

A KONRAD - ADENAUER - STIFTUNG PUBLICATION

Howard **Anglin**  
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# PARALLEL VALUES

Christian Democratic and  
Conservative Values  
in Contemporary  
Western Politics

Perspectives from  
Canada and Germany

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ISBN 978-1-7774289-1-4

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**PART ONE**

Howard Anglin

# Unpicking the Skein

Tracing the threads  
of the CPC's politics  
backward and  
forward from 2020

## At a glance

- **The Conservative Party of Canada** is the product of the 2003 merger of the Progressive Conservative party, whose roots go back to before Confederation, and the Canadian Alliance, which was the latest version of a populist reform movement that began in the late 1980s in Western Canada. This paper examines both political traditions, focusing on four prime ministers– Sir John A. Macdonald (1867–1873, 1878–1891) John Diefenbaker (1957-1963), Brian Mulroney (1984-1993), and Stephen Harper (2006-2015)– and one party leader, Preston Manning (Reform Party leader 1987-2000). It draws out of these traditions five principles that most conservatives would recognize as important to the Conservative Party’s identity and considers each in turn, both historically and with an eye to the future.
- **Free trade and principled foreign policy:** The Conservative Party was historically an anti-free trade party, except when it came to trading within the British Empire and later the Commonwealth, but that changed when Brian Mulroney delivered a free-trade agreement with the United States. Conservatives have also generally (if inconsistently) been willing to put moral principles ahead of commercial interests in foreign policy. A future Conservative foreign policy should fuse these two principles. It should expand free trade on fair terms with reliable partners and seek to build interest blocs of like-minded democracies as a defence against the weaponization of trade and foreign policy by the People’s Republic of China and others.
- **Immigration and multiculturalism:** Contrary to popular perception, the Conservative Party has historically been a more consistent proponent of high levels of immigration than the Liberal Party.



That said, in recent years under Justin Trudeau the Liberal Party has increased annual immigration levels faster and higher than most Canadians, including new Canadians, are comfortable with. Conservatives should rein in annual immigration levels modestly and increase the emphasis on integration through both selection criteria and a practical, non-ideological approach to multiculturalism that emphasizes social and economic participation.

- **Federalism:** Respect for the constitutional division of powers between the federal and provincial governments is the area of policy where the Conservative Party can most easily distinguish itself from the other national, federal parties, enamoured as they are of national strategies for everything from housing to cycling. Mr Harper showed that respect for the principle of subsidiarity and a true diversity of policy across the country can actually promote national unity, especially in Quebec and the Prairies. Conservatives should follow his lead with an open, laissez-faire federalism.
- **Economic choice and security:** In recent decades, one of the Conservative Party's electoral advantages has been public confidence in its handling of economic and fiscal policy. Even in a time of growing disaffection with the apparent failings of neo-liberal economics, Conservatives can promote the benefits of choice and opportunity that flow from less regulation and lower taxes on job creation. At the same time, a Conservative Party should offer the security that people require to take entrepreneurial risks by ensuring that social benefits associated with traditional work extend to individuals and families in the new economy. Conservatives should also be willing to use the tax code to incentivize public goods such as savings and families.
- **Nation-building:** The age of nation-building through major infrastructure projects is over, at least for now. Instead, Conservatives who previously championed a national railway, opening up the North, and projects like the Confederation bridge,

should focus on nation-building through closer economic links from free trade within Canada. They should also take pride in telling the complicated, fascinating story of our history from the earliest Indigenous inhabitants to the present. If Liberals and the NDP want to see our past primarily as a source of embarrassment, Conservatives should look to it as a source of both admonition and inspiration. They should use it to reinforce our identity and as a guide to direct our national path forward.

## Introduction

**The poet Earle Birney famously** said of Canada that “It’s only by our lack of ghosts we’re haunted,” and while that is not actually true of the country – there are plenty of ghosts, from Generals Wolfe and Brock to Thomas D’Arcy McGee and Pierre Laporte, whose untimely deaths haunt our history– it is true of Canadian conservatism. That is not to say we have not had great leaders and even a few notable theorists, but Canadian conservatism has been renewed and reinvented so many times that a Conservative leader today has to squint to discern a coherent tradition among so many disparate and contradictory historical figures and is, thus, mostly free to chart his own course free of spectral haunting.

The task I have been set is to tease out of this diverse party history those principles that have endured over time and apply them to the current political landscape. Some of these principles have been present from the beginning; others entered Canadian conservative thought more recently, but have since become inextricable from the party’s conception of itself.

As this is an essay, not a book, the limitations of its scope are evident: as history, it is incomplete; as analysis, cursory; as prescription, tentative. Any summary of more than 150 years of political history risks being accused of cherry-picking facts to support a narrative. Accounting for R.B. Bennett’s Depression-era leadership, for example, would require a discussion of the legacies of the Bank of Canada, farm marketing boards, and the CBC. I have avoided that problem by simply omitting his aberrant record. Within these strictures, and with a few such exceptions, however, I have tried to offer a plausible account of a core principles from Canadian Conservative party history and to suggest

how they can be carried forward in a way that most conservatives will recognize, even if they may disagree on specifics.

I do not claim that my insights and recommendations are original, and where I have drawn on specific work by others, I have tried to credit them via hyperlinks, acknowledgment in the text, or in the attached bibliography.

## Principles: past, present, and future

**The first challenge that any** Canadian conservative party must confront is that Canada is not a conservative country. This means that a majority of Canadians will not endorse the policies approved at a party convention. That is why principles are so important. When party policies are tailored for public approval, or adapted to meet unexpected circumstances, it is the underlying principles that must guide the policymakers. As **Paul Wells wrote** back in 2007, “Governments improvise more than they can ever plan, and it is natural for conservatives to prefer that a Conservative get to do the improvising.” That is especially true now as we face the greatest period of economic, social, and spiritual destabilization in Canada’s history— but only if the Conservative doing the improvising understands and respects the party’s historic principles.

Principles are also important because without them a party— and the country it leads— can offer only banalistic slogans and an ad hoc policy agenda. Even if such a party wins election, through democratic fatigue with the incumbent or favourable vote splits, it can do no good, and likely much harm. A government can’t expect to win the allegiance of its own citizens, which is necessary to inspire solidarity and industry, let alone the respect of by its peers, which is necessary for trade, diplomacy, and war-and peace-making, if it doesn’t offer a vivid account of what it stands for.

With that in mind, the principles that I have teased out of the history of the Conservative Party of Canada for discussion are:

- Free trade and principled foreign policy
- Immigration and multiculturalism
- Federalism
- Economic choice and security
- Nation-building

This list is selective. It omits many areas of public policy— including criminal justice, Indigenous affairs, the environment, ethics and accountability, and national defence— not because they are not important, but because their distinct roots in Conservative party history are harder to untangle. Nor are the chosen principles discrete; each extends beyond the space allotted to it and, in most cases, encroaches upon others. The reason I have chosen them, however, is that they are areas that highlight clear philosophical differences between Canadian Liberals and Conservatives. They are areas where Conservatives can claim to be more than reluctant and foot-dragging Liberals.

The list focuses exclusively on federal history and policy, which means some of the most important challenges today – such as healthcare, K-12 education, and the as-yet unchecked *trahison des clercs* underway in our post-secondary institutions – are left out because they fall primarily within provincial jurisdiction. Because of historical regional differences, a coherent conservative tradition in those areas would be even harder to tease out. In any event, the federal government can only address them indirectly, which may sometimes be necessary but is generally suspect from a party that champions federalism. Finally, I do not endorse all of the policy suggestions offered; they are, rather, timely policies that flow naturally from the principles I have identified in the party’s history.

## **A History of the Conservative Party of Canada**

Writing a history of the Conservative Party of Canada is a either simple or excessively complicated task. Simple, because the party is just seventeen years old— not even old enough to drink legally in Canada. It still bears the clear stamp of its longest-serving leader and only Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, and an account of the principles of the modern Conservative Party of Canada would devolve into a history of his leadership and record.

Reaching back before 2003, the names of the party’s antecedents tell the complicated tale. On the more venerable side of the family tree, which I will refer to collectively as the “Conservative” party, we find “Liber-

al-Conservative Party” (1867-1873), Conservative Party, (1873-1917), Unionist Party (1917-1920), National Liberal and Conservative Party (1920-1922), Liberal-Conservative Party (again) (1922-1938), National Conservative Party (1938-1942), and the Progressive Conservative Party (1942-2003). On the upstart side, we have the Reform Party of Canada (1987-2000), and the Canadian Alliance (2000-2003).

As this paper has only space for the most cursory of histories, I will focus on the Conservative premierships of Sir John A. Macdonald, John Diefenbaker, and Brian Mulroney and, on the “Reform” side, on the founding work of Preston Manning. The rest of the story belongs to Stephen Harper.

## The Conservative Party

### *Sir John A. Macdonald*

Sir John A. Macdonald’s legacy is summed up in a **well-known campaign poster** from the 1891 election urging voters to endorse “The Old Flag, The Old Policy, The Old Leader.” The poster is a brilliant piece of propaganda. An aging and dignified Macdonald is borne aloft by a prosperous immigrant farmer and a sturdy urban worker under the banner of the Red Ensign, in front of a backdrop of mountains, rolling farmland, a factory, and a steam locomotive. Together the men and the industrious landscape symbolize the vision Macdonald had laid out way back in an 1860, in a speech calling for: “One people, great in territory, great in resources, great in enterprise, great in credit, great in capital.”

The “Old Policy” was the National Policy, which was what it sounds like: a policy to unite and bind together a new nation. In its means, the National Policy was philosophically flexible, but its ends were always oriented to growth: physical, demographic, and economic. Although government was much smaller and less ambitious than today, which makes any leader look *laissez faire* by contemporary standards, Macdonald’s economic policies were a non-dogmatic and improvisational mix of free markets and government intervention to correct the market’s inability to link a vast and disconnected country. The principle features of the National Policy were high tariffs to protect Canadian

manufacturing, especially against American imports after the United States had cancelled the free-trading Reciprocity Treaty in 1866; western expansion through the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885 (a condition of British Columbia's entry into Confederation); and immigration to settle and fructify the new western territories.

In the National Policy, we see the origins of a “conservative” political program that would, with only minor deviations, endure for more than a century, until the leadership of Brian Mulroney. It was a proudly nationalist policy, skeptical of the threat of American economic and cultural dominance over our industry and our distinct identity. It was not necessarily opposed to free trade but, as a loyal Dominion, it favoured preferential trade with reliable friends, which at the time were the United Kingdom and its British Empire. It was eager to develop the country's natural resources, which at the time meant clearing the prairies for farming and exploiting the old growth forests and the gold, silver, and coal deposits of British Columbia, and to sell them to the world.

The National Policy saw immigration as not merely a boon but a necessity. Immigration policy was not the sensitive touchstone of national identity that it is today, but was properly treated like any other matter of public policy, like setting the level of tariffs. Canada needed people, so we imported them. More than a decade before Sir Clifford Sifton's policy of filling the prairies with “stalwart peasants in sheepskin coats,” religious dissidents from the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires found refuge and land in Canada's West. Macdonald, who once remarked that “**a sprinkling of Jews in the North West would do good,**” was **according to Richard Gwyn**, reportedly “ecstatic” to learn that a boat of Jews had landed in Canada. His record on Chinese immigration is embarrassing in hindsight, but it was the Liberal Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier who would raise his punitive \$50 head tax to a prohibitive \$500.

