandfather Anton, originally from Grodno/Hrodna

in Belarus, would expect nothing less, as would former NDP leader David Lewis, born David Losz in 1909 in Svislach, also in today's Grodno region of Belarus.

Belarus paid the highest price of any country, on a per capita basis, in terms of lives lost to the Holocaust, to repression and to fighting during the Second World War. Far from being “people of whom we know nothing,” Belarusians are central to the fabric of Canadian and European life: their homeland's struggle for democracy today should be our fight as well. ✱

Chris Alexander served in Afghanistan from 2003 to 2009 – first as Canada's ambassador, then as deputy head of the UN mission. He was minister of citizenship and immigration in Stephen Harper's Conservative government and spent six years in Moscow (and occasionally Minsk) as a Canadian diplomat.

China (Burton)

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It would also force political elites in Western nations – who are still struggling against China's attempts to increase its influence beyond its own borders – to join together and issue a transparent and unambiguous response to China's actions. The US and its allies, including Canada, must come together to demand fairness and reciprocity from China at all levels.

Clearly, Washington needs to take the lead among advanced Western democracies and Indo-Pacific partners to neutralize China's strategy to displace the US as the leading global superpower in order to serve Beijing's hostile power ambitions. Unity of purpose and harmony of action on China will only come if the US takes the initiative in leading a collaborative response. ✱

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Goalposts (Cole)

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If Cong's remarks indeed reflect Beijing's new policy, then it is clear that the goalposts have moved. Undoubtedly frustrated with its inability to coerce Ottawa into releasing Meng, Beijing has decided to up the ante, making Kovrig and Spavor victims not of the Meng affair, but now making an example of them to punish Ottawa for its defiance. Canada is not the first target of such kidnapping diplomacy – in recent years, Australian, Swedish, and Taiwanese nationals have also been disappeared by Chinese authorities amid a downturn in the relationship.

Ironically, Cong's warning obviates what arguably was Beijing's most potent leverage with Ottawa – hopes by many Canadians to see two of their own return home – in exchange for vague promises of the resumption of cordial ties with China. The problem is that there is no knowing how long this would last, as we cannot know what next “offence” by Canada would prompt the kidnapping of another of our nationals by China.

If Ottawa concedes, Beijing gets what it wants – Meng back – while underscoring the fact that, in its hierarchy of states, it is China, not smaller states, that gets to set the rules of the game. The only thing Canada would obtain in return is “healthy” relations, whose nature and duration would also be decided by Beijing. Based on the precedent set by Beijing with other countries, it's easy to imagine that we'd get screwed. Weakness and contrition would only invite recidivism by Beijing, which would whittle away at Ottawa's ability to set its own parameters for our relations with China.

Canada therefore has even less incentive now to set Meng free. However tempting it may be to repair our relationship with China by giving it what it wants, we should never lose sight of who our real friends are. Disagreements with President

Trump notwithstanding, there is absolutely no doubt that the United States is a much better and ideologically compatible friend.

The fate of Kovrig and Spavor is a brutal reminder of the risks of attracting Beijing's displeasure now that its rulers have concluded that China is a first among equals. It also underscores the urgency of decoupling from China and for a reconfiguration of the global supply chain.

Since their arrest and descent into China's Orwellian legal system, it had been generally acknowledged that by detaining back in a Vancouver court, Beijing was creating a “moral equivalence” which should have facilitated Meng's release. Though it never was a good idea, maybe there was a time when a swap would have at least been possible. But that window has closed. Beijing is now “unshakably” set on retribution.

As General Marshall discovered in his Sisyphean endeavors to encourage unity in China following World War II, the CCP will always exploit weakness in its opponents, while using maximum propaganda to shift the blame for failure squarely on its opponents. It's difficult to imagine what will secure freedom for Kovrig, Spavor, and the many others who have been kidnapped by China in recent years. It's likely they will remain in detention for a while yet, probably until there is a change of attitude in Beijing.

We owe it to them to not give in to the CCP's disregard for the norms of decency. We also owe it to them to deny Beijing the pleasure of depicting us as the reason for soured relations. If it wasn't Meng, it would eventually have been something else, as China's disputes with many other countries have shown. The worst that we could do is to give it what it wants. ✱

J. Michael Cole is a Taipei-based senior fellow at MLI in Ottawa and the Global Taiwan Institute in Washington, DC.

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