Macdonald appears a man of shifting contradictions from our secure vantage point, but much of that confusion resolves itself when seen in the context of his turbulent political age. Macdonald was a “Liberal-Conservative.” He was influenced by the great British Whig, Edmund Burke, as well as by what Rod Preece has called the “Canning-



Pitt-Peelite tradition of liberal-conservatism in Britain.” As a result, he walked a middle road between the radical, rationalist Reformers like George Brown, on the one hand, and the Tories and the Family Compact, on the other. Following Burke’s admonition, he was cautious and conservative in coming to decisions and wanted to be convinced of their practical necessity, and not simply their abstract desirability; but once he had made up his mind to support a cause, he could be bold and ambitious in its pursuit. He was a canny campaigner in public and private, who united English and French provinces in the uncertain early days of Confederation, and an economically ambitious nation-builder once he came around to endorsing the project. In short, Sir John A. Macdonald was not just the indispensable father of his country, he was the founder of a principled, but flexible, conservative political programme that would endure (albeit more often than not in opposition) for more than 120 years.

#### *John Diefenbaker*

John Diefenbaker was, like Sir John A. Macdonald a small town lawyer, but that is where their personal similarities end. While Macdonald was part of the dominant Scottish middle-class of Upper Canada, Diefenbaker was from the new Canadian West. The grandson of a German immigrant and raised in what was then the Northwest Territories, he was the first Prime Minister not to have a British or French surname, and the first to grow up west of Ontario. When it came to policy, however, Diefenbaker was firmly in the tradition established by the “Old Chieftain.”

Diefenbaker shared Macdonald’s suspicion of America’s outside economic power and influence. When the Tories formed government for the first time in 21 years after the 1957 general election, it was in part because of damage sustained by Louis St. Laurent’s Liberal government over the role of an American private company in the construction of the TransCanada natural gas pipeline. His platform in the 1957 election campaign had more than enough anti-American overtones to worry the Eisenhower administration in Washington— a concern that would be partly dispelled by the quick and natural bond between the two leaders when they met.

Diefenbaker sought to maintain a delicate act balancing the benefits and threats of American entanglement. At a post-election speech at Dartmouth College, Diefenbaker reassured his audience that his government “is not now and will not be, anti-American,” but he also cautioned that the close friendship between our two countries meant that we could “speak to each other with a measure of forthrightness which is permitted to very few countries in the world.” The next year, in an address to the Canadian parliament, President Eisenhower returned the favour, with a similar caveat, noting that “[f]rankness, in good spirit, is a measure of friendship.”

In practice, Diefenbaker’s dealings with the United States represented a thawing of traditional Conservative nationalism, but stopped short of a full springtime melt. After the 1957 election, Diefenbaker proposed an economic vision that echoed Macdonald’s, with a goal of increasing trade with the United Kingdom at the expense of the United States. He also rejected free trade with the United States in the growing auto industry, settling on a 25% tariff accompanied by a duty-remission scheme designed to encourage Canadian manufacture and export of auto parts. He declined to join the Organization of American States, believing that it would tie Canadian policy too closely to the United States (Canada’s membership would have to wait for Brian Mulroney), and when the United States imposed an embargo on trade with newly-communist Cuba, Diefenbaker broke ranks and imposed only a limited embargo, focussed on military goods. Generally, where Diefenbaker aligned with U.S. policy it was either on military cooperation or the related issue of Cold War politics; in all other respects he was a traditional Conservative nationalist.

On trade and foreign policy beyond the United States, Diefenbaker vacillated between principle and pragmatism. Politically compromised by agricultural interests in his home province of Saskatchewan, he nevertheless put his anti-communist convictions ahead of domestic economic

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concern when he resisted a proposed trade agreement and guaranteed grain contracts with Kádár's post-1956 Hungarian government. On the other hand, he broke with Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy's policy of isolating Red China, succumbing as many Canadians still do to the untapped potential of such an enormous market. When Red China annexed Tibet, he offered only tepid objection even while he organized opposition to Soviet colonization in Europe and the third world.

After some characteristic internal hesitation, he led the call for the expulsion of the apartheid South African government from the Commonwealth, a cause that would be taken up again two decades later by Mulroney. His strong words for Hendrik Verwoerd prompted the South African leader to walk out of the 1961 Commonwealth summit in London. This principled stand won Diefenbaker plaudits at home and abroad, but his failure to reconcile principle and pragmatism on another pressing foreign policy issue would soon cost him his premiership. As part of his U.S. foreign policy balancing act, in his first minority government Diefenbaker had committed Canada to joining the new integrated air-defence system, NORAD. In 1963, the balance was finally upset. His dithering over the positioning of nuclear weapons on Canadian soil in the face of a divided cabinet and Opposition Leader Mike Pearson's support for the policy forced his resignation.

As the first representative of the one-third of Canadians who did not trace their ancestry to either the United Kingdom or France, Diefenbaker consistently opposed a policy that would see the "two founding nations" continue to divide Canada along linguistic and religious lines. His former assistant Thomas Van Dusen later wrote that "[h]e could not accept any theory of two nations, however worded, because it would make of those neither French nor English second-class citizens." This insistence on what Diefenbaker called in the 1957 election campaign "**a program ... for a united Canada, for one Canada, for Canada first**" would have lasting impact on Canada's identity as a multicultural country.

While Diefenbaker's rejection of a culturally-divided country was a departure from Macdonald's recognition of the reality of French Canada (and, at the time, of French Canadian numerical power), it is explained by his roots in the heartland of Canada's increasingly multicultural society.

In 1962 Diefenbaker's government changed Canadian immigration laws to eliminate preferences based on race. And, in 1963, his appointment of Paul Yuzyk, an outspoken professor of Slavic studies, to the Senate gave the latter a platform **from which he would criticize Pearson's 1963 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism** for failing to account for the multicultural reality of Canada. Eight years later, when Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau implemented **the Commission's report**, he accepted its recommendation of official bilingualism, but also accepted Yuzyk's insistence on a federal policy of official multiculturalism.

In other ways, Diefenbaker stayed true to Macdonald's legacy. Both had an eye on expansion, but while Macdonald had looked west, Diefenbaker looked north. He championed the opening of Canada's north through his "Roads to Resources," which in his lifetime promised more than it delivered, but which set a course that future governments would follow. And the Prime Minister who proudly campaigned under "The Old Flag," would surely have applauded Diefenbaker's thunderous opposition to the new Canadian flag, which he dismissed as "a flag that Peruvians might salute," during a series of bruising parliamentary debates with arch-internationalist Prime Minister Pearson.

#### *Brian Mulroney*

When Brian Mulroney was elected in September 1984 with an historic majority of 211 seats – surpassing even Diefenbaker's unprecedented 1958 majority – it was, as it had been for Diefenbaker, after 21 years of Liberal government (I acknowledge, but do not count, the brief and inconsequential Clark minority). His tenure would transform Canadian politics and upend Conservative policy at home and abroad, both in ways he intended and in ways unforeseeable at the time.

In some obvious policy areas, such as free trade with the United States, Mulroney's governments marked a significant break with traditional Conservative policy, but the substantial areas of continuity are also noteworthy. For example, in foreign policy outside of North America, Mulroney and his quondam leadership opponent, Joe Clark (much more comfortable at External Affairs than in the Prime Minister's Office), led the most principled Canadian foreign policy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He

appointed former Ontario NDP leader Stephen Lewis as ambassador to the United Nations and, in a 1985 address to the General Assembly, Mulroney followed Diefenbaker's precedent— and ignored the advice of External Affairs bureaucrats— in vowing that **“if there is no progress in the dismantling of apartheid, our relations with South Africa may have to be severed completely.”**

It was not a perfect record. His reaction to the People's Republic of China's massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square was limply equivocal, as Diefenbaker's had been after the annexation of Tibet, combining a sharp tongue with a soft touch. On the other hand, like Diefenbaker, he was a committed cold-warrior, the first leader to recognize a newly-independent Ukraine after the collapse of the Soviet empire, and he was comfortable placing Canada at the centre of multi-lateral interventions in foreign crises.

On immigration, Mulroney accelerated Canada's move away from the two founding nations, continuing the project that Macdonald had begun as economic policy and which Diefenbaker had helped transform into an awareness of multicultural identity. When Mulroney came to office in 1983, annual immigration to Canada under the Liberals was 89,000 per year; when he left, it was almost 260,000— the highest level as a percentage of Canada's population since the mid-1960s. In contrast with Macdonald, Mulroney especially encouraged Chinese and British Chinese immigration. A combination of uncertainty over the future of Hong Kong after its imminent hand-over to China and the opportunity provided by new Canadian business and investor immigration streams, would bring tens of thousands of Hong Kong Chinese to Vancouver and Toronto in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Economically, despite early stated ambitions, Mulroney failed to eliminate the large deficits of the Trudeau years, but he managed to stop their growth and reduced the deficit as a share of GDP from more than 9% to less than 5%. He shared Macdonald's and Diefenbaker's vision for opening underdeveloped regions, and the successful “mega-projects” he forced through, often over strong skepticism from his caucus and the public, include the Confederation Bridge linking Prince Edward Island and the Hibernia oil project. He also undertook significant de-

regulation and privatization of Crown corporations, including two of the “Crown jewels,” Air Canada and Petro-Canada.

Mulroney wasted an enormous amount of time and political capital on proving that Quebec was not willing to join the renewed post-1982 confederation on terms acceptable to the rest of Canada. While this had little practical effect on Quebec’s long-term relations with Ottawa or the other provinces, it had a deep and lasting effect on our constitutional order and precipitated the end of the PC party. The double-failure of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords meant that, going forward, it would be effectively impossible to reopen the Canadian constitution for amendment— even an amendment that Quebec supported— without also agreeing to Quebec’s *revendications traditionnelles*. Two decades later, this would stymie Prime Minister Harper’s desire to reform the unelected Canadian senate.

Mulroney’s obsession with Quebec’s constitutional status, and especially his failure to entrench asymmetrical federalism, ignored Macdonald’s warning from 1853 that “[i]f there is one thing to be avoided, it is meddling with the constitution of the country, which should not be altered till it is evident that the people are suffering from the effects of that constitution as it actually exists.” His determination that Canadian constitutionalism should work in theory, and not just in practice, shattered the big tent party that he brought to power in 1984. By 1990, the fault lines of division were irreversible. Mulroney’s former Quebec lieutenant Lucien Bouchard was leading the separatist Bloc Québécois and the newly-founded Reform Party’s first MP, Deborah Grey, was sitting in Parliament. In the 1993 election, a PC majority of 156 would be shattered along regional lines and reduced to just two seats.

If constitutional conventions were his outstanding failure, Mulroney’s enduring success was the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement. Although Mulroney had opposed free trade with the United States in the 1983

If constitutional conventions were his outstanding failure, Mulroney’s enduring success was the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement.

PC leadership race and in the 1984 general election, his temperamental pro-Americanism was a break from the Trudeau government's policy and his own party's protectionist history since Confederation. Mulroney's personal relationship with U.S. President Ronald Reagan may have turned heads (and stomachs) within the Laurentian establishment, but it would alter the course of Canadian economic history permanently.

At the time, most Canadian Liberals and, with the notable exception of Alberta premier Peter Lougheed, many leading Canadian conservatives shared George Grant's "red Tory" fear of American power and jealousy of Canadian autonomy. They supported the tariff protections that had insulated (and, economists said, suffocated) central Canadian manufacturing for decades. But uncertain global trade politics, fear of American industrial retrenchment, the retirement of Ontario premier Bill Davis, and the positive reception of the pro-free trade [Macdonald Commission report](#) in 1985 converged suddenly to make a free-trade agreement seem not only possible but desirable.

The 1988 general election became a referendum on the proposed agreement and, although a majority of the popular vote went to parties opposing the deal, Mulroney was returned with a healthy majority in Parliament and his great legacy, the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement, came into force on January 1, 1989.

## Reform Party<sup>1</sup>

### *Preston Manning*

The spring of 1987 held the hope of unity and the fear of fracture in Canada. In Vancouver, what [CBC's Peter Mansbridge called](#) "a group

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1 In the interest of concision, I will not discuss separately the three years between the end of the Reform Party and the creation of the Conservative Party of Canada. During this time the Reform Party changed its name first to the Canadian Conservative Reform Alliance and then to the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance; underwent a leadership race (in 2000, won by Stockwell Day); contested the 2000 federal election, in which it made further gains in the popular vote and elected two MPs in Ontario; endured an Adullumite schism from, and eventual partial reunification with, the short-lived Democratic Representative Caucus; and underwent a second leadership race (in 2002, won by Stephen Harper). As the foundational policies of Manning's Reform Party carried over into the Canadian Alliance years, little of substance is lost by omitting this short but eventful period.

of disenchanted Westerners” convened at the wonkishly-titled “Western Assembly on Canada’s Economic and Political Future” to discuss forming a new party to represent western interests. At the very same time these delegates were voting to establish a new “Reform” party, Canada’s ten premiers were flying to Ottawa to finalize negotiations on the Meech Lake Accord. The next day, the Premiers would celebrate what Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa called the prospect of his province’s “reintegration” into Canada. Never before had the country been so politically disconnected.

Three years later, the Meech Lake Accord was dead and, at least in the West, the repeated failures to appease Quebec with different versions of unique constitutional recognition meant that Canada felt more like a notion than a nation. For very different reasons, voters in Quebec and the West concluded that a radical shake up was necessary to restore coherence to Confederation. For the Bloc Québécois, that meant either outright independence or a significant further devolution of provincial autonomy to a sovereign-in-all-but-name Quebec. For Reform, it meant a similar devolution of federal power combined with formal recognition in federal institutions of the West’s growth in population and prosperity since 1867.

Western disenchantment would inform many, but by no means all, of the Reform Party’s signature policy positions. These included opposition to official bilingualism, redressing the imbalance of representation in the House of Commons, and opposition to special status for any one province while favouring greater devolution of political power to all provinces. The Senate, where Alberta and British Columbia each had (and still have) fewer seats than much smaller New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and only two more seats than tiny Prince Edward Island, was a particular irritant. In response, Reform proposed a “Triple E” Senate, which would be elected (by provincial voters), equal (in proportion to population), and effective (with increased powers befitting a democratically-elected upper chamber).

Fiscally, the Reform Party was neo-liberal rather than populist, though its small-government vision proved popular in the west and in parts of Ontario. It supported free trade agreements, including the Canada-US



Free Trade agreement, shrinking the size of government, tax cuts, and privatization of most remaining Crown Corporations. During the mid-1990s, having the Reform Party in opposition gave Liberal Finance Minister Paul Martin the tailwind he needed to curb runaway spending— mostly through reduced transfers to the provinces— and balance the federal budget.

On immigration, the Reform Party broke with the other major parties in the 1993 federal election and called for a reduction of annual immigration levels from 250,000 to 150,000. This drew predictable accusations of “racism” despite the fact that immigration levels had been 150,000 as recently as 1987, and as low as 85,000 just two years before that. The Reform Party opposed federal spending on government multiculturalism programs and favoured integration of newcomers rather than talk of so-called “hyphenated Canadians.”

The Reform Party’s birth in Western alienation explain its origin, but it does not explain its rapid success beyond the prairies. In the 1993 election, just six years after its founding, Reform won 20.1% of the popular vote in Ontario, more than the Progressive Conservatives and more than triple the share for the NDP. Manning’s upstart party repeated this feat in 1997, again outpolling both the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP in Ontario and consolidating its western base to form the Official Opposition in Ottawa. Further belying its prairie roots, in both elections Reform won more seats in British Columbia— always fertile ground for political outsiders and protest votes— than in Alberta.

In both elections, Reform drew votes from the moribund Progressive Conservative party, which was expected, but also from former NDP voters, which was not, but should have been. After the PC party had competed with the Liberal Party for the votes of Bay Street and the new Château Clique under Brian Mulroney, the rise of the Reform Par-

Western  
disenchantment  
would inform many,  
but by no means  
all, of the Reform  
Party’s signature  
policy positions.

ty as the dominant right-of-centre party meant a new electoral base for conservatives among working men and women. It would mark a return to Canadian conservatism's roots, although this time it was not the bibulous Macdonald but the abstemious Manning carried metaphorically on the shoulders of the farmer and the factory worker.

If Preston Manning and the Reform Party had a central idea, it was to bring politics closer to the people. The movement was, in the best sense, a populist movement, which is to say it was insistently democratic. They wanted to renew federalism by enforcing the principle of subsidiarity embodied in the constitutional division of powers, not just for Quebec but for all provinces. They would consult the people on important questions of policy through regular referenda, and they would overrun the last redoubt of parliamentary patronage and privilege, replacing the "taskless thanks" of Senate appointments with an elected upper chamber. Many Reformers also supported proportional representation, which (conveniently) would benefit upstart political parties.

In the end, Manning's political Achilles heel was his optimistic belief that populist politics could be, if not non-partisan, more or less non-ideological. From the beginning, he viewed the Reform Party as a project with a mission, not a permanent governing party. Yes, he favoured respect for taxpayers and free markets and free trade, but his primary concern was to do what his party said it would do: reform Canadian politics to make it more democratic and correct the imbalance of power in the country. If, in shifting the balance of power westward from Ottawa and downward from politicians to the people, he attracted support from outside the West, that was a bonus. To emphasize the party's limited focus, Manning included a sunset clause in its constitution. Either it would succeed by November 1, 2000, or it would pack its rucksack and head back to Calgary.

Manning is a unique figure in modern Canadian history. Among politicians who did not become prime minister, probably only René Lévesque compares in importance. But unlike Lévesque's Parti Québécois, Manning's Reform Party, after a modest transformation, would go on to become the governing party of Canada for almost a decade. To do that, however, the party needed to become a national party representing con-

servatives of different types from coast to coast to coast, and for that it would need a new leader with a broader vision.

## Conservative Party of Canada

### *Stephen Harper*

Because the story of the Conservative Party of Canada is still, in essence, the story of Stephen Harper, historical analysis can slip quickly into biography. Much has been written about the formation of Harper's politics and his important but often uneasy role in the birth and growth of the Reform Party, some of it even interesting. That he first ran for office against his former Progressive Conservative boss, Jim Hawkes, and later turned against Manning's plans for the Reform Party, lends itself to a crude Oedipal account of his rise to power. But you don't need Greek mythology or Viennese erotic reductionism to explain a man seeing political openings and taking them. The simple truth is that Harper had ideas and ambition and, at several junctures, they coincided with happy opportunity, which he happily seized.

### *From policy to power*

Harper's ideas were laid out in a series of articles and speeches composed after he left Ottawa in 1997, after four years as a Reform Party MP, to lead the National Citizens Coalition. The most frequently referenced is [a speech he gave in 2003 at Civitas](#), an annual conservative intellectual retreat. In that speech, Harper laid out an intellectual vision for a conservative politics that would unite a coalition of economic and social conservatives by marrying classical liberal ideas about the limited role of government to Burkean ideas about the importance of time-honoured institutions like the family and the nation. It was a pragmatic platform, squarely in the tradition of Macdonald.

The 2003 Civitas speech stands up well today, and in some passages was strikingly prophetic. It is not a policy speech so much as a philosophical disquisition, but in that philosophy you can see the roots of some of the future CPC policy agenda. For example, in an implicit repudiation of the Mulroney government's corporatism (which was likely quite explicit

to the audience in the room), Harper asserted that the defining issues of the time were social rather than economic. He claimed that “politics is a moral affair,” by which he did not mean it should be sectarian or even moralizing, but that conservatives should advance the moral values of “democracy, free enterprise, and individual freedom” in both domestic and foreign policy.

After the merger of the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative parties, Harper largely proceeded to implement the agenda he had laid out in his 2003 Civitas speech. It was not to be a merger of “Red Tory” and “Populist Reformers” but a deepening of the coalition of economic and social conservatives that existed in slightly different forms, and with different emphases, in both legacy parties. He would then lead that coalition into Central and Eastern Canadian electoral territory no longer occupied by a viable rival party.

It was not always a smooth merger. It came under withering criticism from former PC big beasts like [John Crosbie](#) and [Joe Clark](#), and many others of that ilk and era found they couldn’t stomach sharing a banner with their whilom populist opponents, but overall the marriage was, and has since proved, remarkably successful. By the time the Conservative Party of Canada formed a majority government in 2011, most of its candidates had never run as anything but CPC candidates.

After Harper stepped down in 2015, many political observers expected the fight to replace him would be between a legacy Reformer like Jason Kenney and former PC leader Peter Mackay, which might have reopened old partisan fissures. But when both opted out of the race, the contest became one of personalities rather than tribalism. The top ten finishers in the 2017 leadership race had all been first elected as CPC MPs, including the winner, Andrew Scheer, and the third-place finisher and his eventual replacement, Erin O’Toole. Any internal party divides today are regional and to a lesser extent ideological, rather than historical.

*In power: foreign policy*

Once he found himself in government, Harper’s belief that “the emerging debates on foreign affairs should be fought on moral grounds”

quickly differentiated his foreign policy from that of Chrétien and the Laurentian consensus. When Israel invaded southern Lebanon in July 2006, in response to Hezbollah incursions and rocket attacks into northern Israel, international NGOs and most European countries reflexively condemned Israel's "disproportionate" military reaction. Harper, who was in the air on his way to Europe, was asked for his opinion. He responded straightforwardly that "Israel has the right to defend itself" and "I think Israel's response under the circumstances has been measured," adding for good measure that "the [Hezbollah] attack [on Israel] is the cause of this immediate conflict." For the next nine years, Canada would be Israel's most reliable friend on the world stage. Why? Because, as Harper said in his [2014 address to the Knesset](#): "Israel is the only country in the Middle East, which has long anchored itself in the ideals of freedom, democracy and the rule of law."

This focus on shared values— and, where a country didn't share our values, a commitment not to remain silent— was [dismissed sniffily by Ottawa's foreign policy panjandrums](#) as naïve and unproductive. There is no doubt that early criticism of the Chinese Communist Party's appalling human rights record cooled Canada's relationship with China, but the relationship eventually recovered even though Harper continued to raise human rights concerns with them, sometimes in public and always, and often sharply, in private. Harper also led the push to remove Vladimir Putin from the G8, and was the most forceful critic of Russia's invasion of Crimea, telling Putin bluntly at the G20 meeting in Brisbane to "[get out of Ukraine](#)."

Harper also promoted the values he identified in his Civitas speech through the most ambitious free-trade agenda in Canadian history. When he became Prime Minister in 2006, Canada had free-trade agreements with five countries; when he left, it was more than 50, including the European Union and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which was only

Canada would more than pull our weight when it comes to taking on difficult and dangerous roles in foreign conflicts.

inked during the 2015 election writ period, and both of which would be seen to conclusion by the succeeding Liberal government.

While the relationship between Harper and President Obama was cordially professional rather than personal, Harper recognized that, after keeping Canada united, the most important job of a Prime Minister is to maintain a successful relationship with our largest trading partner and ally. He partnered with Obama on relief for the auto sector during the Global Financial Crisis, negotiated a new Beyond-the-Border agreement to facilitate cross-border trade and travel, and maneuvered Canada into the TPP earlier and on more favourable terms than the Americans would have liked.

Canada under Harper coordinated closely with the United States on two major international military interventions: removing Ghaddafi in Libya, which was successful but regrettable, and bombing ISIS in Iraq and Syria and supporting Kurdish fighters in Northern Iraq, which was successful and worthwhile. While no Canadian government will ever meet the notional NATO goal of spending 2% of GDP on our military, the Iraq mission, like the Afghanistan campaign before it, showed that Canada would more than pull our weight when it comes to taking on difficult and dangerous roles in foreign conflicts.

At the same time, Harper showed that Canada would not simply follow the US or European lead on foreign affairs. In addition to breaking ranks with many of our allies on support for Israel, Harper also declined to support the Free Syrian Army, which was backed and supplied at various times by the United States, the UK, France, and Germany, and he was deeply skeptical about the American desire to replace Syrian Bashar al-Assad, not out of any illusions as to Assad's depravity, but because there was no viable alternative and the lesson Harper drew from Iraq was that a power vacuum can be worse than a bad leader.

#### *In power: immigration and multiculturalism*

On immigration, Harper declined to follow the Reform plan for even modestly-lower immigration levels and continued the PC tradition of maintaining immigration levels even during a major economic down-

turn. Under Harper, Canada saw our highest sustained level of immigration in more than a century, and the highest in the developed world. While there was an overdue crackdown on immigration fraud led by Minister Jason Kenney, the same minister also led an unprecedented outreach to new Canadians as natural conservative voters. This fulfilled a theme Harper had mentioned in his Civitas speech, when he noted that “[m]any traditional voters, especially those from key ethnic and immigrant communities, will be attracted to a party with strong traditional views of values and family.”

*In power: nation-building*

When it came to nation-building, the Global Financial Crisis and the imperative to return to fiscal balance before the 2015 election meant there was no money for major projects of the kind that Macdonald and, to a lesser, degree Diefenbaker and Mulroney had championed. Instead, Harper’s Economic Action Plan, which was launched in 2009 to accelerate recovery out of the fiscal crisis, included \$12 billion in local and regional infrastructure spending. In 2014, however, Harper broke ground on the extension of Diefenbaker’s Dempster Highway from its terminus at Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk on the Arctic Ocean, and when he left office there were four major oil pipeline projects finally or substantially approved for construction. The succeeding Trudeau government would finish the highway but not, as of the time of writing, any of the pipelines.

The Inuvik-Tuk highway was part of a renewed commitment to symbolic nation-building. Symbols matter in politics, and Harper was determined to recover our country’s historic character from underneath the palimpsest of Liberal revisionism. He restored the traditional names of the Canadian Armed Forces, and the pre-Confederation bicentennials of the War of 1812– dubbed “the Fight for Canada” – and the births of John A. Macdonald and George-Étienne Cartier received more attention than the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1982 constitution. His focus on Canada’s North was part of this process of recovery and his annual Arctic visits and the romance of the search for Franklin’s lost ships became perhaps his favourite political tradition.

When Harper invoked Canada's North he often did so with reference to past Conservative prime ministers. On a 2008 visit to Inuvik, **Harper explained** that "John George Diefenbaker, like Sir John A. Macdonald, was a Prime Minister with a dream [and] he understood that to truly fulfill our national dream, we must accept the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by our North." "This is why," he concluded,

our government has launched an ambitious Northern Agenda based on the timeless responsibility imposed by our national anthem, to keep the True North strong and free. To this end, we will encourage responsible development of the North's abundant economic resources, we will ensure jobs and opportunity and the health and good governance of Northern communities. We will protect the unique and fragile Arctic ecosystem for the generations yet to come. And of course, we will assert and defend Canada's sovereignty and security in this region.

*In power: economic policy*

Fiscally, Harper was a Reformer, but he could be a pragmatist in the PC tradition when necessary. He was fortunate to inherit a modest surplus and disciplined enough to leave one to his successor. In between, the Global Financial Crisis required him to put aside his instinctual opposition to government subsidies and Keynesian stimulus, although his Economic Action Plan was guided by the goal of spending on necessary infrastructure to support future economic growth. This, together with the help of strong western energy prices, allowed Canada to emerge first and least damaged by the crisis. What in hindsight looks inevitable was in fact the product of almost fanatical fiscal discipline beginning in 2010 and accelerating after 2011. Through the skillful execution of hundreds of scalpel cuts to spending during two rounds of strategic program review and the Deficit Reduction Action Plan, Harper succeeded at Portia's seemingly impossible challenge of extracting a pound of discretionary flesh without spilling a jot of entitlement blood.

On the revenue side of the ledger, Harper relentlessly ground down the overall tax burdens on Canadian households, giving them more choice



over how their money was spent, and on Canadian businesses, making them more globally competitive. He began with implementing his 2005 campaign to cut the GST by 2 points and continued with a 6 point reduction of the corporate tax rate to below the US average. His belief that Canadians knew better than Ottawa how to spend their tax dollars shaped his Tax Free Savings Account plan, incoming splitting for seniors and families, and his direct benefits to parents for child care, first through the Choice in Child Care Allowance and then the Universal Child Care Benefit.

While his focus on reducing visible consumption taxes went against prevailing economic theory, it was politically astute: tax cuts that people notice are much harder to reverse, and so far Liberal reluctance to reverse his cuts has proved Harper right. While he was not able to do more than tinker with the broken Employment Insurance program he cut his teeth on in Ottawa as a young aide to Jim Hawkes, overall he managed the difficult task of **balancing the federal budget while lowering the federal tax burden and even slightly increasing federal program spending.**

*In power: federalism*

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Harper's time in office saw the lowest levels of regional unrest in more than a generation. Quebec separatism was impotent as a political force— the Bloc Québécois was almost wiped out in the 2011 election and the Parti Québécois never managing more than an ineffectual minority government— and the prairies were quiescent. Harper had learned from Mulroney's failures, which he had identified in his 2003 Civitas speech: "Canada's Mulroney coalition did not break up because of divisions between [economic and social conservatives]. Rather, it broke up over regional and constitutional questions and abandonment of both forms of conservatism."

Rather than put his time and energy into national gatherings of the premiers, Harper preferred to deal with them individually, and sometimes— as with the abruptly-announced 10 year Health Accord— unilaterally. His early recognition of the Québécois as a nation within a united Canada— a gambit that Macdonald and Mulroney would have

instinctively understood, but which probably had Diefenbaker spinning in the Saskatchewan soil— went against twenty years of Reform Party policy and showed that the CPC was more of a true merger with the PC Party than many observers had anticipated.

Expected western dissent over Harper's overtures to Quebec was largely mollified by his commitment to realizing Reform's goal of a devolved federalism that offered all provinces most of the benefits that Quebec alone had traditionally enjoyed. While not going quite as far as the vision of the "**Firewall Letter**" he co-signed in 2001, his "**open federalism**," which emphasised federal restraint and respect for provincial jurisdiction, met many longstanding provincial demands and defanged most of the Premiers' traditional complaints. As a result, Harper **left Canada in 2015 more politically united than it had been in fifty years**. What a difference the next five years would make.

# Historical principles applied today

## Immigration and Multiculturalism

Although immigration in Canada's early days was characterized by some policies we recognize as familiar and others we recall with embarrassment, immigration has been a core commitment of Canadian conservative parties since before Confederation. Even the Reform Party's proposal to reduce annual immigration was only to lower it to a level that would have been significantly higher than they had been under Liberal Prime Ministers Trudeau and Turner a decade earlier, and still higher than most other OECD countries.

In the early years of Confederation, immigration was both an economic policy and a nation-building imperative. In 1867, Washington, Idaho, Montana, the Dakotas, and Wyoming were not yet states and, directly north of them across the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba were not yet provinces. In populating the prairies, Macdonald, and later Laurier and the Sifton brothers, were competing with American Manifest Destiny. The the drive to clear and settle the prairies and the Pacific coast was existential for the new country. The rush to complete a trans-national railway was the physical manifestation of this project, while the wave of immigration was its human face.

There may have been bipartisan commitment to high levels of immigration to fill the new country's expanding bounds, but the racial restrictions were often crude and are jarringly offensive modern sensibilities. To greater and lesser degrees at different times, Chinese and South Asian immigration was strictly controlled and even discouraged. Even Sir Clifford Sifton's praise of the typical Eastern European settler as "a stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat ... with a stout wife and a half-dozen children"

sounds quaintly patronizing today. And no discussion of immigration is complete without an appreciation of its impact on Canada's original occupants, the many First Nations who were relocated or corralled onto reserves a fraction the size of their traditional territory to make way for the newcomers. Later, the experience of the Great War would reinforce the idea that immigration should come from friendly countries, while the Depression would dampen the enthusiasm for more workers to compete for non-existent jobs.

Enthusiasm for immigration wouldn't resume until after World War II, when post-war economic growth and humanitarian considerations, which formally entered Canada's immigration policy for the first time in the 1950s, combined to increase immigration levels of war-impooverished Britons, displaced central European labourers, and refugees from Communist Eastern Europe. The influx of almost 40,000 Hungarian refugees in 1956 and 1957 was a Liberal policy, which was largely reversed by Diefenbaker's government as unemployment surged soon after he took office. This was not unusual. Diefenbaker's response was part of a pattern of matching immigration to economic cycles that began in the Depression and would continue under the first Trudeau, **who similarly slashed immigration** by almost half during two economic downturns. It wasn't until Mulroney that Canada would stop following this cyclical pattern and maintain high immigration levels even during recessions, a precedent Harper followed during the Global Financial Crisis.

He may have followed the existing ebb and flow of economic immigration policy, but Diefenbaker still helped forge a new immigration-driven, multicultural Canada that would come to influence government policy in unexpected ways. When it came to relations with the post-1956 Hungarian government, for example, Diefenbaker's anti-communism and the fact of 40,000 recently-arrived refugees had a distinct

We may be a large country, with plenty of wide open space, but immigration does not fill those voids.

chilling effect, even at the expense of lucrative wheat contracts. The influence of immigrant populations, especially recent arrivals, on Canada's foreign policy goes back at least to the nineteenth century Irish diaspora, but increasing diversity in immigration coupled with the new ease and speed of travel and communication after the 1950s meant that, increasingly, Canadian foreign policy would be influenced by the long tail of immigration policy.

### Public policy and public opinion

What does this history tell us about immigration and multiculturalism policy today? First, it is unlikely that any government could significantly reduce annual immigration levels, even if it believed doing so were sound policy. That said, a Conservative government cannot ignore public sentiment, which for at least the last decade has run strongly **against increasing immigration**, as Trudeau's Liberals have done and promise to continue to do.

An **Angus Reid survey** last year found that only 13% of Canadians favoured immigration higher than the 331,000 annual target at the time. A full forty percent thought the target should be lower. Despite this, Trudeau subsequently pledged to increase the annual level to 421,000 in two years. If that new target were a city would be the twelfth largest in Canada— just ahead of Halifax— every year, and that doesn't include hundreds of thousands of temporary foreign workers and visa holders and a growing number of failed asylum seekers and visa-overstays evading removal.

This Liberal defiance of public sentiment should not be surprising. Arrayed against popular opinion are influential corporate interests and an elite consensus in the media, NGOs, and academia that sees virtually no necessary limit on immigration. In 2016, Trudeau's Advisory Council on Economic Growth **called for a Canada of 100 million** by the end of the century, and in 2020 Brian Mulroney **called for a Canada of 75 million**. (A cynic might observe that, while calling for the world to come to Canada, neither the Commission's chairman, Dominic Barton, nor Mulroney, bother to reside here full-time.)

This elite bias towards an ever-growing population is increasingly detached from the everyday experiences of Canadians. As I have [noted elsewhere](#), “[o]f the twenty countries with the highest per capita GDP, only the United States has more than 100 million people. Most have fewer than 10 million.” So, why the obsession of accelerating population growth, which [StatCan already predicts](#) will grow to 55 million, and possibly as high as 70 million, without any help by 2068? The replacement of aging workers offers only a partial and usually exaggerated rationale, which must be weighed against other costs. We may be a large country, with plenty of wide open space, but immigration does not fill those voids: it follows existing migration patterns to a handful of cities. If Canadians think urban density, housing prices, suburban sprawl, and strained infrastructure are a problem now, wait until Vancouver and Toronto double or triple in population under the current bi-partisan consensus.

Trudeau and corporate interests are playing a dangerous game. A government can only flout public opinion for so long before it risks a backlash. Canadians, including new Canadians, aren’t fundamentally different from Americans or Europeans: if they believe the ruling class has lost touch or, worse, is contemptuous of their views, eventually they will speak up more vocally. This will be even more likely if the government fails to curb illegal immigration— visa-overstays and border crossers— which is even more strongly opposed by new immigrants who know and followed the rules, than by than Canadians born here. As we have seen in Europe and the United States, when people believe the government has lost control of immigration and migration they, understandably, become skeptical of its benefits.

#### [Reality-based immigration and multiculturalism policy](#)

A Conservative government should choose a middle path, matching the Liberals and their surrogates in the media in vocal support for immigrants (and matching this rhetoric with sound policies reinforcing it) while respecting public opinion on reasonable limits. It should return to Harper-era annual levels, which at an average of 257,000, were already the highest in more than a generation in Canada and the highest among our OECD peers. The usual voices will call even this modest adjustment

racist or xenophobic, but Conservatives can remind them that even impeccably progressive New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern ran in 2017 on a promise to **cut immigration by 40%** to deal with a housing crisis (a promise she later broke).

At the same time, Conservatives should stress the benefits of an orderly process of selective immigration that privileges attributes we know encourage economic and social integration (which go hand in hand). Conservatives should spend more money on the integrity the system but also on better service standards for work and student visas, which can be paid for by increasing fees and offering faster and more individualized service for a premium. The whole system could even pay for itself by turning Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada into a special operating agency that funds itself through the fees it charges.

Conservatives should build on the system that Harper's government introduced of using the resources of the private sector and the internet to match prospective immigrants with employers. Employers know better than bureaucrats who they want to hire, and have a strong incentive to hire someone who is qualified and likely to succeed. They have skin in the game. This should be in addition to a continued insistence on high levels of English and French language fluency and a preference for younger immigrants with young children and professional or skilled credentials that are already recognized in Canada or capable of being recognized with minimal upgrading—preferably recent graduates of Canadian colleges and universities. The goal should be to set sound policy to reassure Canadians that immigration will benefit Canada as well as immigrants—in fact, a system that fails at one will inevitably fail at the other.

We should also—and this will be heresy to the refugee lobby—spend more money housing and protecting refugees where they are, and put less emphasis on bringing them to Canada. The purpose of the 1951 Refugee Convention is to protect people fleeing a well-founded fear of

The goal should be to set sound policy to reassure Canadians that immigration will benefit Canada as well as immigrants.

persecution, and a Canadian dollar goes much farther promoting that worthy goal overseas than here. And, when we do resettle refugees, we should keep Canada's interests in mind without tempering our humanitarian commitment. No refugee is more or less deserving of protection under the Convention, so where possible we should favour resettlement of those who are most likely to succeed here. In selecting refugees for resettlement, we should work first with reliable community leaders here in Canada who know the individuals and can vouch for them— as the Harper government did with its Tibetan resettlement program— and only secondarily with international NGOs and the UN, whose interest is usually (and rightly) in alleviating a refugee crisis rather than what happens to them when they arrive in Canada.

Promoting controlled, selective immigration goes hand-in-hand with stricter controls on immigration fraud and illegal immigration. Crooked immigration consultants, sham marriages, the laxest standards for asylum in the world, and an abysmal record of removing failed asylum seekers and criminals undermines confidence in our legal immigration system. This is something new Canadians, who know the system and are aware of its abuses, understand better than anyone. Conservatives should close the de facto border crossing at Roxham Road, [work with the United States](#) to apprehend border jumpers before they cross, and should restore the safe third country agreement or a similar process that avoids asylum shopping, even if it requires using the Notwithstanding Clause.

A clear-eyed focus on Canadian interests and the integrity of the immigration system should be complimented by a commitment to multiculturalism not as an abstract and relativistic academic philosophy but as a practical policy that [stresses integration](#). It is not offensive to new Canadians to say that immigrants come to Canada to become Canadian. They come because of our tolerance, yes, but also because of our commitments to equal citizenship, the rule of law, and institutions rooted in European (mostly British) political traditions. It takes years of maceration in the unreality of a university campus to discover that this is a controversial idea.

Multiculturalism is the lived reality of Canadians and has been since before Confederation. Accommodation of cultural and religious differences is a constitutional requirement, but it is also a social lubricant



that happens naturally countless times a day without government intervention and does not need subsidizing. Conservatives should reject the cheap gestures of identity politics and focus instead on supporting the goals of most immigrants: good jobs, good education, safe communities, and economic and social rewards for hard work.

## Free trade and principled foreign policy

These two topics are treated together because they are closely related conceptually and, usually, in practice. How a country approaches international commerce can't help but affect its international relations, and vice versa. That does not mean, of course, that the two necessarily go hand in hand; it is just as possible for a government's trade and foreign policies to be in tension and, in fact, we see examples of both in the history of Canadian Conservative governments.

Canadian conservative parties have, from the beginning, generally pursued a principled foreign policy, and when they have not done so in practice they have still paid tribute to the idea rhetorically. By a "principled foreign policy" I mean that a moral assessment of another country's domestic and foreign behaviour is a significant factor in determining Canada's relations with them. It does not mean that considerations of human rights, aggressive warmongering, or coercive regional domination is the dispositive factor in deciding Canada's foreign policy towards them, but it does mean that they are weighed and taken seriously. If the moral concerns are serious enough, they can even outweigh our national or commercial interests. This can mean sacrificing other benefits— most often trade opportunities— that have domestic political trade-offs, which a government must explain convincingly if it is to keep voters onside.

### Conservatives and the United States: A complicated history

Canadian conservative parties have not always chosen principle above national or partisan interest, and I do not deny that in some cases practical considerations might not be so overwhelming that even significant disagreement in principle means it would be impossibly foolish

to limit trade with a country. The most obvious example is the United States, with whose economy ours is so intimately entwined. While, for reasons already discussed and elaborated further below, for more than a century Canadian conservatives were wary of free trade with our closest neighbours, those concerns were unrelated to American foreign or domestic policy. It has been perceived national self-interest, not Jim Crow laws or disagreements over the Vietnam or Iraq wars, that has determined Canada-US trade policy for Conservatives (and Liberals).

Conservative prime ministers also continued to trade on a limited basis with the Soviet Union even in the depths of the Cold War (as did the Americans), and with Red China in the 1950s. Principle, I would argue, is and should be a more significant factor in Canadian foreign policy than it is today, but it should not be the only one. A Conservative party surveying the world in the years to come will be torn by the same competing instincts Conservative parties have always faced between principle and the national interest.

The United States is, and will be, by far our most important and, despite regular and predictable disagreements, most reliable trading partner. The number one foreign policy job of a Conservative prime minister is to work effectively with the US president, and the number one trade objective is the easy flow of goods and people across our shared border. This is never something Canada can take for granted. The United States, under both Democratic and Republican presidents and congresses, is prone to fits of forgetting. Whether it is real or imagined security threats, a uniform hardening of both its borders in reaction to problems to its south, or natural protectionism in the form of Buy American or Country of Origin Labelling policies, Canadian prime ministers must constantly remind their counterparts of the integrated supply chains that criss-cross our border and the mutual benefits that flow from them.

This does not mean being reflexively pro-American, but it means not slipping into the lazy anti-Americanism that tempts Canadian politicians when they play to domestic chauvinism. It means following the recent examples of Mulroney and Harper, rather than the skeptical

and sometimes hostile approaches of Macdonald and Diefenbaker, but Conservatives today can learn something from both traditions. On the one hand, Harper showed that, even without the personal relationship that Mulroney had with Reagan, a Conservative prime minister can work effectively with the American president to reduce border congestion and on international military interventions. Conversely, Diefenbaker showed with Eisenhower that a good personal relationship can survive even strong disagreements over military defence policy or international trade.

One area where a Conservative leader should pursue closer cooperation with the United States is energy policy. Even under a Democratic administration committed to phasing out fossil fuels, domestic US politics and their own strategic foreign policy interests mean that oil and gas will continue to be produced, refined, used, and exported. A Conservative leader should aim for an integrated North American energy policy, stressing Canada's reliability and stability as a supplier to everywhere from the Detroit airport to Gulf Coast refineries. After more than half a century of reliance on Middle East oil, which cost Americans trillions of dollars and thousands of lives in military entanglements, partnering with Canada could guarantee energy security until such time as fossil fuels are transitioned out of the domestic and global energy markets. With an American administration that wants to accelerate the reduction of emissions from coal, oil, and gas, a Conservative government should still work with them to match ambition on carbon pricing, keeping our regulations and taxes in lockstep to avoid Canadian producers being put at a relative competitive disadvantage.

### Conservatives and China: A complicated future

More challenging than our complicated friendship with the United States is the double-edged threat and opportunity posed by China. A Conservative leader will face significant pressure to maximize access to the world's largest and fastest growing market, not just from the Canadian corporate establishment, but from farmers in western and central Canada, who are harder to ignore for electoral reasons. If we analogize

China today to the Soviet Union in Diefenbaker's or Mulroney's day, it militates in favour of limited trade, which is probably the correct approach. Having said that, we should also remember that Canada's foreign policy towards the Soviet Union under those two Cold Warriors was much more restrictive and its rhetoric much sterner than Canada's dealings with China are today.

In 1987, a Government of Canada white paper on defence candidly warned that, in the USSR, **“the West is faced with an ideological, political and economic adversary whose explicit long-term aim is to mould the world in its own image.”** An updated Conservative government white paper might note that China's ambitions are increasingly global and that it aims to mould the world's institutions in its image. A Conservative government should ring the warning bells about China's growing assertiveness in global institutions at the United Nations, the WHO, and the WTO—made easier by recent American Democratic complaisance and Republican disinterest— and work with like-minded countries to counter it.

Although it is hard to imagine a government putting itself further off-side China than the current Trudeau government, that was by accident rather than by design. A Conservative government committed to a stronger rhetorical and practical opposition to the Chinese Communist Party must be prepared for a reaction that would make Harper's early reception seem like a ticker-tape parade by comparison. But given the Chinese Communist Party's manifest abuses— its genocidal campaigns against Uighurs and Tibetans, its brutal repression of the Christian and Falun Gong religions, its abuse of democratic activists in Hong Kong and on the mainland, and its menacing of the Republic of China (Taiwan)— it would be embarrassing for a Conservative government to remain dumb and passive. Even Mulroney, long a spokesman for Canada's corporate interests in China, recently called for **“an immediate and urgent rethink”** of the relationship.

There are a few measures that a Conservative government should take to mitigate the consequences of a principled foreign policy, especially when it comes to China. First, as Harper did with Iran, Iraq, and China, always be careful to distinguish between the repressive and criminal operation

that is the Chinese Communist Party and the people, the history, and the culture of a justifiably-proud historical civilization. Our domestic Chinese-Canadian population will be concerned by rhetoric that sounds anti-Chinese, which they might reasonably fear will redound against them domestically, and dealings with China will have to be calibrated to assuage that concern and separate the regime from the people.

Nor should anti-Chinese regime policy be the aggressive centre-piece of a Conservative government's foreign policy. History does not counsel recklessness engagement with superpowers, and principle does not require it. A foreign policy that expresses principle only in pique, while tempting for middle-powers like Canada, achieves nothing beyond momentary self-satisfaction. Chinese power is a reality and we should not fool ourselves that Canada can do anything on its own to alter its foreign or domestic policy. What is required is simply clarity and resolve— something the Chinese regime will respect more than the supine obsequy of our corporate and foreign policy establishments.

Second, a Conservative government should be up front with domestic interests, who are inclined to focus on the potential benefits of trade with China rather than the risks of doing business in a country that does not believe in the rule of law (something that applies to Russia and other countries as well). For those industries, like wheat, canola, pork, and beef, for whom China already represents an important market, the government should be prepared to step up and compensate them for retaliatory sanctions. We should not allow Canada's free hand in dealing with China to be restricted more than is absolutely necessary by economic considerations. One thing Canada has in our favour is that many of our exports to China are fungible commodities, for which we should aggressively court more markets. And in some cases, like future oil and gas sales, our products trade on global markets that are only minimally effected by sanctions by a single country on another.

#### [Conservatives and the world: Building the network of middle powers](#)

Related to expanding the markets for Canadian products, which we should continue to pursue through current and new free trade

agreements, is strengthening the international network of like-minded democracies. At several points in the 1950s and 1960s, Diefenbaker sought support from Commonwealth and Western leaders, for a “declaration on dedication to freedom” or “a declaration of freedom’s creed.” Where he failed to win agreement, future Conservative leaders should aim more modestly for incremental multi-lateral cooperation with fellow democracies.

Deepening trade and even mobility agreements with our closest international friends, such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom (the so-called **CANZUK alliance**), the “Five Eyes” network (which encompasses the CANZUK countries plus the United States), the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue with the United States, Australia, Japan, and India, or the “D10” alliance of democratic nations floated by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, should be a priority. So should increasing trade and deepening international friendship with India, South Korea, Japan, Mexico, the Philippines, and the countries of the European Union. We should offer our auspices as coordinators of formal and informal gatherings of these countries, working with them in an on the margins of existing international forums, but also exploring possible new or reshaped forums, as Harper did when he pushed for the removal of Putin from the G8 after the 2013 summit in Lough Erne, thereby reviving by subtraction the G7 of democratic countries.

Historically, Canada has the most international influence when we are seen as having privileged access to the United States; when we speak clearly and other countries know our positions, even when they disagree; and when we take an active role in brokering ententes and détente. A modern Conservative party should, therefore, follow Mulroney’s example of building a strong working relationship with the United States. It should also follow Harper’s example of standing on principle and speaking plainly— sometimes uncomfortably so— and refusing, as Harper would say, to just “go along to get along” in endemically corrupt forums like the United Nations. This extends to Harper’s example of declining to play the cynical game of signing international treaties with no intent to abide by them, as Jean Chrétien did with the Kyoto treaty, which Harper withdrew from. A Conservative leader

should follow this example with respect to more international agreements that conflict with Canadian law or interests. Our foreign policy establishment takes pride in binding Canada to any and all international agreements thrown up by the global consensus; a Conservative government should comb through the list and withdraw from as many as it can without endangering our national interests. Finally, it should strike new ground in building new and stronger alliances, putting more time and attention into active work with allies than on seeking recognition at international talking shops.

## Federalism

The constitutional principle of federalism is closely linked to the philosophical idea of subsidiarity. Politically and legally, [sections 91 and 92 of the \*Constitution Act, 1867\*](#) set out the division of powers between Ottawa and the provinces. With only minor exceptions, the division is as one would expect, with quintessentially local matters falling under the control of the provinces and matters of national and international concern reserved to the Dominion government. The list of “heads of power” has been updated on a couple of occasions, including to specify that the “development, conservation and management of non-renewable natural resources and forestry resources in the province” fall under exclusive provincial jurisdiction, while “old age pensions” are a federal responsibility. In a few cases, such as immigration and agriculture (which are specified in the Constitution) and environmental regulation (which is not) jurisdiction is shared subject to federal paramountcy when federal and provincial laws conflict.

The constitutional division of powers broadly follows the older Catholic principle of subsidiarity, which is a feature of most federal modern states and supra-national bodies. While the Catholic idea of subsidiarity is concerned primarily with the division between public and private spheres, giving primacy to the pre-political private institutions of the family and the church, the political version of the principle is concerned with the division of political power over both the private and the public spheres. Stated generally, it holds that laws and regulations should be made at the level closest to the people most affected by them. Intrinsically,

it is neither a conservative nor a liberal principle, but a democratic one: it ensures greater responsiveness and accountability by elected officials to those who bear the consequences of their decisions.

### Narrow constitutionalism and broad public expectations

One political problem with constitutional federalism in Canada is that it cuts against a general public confusion about the respective roles of federal, provincial, and municipal government. This confusion extends to federal political parties, who like to call for “national strategies” on everything from climate change (Liberals), where it might make sense, to housing (Liberals and NDP), where it is questionable, and **even to cycling** (NDP), which is just silly. The media also seem to appreciate the appearance of ambition that comes from sweeping national strategies, which attract easy headlines even if in practice they amount to little. Conservatives should resist this urge and, where they can’t, they should follow the principle of subsidiarity and leave design and the delivery of the strategies up to the provinces.

If Conservatives must have a national housing strategy, for example, they should be sure to transfer any attendant funds to the provinces to implement it, with only minimal oversight and auditing by the federal government. The same applies to national Pharmacare: if we are to have such a program, and we probably should eventually, Conservatives should talk about a national program, but then defer entirely to the provinces on its implementation. Conservatives could even consider extending the principle to climate change. Canada’s emission reduction goals are effectively the total of thirteen provincial and territorial goals, so a federal government could loosen the strictures of the current carbon tax and give provinces more flexibility to design policies to meet their targets but, in exchange, insist that they do.

### Ottawa Liberals and provincial Conservatives

For the first century or so, the original division of powers held up pretty well. It was not until the growth of the federal welfare state after World War II that it was felt necessary to clarify, for example, ultimate federal



responsibility for old age pensions (1951). The first national health care law, the *Medical Care Act* (1966) provided for federal-provincial cost sharing for healthcare outside of hospitals, which under Section 92 fell under provincial jurisdiction. Then, in 1984 (via a bill introduced by the Liberal government in 1983), the government passed the *Canada Health Act*. This gave the federal government indirect power over provincial health care policy by tying federal funding to a unilateral and discretionary federal interpretation of the Act's core principles. Finally, in 1995, another Liberal government consolidated federal health and social welfare transfers to the provinces into a single Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) payment, which it later divided, in 2004, into a separate Canada Health Transfer (CHT) and a Canada Social Transfer (CST).

The point of this extremely abbreviated history is to show that virtually none of the major expansions of federal power (with one exception I will come to) were initiated by Conservative governments. Macdonald and Diefenbaker in particular, had little cause to question the division of powers, but we can infer their general approval by two important events. The first is obvious: Macdonald was "present at the creation" and explained his support for the proposed constitution's division of powers on the record. While he believed a lasting union would require a strong federal government, with all the powers that requires, he balanced that with a recognition of the desire, and desirability, of the provinces controlling their own affairs. "All matters of general interest are to be dealt with by the General Legislature," he said, "while the local legislatures will deal with matters of local interest, which do not affect the Confederation as a whole, but are of the greatest importance to their particular sections."

For Diefenbaker's part, it is telling that his Bill of Rights applied only to the Dominion parliament. He rejected the idea of entrenching it in the *British North America Act* because he believed it would not be possible to secure provincial support for a federal bill that would constrain them. On the other hand, he did pass and secure grudging provincial assent for the *Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act*, which he had inherited from the previous Liberal government. Like Macdonald, who despite his endorsement of the principle of subsidiarity was also keen

to ensure that the central government could step in if “local” matters came to “affect the Confederation as a whole,” Diefenbaker’s general preference for localism could bow to national political pressure.

While Mulroney’s constitutional attention was focussed on securing Quebec’s assent to the *Constitution Act, 1982*, his most powerful tool in that cause was the transfer of more federal power to Quebec. It is fair to say that the proposed 1990 Charlottetown Accord was about nothing so much as a redistribution of power away from Ottawa to the provinces. The proposed Accord contained much that Western provinces as well as Quebec had asked for, including a version of the “triple-E” senate that the Reform Party supported, provincial jurisdiction over forestry and mining, and more provincial power over cultural matters, telecommunications, regional development, labour, and immigration. It also proposed to make it harder to amend the constitution without unanimous provincial consent and offered provinces the right to opt out of federal health and social programs without conditions and with full compensation.

The kicker, however, was that while it gave more powers to all provinces, it gave even more power to Quebec, including guaranteed representation in the House of Commons that would soon exceed its proportional share of the population and, most controversially, a requirement that the Supreme Court of Canada interpret the constitution in light of Quebec’s “distinct society.” This reinforcement of asymmetrical federalism ultimately doomed the project. In the west, despite offering much of what the Reform Party had been fighting for, the accommodations for Quebec went too far and Preston Manning opposed it; in Quebec, despite offering much of what Quebec nationalists had sought in 1982, it did not go far enough and Lucien Bouchard’s Bloc Québécois opposed it.

### Regional respect and *laissez faire* federalism

A Conservative government today should follow the lesson that Stephen Harper learned as policy advisor to Manning during the Charlottetown referendum. As Prime Minister, he eschewed grand constitutional bargains and, instead, devolved power informally, incrementally, and unilaterally. It was up to the provinces to take advantage of the flexibility

he offered them— for example, in health care delivery— if they wanted to. Unfortunately, none really did. They were more concerned, as they still are today, about the amount of federal transfers, especially healthcare transfers, than about attendant conditions. Some even *want* conditions. It is always a strange experience to hear some premiers at meetings of the Council of the Confederation ask for strings on federal funding so it doesn't end up being swallowed by health care unions in collective bargaining.

A Conservative government should be champions of both real federalism— the federalism set out in the *Constitution Act, 1867*— and of the principle of subsidiarity. Federalism is often described as a laboratory, with thirteen different provinces and territories conducting policy experiments from which the others can adopt the most successful. This is a useful feature of federalism, but equally important is the idea implicit in the structure of a federation that different regions will have different social and political preferences. Liberals and the NDP pay lip service to a narrow and superficial form of diversity, but then propose uniform national policies that homogenize and standardize local policies. Conservatives should be champions of a constitutional federalism that, following the principle of subsidiarity, encourages political diversity and pluralism and respects regional variety.

The reform to economic federalism that would most respect provincial autonomy would involve **returning “tax points” for social programs to the provinces**. This would give provinces total control over both funding and design of social programs, and remove the ability of the federal government to cut transfers, as the Chrétien government did with the CHST, or set them without consultation, as Harper did with the CHT. Differences among the provinces in fiscal capacity would be made up for through Equalization, which is after all both the name and the purpose of that program. Unfortunately, this is probably too radical a change in the national political order for most provinces and most Canadians. Instead, a Conservative government should encourage provincial autonomy by attaching minimal or no conditions to federal transfers and (*pace* Diefenbaker) guarantee the right of each province to opt out of any new federal programs with full compensation.

For example, a Conservative government should update the two ministerial guidance letters— the first from Mulroney’s government in 1985 and the second from Chrétien’s government in 1995, and neither updated in the last quarter century— that purport to limit the scope for provincial innovation in health care delivery. Provinces should be encouraged to put more emphasis on policy reforms to meet the *Canada Health Act*’s condition of “accessibility” by reducing wait times. As Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin and Justice Jack Major wrote in the 2005 *Chaoulli* decision, “[a]ccess to a waiting list is not access to health care.” In increasing access, provinces should be encouraged to look to the hybrid systems that maintain a commitment to universal, comprehensive, “free” coverage in the liberal democracies of Western Europe, or Australia and New Zealand and not penalized for such creativity.

Other areas where provinces should be given free policy reign are provincial pensions, environmental review, and management of forests and endangered species. In some cases this will require amending federal laws, including the *Species at Risk Act*, the new *Impact Assessment Act* and the *Canadian Energy Regulator Act* (a successor to an unfortunate precedent set by Mulroney with the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*), and the *Navigation Protection Act*. These changes would bring public controversy, but the point of a government accruing political capital in an election is to spend it on policies that matter, not simply horde it for re-election.

In other cases, the goals of federalism and subsidiarity can be achieved without statutory changes. This would include deferring more often to provincial regulatory bodies on their environmental impact assessments and exempting almost all energy projects from federal review, consistent with section 92A of the Constitution. It could also mean working with a province like Alberta to **give it control over its pension program**, as Quebec has had since the inception of the Canada Pension Plan, which

The point of a government accruing political capital in an election is to spend it on policies that matter, not simply horde it for re-election.

would have the advantage of effectively transferring a \$3 billion subsidy back to Alberta tax payers— conveniently, almost exactly the same amount by which that province’s taxpayers subsidize the rest of the country through Equalization.

Through all this, a Conservative government should pay close attention to Quebec’s unique sensitivity to provincial jurisdiction. It is unavoidable, because it is a reality, that special accommodations will sometimes need to be given to Quebec. As far as possible, this should be done on an ad hoc basis and not entrenched too formally. Harper recognized that with his Québécois nation motion, which was symbolically powerful but fell far short of constitutional “distinct society” status. It followed the advice of Macdonald, who once said of the Québécois, “Treat them as a nation, and they will act as a free people generally do: generously. Call them a faction and they become factious.” It is that sort of sensitive treatment, more than official constitutional status, that should matter to a Conservative government, which can succeed in quelling regional discontent, as Harper did, by respecting regional differences.

## **Economic Choice and Security**

Macdonald’s National Policy promoted geographic expansion at home and market contraction abroad. It largely ignored historic North-South trade routes in favour of an West-East trade route across Canada that continued across the Atlantic in service of an imperial preference. This was not entirely Macdonald’s choice— it was the Americans who had abrogated the Reciprocity Treaty right before Confederation— but, voluntary or not, Macdonald made the most of it politically. It was an economic policy of growth: geographic growth, population growth, and growth in exports of Canada’s abundant natural resources.

Diefenbaker’s Northern Development Policy was an extension of Macdonald’s vision for Canada’s West to the North, and **Diefenbaker explicitly described it as such** in 1957, saying “the Federal government should become aware of the vast potential of our northland frontier, and should take steps to broaden this country from north to south, as the Conservative government of Sir John A. Macdonald broadened it from

east to west.” It even had its own railway, the Great Slave Lake Railway to the Pine Point mine in the Northwest Territories. For Diefenbaker, economic prosperity was not an end in itself but a means to improving social welfare for all Canadians, not just in the North. And he believed that government policy, including government spending, was an important part of creating the conditions for the economic growth to pay for it.

By the time Mulroney came to office, four years after Ronald Reagan and five years after Margaret Thatcher, deregulation had replaced dirigisme as the preferred path to economic growth. Mulroney was elected on a promise to cut the size of government and he followed through by privatizing two of Canada’s “Crown” jewels, Air Canada and Petro-Canada, along with more than twenty others, including De Havilland Aircraft Co., Canadair, and the Radiochemical Company. Harper did not go in for further privatization, though he did dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board. He preferred instead to incrementally and modestly shrink the size of government and starve it of revenue through tax cuts and Tax Free Savings Accounts, but he also provided new social benefits— the largest and most enduring being the Universal Child Care Benefit.

A Conservative leader today can, therefore, look back at a Conservative record of state intervention, infrastructure spending, protectionism, privatization, deregulation, free markets, broad tax cuts, and targeted social benefits. Not so much a tradition as a buffet. Perhaps this just reflects the quite different economic challenges at different times of governing a country 28 times larger than Germany with half its population; or perhaps it reflects a pragmatism that goes back to Macdonald and, before him, to the British enlightenment economists like Adam Smith and John Locke, who preferred free markets to state mercantilism, but still saw a role for government in managing trade and infrastructure. Looking ahead, a Conservative government will need to be similarly flexible and adaptable as it faces an economy that, thanks to the creative disruption of new technology, is more decentralized than it has been in almost a century, but also more unstable and insecure than it has been since the Great Depression.

## A generation spoiled for choice

There are still plenty of possible areas for further privatization, including Canada Post and Via Rail (but who would buy it?), and for deregulation of our closed airline and telecommunications sectors. This would probably be good policy in the medium term, but they are not currently priorities for Canadians and there were good political reasons why Harper did not go much further than structuring broadband auctions to encourage more competition among telecommunications providers. Still, the lessons of privatization and deregulation— more competition among businesses and more choice for consumers— should underlie Conservative policy today and in the future.

Conservatives have distinguished themselves favourably from Liberals in recent decades as better stewards of the national economy. This matters because only economic growth creates jobs in the private sector and pays for jobs in the public sector. Conservatives should emphasize the link between economic growth, jobs, and social benefits, and explain clearly and without apology why this means that Canadian corporate tax rates must be competitive with our peer countries, and ideally lower than most American states to offset the disadvantages of remoteness and the complexity and uncertainty of our federal and provincial legal and regulatory regimes.

A generation that orders dinner by choosing from forty national cuisines on their phones and bypasses hotels for Airbnb, taxis for Uber and Lyft, and restaurants for food trucks is a generation that is comfortable with the results, if not necessarily the economic theory, of capitalism and free markets. This is good, but it also counsels that Conservatives frame their policies around personal choice and opportunity and growth, and it should remind them that favouring freer markets is not the same as favouring entrenched corporate interests— especially large and powerful corporate interests that seek to minimize competition. Conservatives should empower entrepreneurship by removing barriers to starting and growing businesses. They should cut red tape where they can (unfortunately, it's mostly at the provincial level), make it easier to sell and ship goods between provinces, and ensure that, whether it is a grandmother selling her knitting patterns online or the next Shopify, small and new business-owners keep more of what they earn.

## Maximizing the economic creation, minimizing the social destruction in creative destruction

If encouraged, this technological disruption will continue to create opportunities for new businesses, and new opportunities for old businesses, but it will come at the cost of personal insecurity. Fewer young Canadians can expect to have long-term careers and many who participate in the new “gig” economy are effectively self-employed, without the security of Employment Insurance, healthcare benefits, or unionization. A Conservative government must have answers to these problems. If the dark side of freedom is insecurity, then at the same a Conservative government encourages more choice, it should provide more security. Without a baseline of security, people will be less-inclined to take the risks required for economic growth.

A Conservative government should expand the social safety net so it catches those who fall out of the new economy. There is an obvious moral hazard to extending Employment Insurance to people whose employment status is substantially in their own hands, but Conservatives should explore creative ways of providing similar security through portable benefits and tax-incented extended healthcare benefits of the kind that employees traditionally receive. If Conservatives don't move to address this issue in a way that protects workers without discouraging innovation and personal choice, they will end up backed into some version of an economically ruinous and socially retrograde universal basic income. Instead, to help the unemployed and what the British call JAMs– “just about managing”– families, Conservatives need policies that incentivize work. They should target support to the lowest income Canadians with wage subsidies or hiring subsidies, [as Sean Speer has advocated](#), revisit the tentative Harper-era experiment with income splitting, [as Jack Mintz promoted](#), expand the Working Income Tax Benefit, and continue increasing the Canada Child Benefit.

Conservatives should not be afraid to use the tax system to incent pro-social behaviour, including through the sort of boutique tax credits that Harper introduced, which were so maligned by the economists who studied them– and so appreciated by the Canadians who used them. Conservatives should have a vision of the common good and should use



government policy to achieve it using the least coercive means necessary. Government programs, like free markets, are neither inherently good or bad: they are tools. Markets are useful for allocating exchangeable goods; government is useful for promoting intangible goods. If Conservatives think saving is important— and if the pandemic-driven recession has shown anything, it's that a cushion of savings can be very useful— they should build on Harper's Tax Free Savings Accounts, increasing both the limits and awareness, as well as providing incentives for late-starters to “catch up.”

Conservatives believe families are important building blocks of society, and a Conservative government should support families as they sacrifice to raise the generation who will pay for our retirements. But, unlike the other federal parties, and especially the NDP, Conservatives should offer security with choice. Some parents may want to use state or private childcare, some may want to use the benefit so one or both parents can spend more time at home, while others may want to use it for care by relatives or friends or informal, community-based care. Conservatives should continue to follow Harper's policy of giving parents choice in how they want their children cared for (while not interfering in provincial jurisdiction) and dramatically increase the value of the benefit to meet more of the cost of childcare, well above the temporary boost [the Liberal government recently announced](#).

Macdonald's campaign poster showed that the strength of the Conservative party lay with the farmers and factory workers who, in the iconic image, literally carried the leader to victory. Today's equivalents would be hourly employees in the service industry, new economy gig workers, as well as workers in traditional manufacturing and resource industries with uncertain futures. Conservatives must set policies to support those workers— the battlers, and the aspirational Canadians, new and old— first with jobs and economic growth, but also with personal and family security.

When Diefenbaker took his vision of economic growth and social justice to Canadians in the 1958 election, the *Globe and Mail* endorsement said that “To vote for the Conservative Government is thus to vote, at one time, both for a secure future and for an adventurous one,

both for enjoyed stability and for enjoyable progress, to vote in short for the things most Canadians want most.” Even if most Conservatives today would break with Diefenbaker on some of his more statist and protectionist economic policy, “a secure future and an adventurous one” is a pretty good motto– and model– for a modern Conservative party committed to choice and security.

## Nation-building

The age of grand nation-building public projects is over. While some optimists still dream of high-speed rail linking Canada’s major cities, or at least Hamilton and Montreal, there are [good reasons why high speed rail plans have repeatedly failed in North America](#). There is also a need for more and better broadband internet service, especially in rural Canada, but there is already bipartisan consensus for this. And Western Canada desperately needs oil and gas pipelines to get our valuable resources to global markets, but those projects are underway and there is not currently a need for more federal involvement than the existing, welcome investment by Trudeau’s government.

Canada’s real infrastructure needs are mostly in the nature of upgrades (of bridges and roads), twinning (of roads and railways), expansion (of airports, road networks, local public transit), and more of what we have (schools and hospitals to serve growing suburbs). Macdonald’s national railway and Diefenbaker’s Roads to Resources matched the economic needs of their day, and Conservative nation-building must likewise suit our society today.

China’s growing power, America’s increasing erraticism, and the geopolitical shock of the Covid-19 pandemic mean that the world will likely be colder and harder than what we have been used to since the end of the Cold War. It will be a more wary and selfish world, with fewer bridges and more drawbridges. And even as Western countries withdraw into themselves and erect more trade barriers, they will find their greatest threats are internal– a lack of civilizational confidence, a loss of faith, and spiritual decay– than external.

## Connecting Canadians through internal free trade

In this uncertain and suspicious world, it would be easy to fall into reflexive protectionism, but that has not been the Conservative tradition. Even Macdonald's and Diefenbaker's hostility to free trade with the United States was countered by their commitment to increased trade within the British Empire and the Commonwealth. The lesson from those early Conservative Prime Ministers is that we need to trade with reliable and responsible partners, which today includes the United States (regular eruptions notwithstanding), but also the other countries mentioned in the free trade discussion above. China now takes the place of the United States in our first century, with the United States replacing the United Kingdom (in relative importance, not altogether). The free-trading commitments of Mulroney and Harper should be continued with this caveat. Canada is a trading nation, and that should continue to be Conservative policy as well as part of our national identity— with countries that share our social and legal standards and moral norms.

Conservatives should complement this policy of principled international trade with a renewed commitment to **free trade within Canada** as a **nation-building and nation-uniting project**. This could have been addressed in the federalism section or the economic section, but I include it here because it is a fundamental, if long-neglected, part of our founding national vision. When the United States cancelled the Reciprocity Treaty, Canadian farmers and manufacturers lost their largest and closest market. A year later, Macdonald and the other drafters of the *British North America Act* included in it a provision intended to ensure the new country would be a single economic free-trading zone. It was a bipartisan vision, championed by the “Clear Grit” party leader George Brown as well as by Macdonald. Both sides agreed that, if international trade would always depend the vicissitudes of diplomacy, at least Canadian businesses would be able to rely on the largest possible internal market.

The same logic holds today, but since Macdonald boasted in 1865 that Confederation would bring “unrestricted free trade, between people of the five province,” the accretion of hundreds of provincial and federal protectionist measures has betrayed that founding promise. Economists Trevor Tombe and Lucas Albrecht **have calculated** that “the effect of

interprovincial trade barriers adds between 7.8% and 14.5% to prices of goods and services that we buy each day.” **StatCan has calculated** that barriers to free trade within Canada act as an effective 7% tax on the price of goods crossing provincial lines (by comparison, StatCan found no measurable cost to US interstate trade). And, unlike a tax, which at least provides revenue for government services, revenue lost to interprovincial red tape is just ... lost: lost wealth and lost opportunity. Tombe **has recently quantified the value of that loss** at about \$90 billion each year, which works out to \$2,300 per person or over \$6,000 per household. It is a staggering missed opportunity that should scandalize all Canadians.

The Constitution grants the federal government power over “trade and commerce” – a power federal governments have been loath to exercise, as legislating free trade would pit Ottawa against all ten provinces and the three territories on everything from liquor sale monopolies to procurement preferences. To his credit, the grand deal of Mulroney’s Charlottetown Accord tried to cut through this tangle of regulations, but that ambition did not survive the death of the accord. Even if a Conservative government is not prepared to clash with the provinces– and especially Quebec – there are still steps that it could take to promote free trade within Canada.

It could start by eliminating federal regulations that duplicate provincial rules and burden local producers. For example, in March 2020, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency **announced** a temporary Ministerial Exemption that would “permit interprovincial movement of meat and poultry products from establishments that are not federally licensed if such trade becomes necessary to alleviate meat shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic.” But why temporary? If a steak from a provincial abattoir is good enough to be served in the best steakhouses in Calgary, why can’t it be served in Vancouver or Toronto?

A Conservative federal government should also promote regional trade blocks, using its formal and informal powers not to strong-arm unwilling provinces but to incent willing ones into sub-national agreements like the “Joint Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness” in Atlantic Canada or the “New West Partnership Trade Agreement” in the west. The latter, which has worked well for four western provinc-

es with very different economies under governments of very different stripes, should be expanded to include other pro-free trade provinces. Meanwhile, the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, with its ad hoc working groups and annual meetings, will continue to grind slowly away at consensus reductions to trade barriers, but it will only ever be as ambitious as the least ambitious province. Those willing to move faster should do so, especially those willing to move away from regulatory harmonization to mutual recognition of each other's laws and regulations, and the federal government should use its constitutional powers to encourage them.

### The perennial search for Canadian identity

While economic unity is good economics, the "unity" part is equally important. Most of Canada's population is strung out along the line of the old national railway, spanning a continent whose diverse regions cover rainforests, mountains, prairies, deserts, and fishing ports. We are not two solitudes, as the old cliché goes, but hundreds. In many cases, Canadians have more in common with their American neighbours directly to the south than they do with their compatriots far to the east or west. And new ethnic and linguistic communities may have closer family and social links with similar communities in other cities in other provinces than to newcomers from a different part of the world a few blocks away.

To some extent, it has always been this way, but for most of our first century Canadians were part of the framework of a larger empire and that external superstructure fixed our place in the world. That is why men from small towns like Prince George and Gander volunteered to fight in two world wars on continents they knew mostly from schoolroom maps, for kings they knew mostly from their coins. This was the world into which both the British Macdonald and the German Diefenbaker assimilated, and that they, in turn, promoted.

The British Empire's rapid decline after the Second World War into a largely symbolic Commonwealth coincided with a new generation of Canadians for whom American wealth and glamour held more appeal and relevance than an Old World that was showing its age. By 1967, a

young Canadian wandering the futuristic pavilions of Montreal's Expo 67 could easily forget that only four years earlier Diefenbaker had been prime minister, or that he was still the leader of the Opposition. By the time Expo 67 wrapped up in October of that year, Diefenbaker would be out as Opposition leader and Canada would feel like a new country, with a new flag that starkly illustrated the eclipse of the old British identity. The confidence of the new Canada was the confidence of youth, of adolescent rebellion. Its forceful rejection of its former Dominion status was at least partial compensation for the insecurity of a country yet to establish an independent identity as more than being “not British” and “not American.” The next half century would be a largely unsuccessful struggle to find one.

#### Liberal surrender and a Conservative opportunity

For several generations, at least, Canada's political values have not been expressly grounded in an appeal to religious teaching (and, before that, the reality of Quebec meant religion was a source more of division than commonality). As a result, Canadian conservatives could not draw explicitly on the sort of Christian democratic principles that animated their counterparts in Europe. Other than hockey, the symbols of a common national identity have largely been government policies— a Medicare program that may once have been ground-breaking, but now puts us increasingly out of step with our liberal democratic peers in Europe; a national broadcaster with a shrinking audience— or values so vague that they could be claimed by any modern democracy. It's all well and good to repeat that “the world needs more Canada,” but at some point you have to explain what you mean by “Canada.” Or, to pose the problem in practical terms, how do you campaign for a UN Security Council seat on slogans about openness, tolerance, feminist foreign policy, environmental protection that could just as easily apply to your competitors, Ireland and Norway?

Geographically dispersed, linguistically divided, and culturally deracinated, it is easy to see how Justin Trudeau could **deny that Canada has a “core identity” or proclaim Canada to be “the world's first post-national state”**— an aspiration he has reinforced by wearing

a t-shirt with the oxymoronic (with emphasis on the latter three syllables) slogan “Global Citizen.” Of course, a country can’t actually be “postnational” and Canadians belie Trudeau’s claim by affixing our flag to their backpacks, belting the anthem after Olympic gold medals, and constantly reminding Americans of which celebrities are Canadian. Still, there is always a danger of fragmentation in a regional confederation and Trudeau’s idea, which he probably thought sounded profound, could prove profoundly dangerous.

In effect, Trudeau answered fifty years of searching for a Canadian identity by just shrugging his shoulders and giving up: our identity is who we are, and there’s no point in putting any effort into it. This will not do. A country can’t expect to win the allegiance of its own citizens, let alone the respect of its peers, if it has nothing to offer but bumper sticker slogans. A nation requires a sense of itself as a pre-political entity engaged in a joint project— a “psycho-social homogeneity,” to borrow Carl Schmitt’s term— in order to sustain the ordered liberty that is a precondition for physical, religious, and economic flourishing.

Conservatives offer a richer vision of Canada: our identity is not simply who we are, but who we have been. The line to a country’s future cannot be determined from a single point, but is discerned by looking back at a series of points that brought us to where we are today and point to where we should go. Harper sought to revive Canadian history— and especially our history before 1967, the Liberal “year zero”— not just because he was a history buff, but because we have a fascinating history that explains who we are. If you want to know why Nova Scotia is Nova Scotia and Alberta is Alberta, or even why Canada is Canada and not America, you need to go back to Port Royal and the refugees of the Highland Clearances, to the migration of 600,000 Americans to Alberta after the closing of the American frontier, and to the War of 1812, which Harper dubbed “the Fight for Canada.” This is not obscure arcana— it is our national DNA.

A Conservative government should continue to tell our history, a diverse history that should not deny historical faults and errors nor fail to celebrate our triumphs and our success in building a country that hundreds of millions of people around the world dream of making their

home. In a [speech marking the 150th anniversary of the Canadian Parliament](#), then-Conservative party leader Andrew Scheer captured the Conservative commitment to our history. He **said**:

It is fashionable today to look down at the past, but that is a luxury we enjoy from heights built by those who preceded us in this chamber. If we look back at our rich history and study the leading figures in its telling and see only the blemishes, then we are missing out on the beautiful story of a country constantly bettering itself, and consistently offering a refuge to so many around the world. It is a story of different parliaments at different times, working through the imperfections of the day. It is a story that on the whole has been a story of hope for so many.

Canada's identity has changed gradually over time, driven by the changing needs of a country that was born in the Age of Empire, came of age in the Cold War, and now faces maturity in an uncertain, multipolar world. We are a country divided from birth that needs unifying symbols and a unifying vision, and those rooted in our history, in our land, and in our institutions are more likely to resonate and endure than those based on gauzy ideological abstractions.

Conservatives should continue to tell our proud, and occasionally shameful, history, including by naming more buildings and infrastructure after neglected Conservative figures, which began too late under Harper. We need more statues and memorials, not fewer, which should include more diverse Canadians, not just racially, but culturally: artists, singers, and writers as well as political leaders, explorers, and military and heroes. This will send a clear message that our past, and not a contest over our present, is the key to our future.

Conservatives should take as their model the citizenship guide, "[Discover Canada](#)," which was published by the Harper government under the supervision of Minister Jason Kenney. It is the basis of the citizenship test that more than 300,000 permanent residents take each year and it does an exemplary job connecting our past to our future. In its introduction, it welcomes new Canadians by telling them: "You are becoming part of a great tradition that was built by generations of pioneers before



you.” The message is clear: all this history– Champlain and Tecumseh, the Plains of Abraham and Vimy Ridge, Responsible Government and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*– is now your history, and it is your responsibility to carry it into the future.

This is an essentially conservative vision that echoes Edmund Burke’s conviction that “society is ... a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.” Against Trudeau’s shallow idea that Canada’s identity is “whatever happens here, eh?” Conservatives offer a deeper and richer vision rooted in our unique history and geography. We are the people who, sometimes together and sometimes in opposition to each other, built a free and ordered society not in Britain or France, not in Ukraine or India, but in this place in the northern half of North America. That history is worth remembering. It should uplift us, and if some people think the past only a place of ignominy and cannot also be a source of inspiration, then that is a fight Conservatives should be happy to have. If progressives want to disown Canada’s history, then Conservatives will happily claim it.

A stylized graphic of the German flag, featuring three diagonal stripes of black, red, and gold, set against a black background. The stripes are slightly blurred and overlap each other.

**PART TWO**

Michael Borchard

# “Interesting Times” and the CDU Party

The importance of the party  
75 years after its formation

## At a glance

- **In the seemingly hopeless situation** after the war, in which many people are without perspective and orientation, a “revolution” occurs in the German party system. In many places in Germany, especially in Cologne and in Berlin, a hitherto completely new party form is founded in the summer of 1945 with the help of politicians, many of whom had resisted the National Socialists and suffered persecution for it: a party that firstly overcomes the confessional differences that were still so present in the time of the Weimar Republic, secondly sets itself up as a people’s party that reaches out to all classes and thirdly consistently orients its policies on the Christian image of man.
- **On the basis of the** Christian image of man, the party made three directional decisions after the war that are still part of the core of its DNA today: First, the orientation toward the West, which was to prevent a swing policy of “free hand.” The second decision is to build on European integration and, through economic and political interdependence, to prevent warlike conflicts from erupting in Europe once again. The third decision is the development of the concept of the social market economy, which is based on the Christian image of man and provides for prosperity as a “third way” between a capitalism without rules and a constricting state socialism. An order, however, that needs “international” approaches if it is to be preserved in the future.
- **The important question is what arc** can be drawn from the founding period of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) to the present: At a time when there are signs of alienation between

politics and citizens, the party should remember its decentralized founding and its early days as a “movement” and itself reconnect with movements on the ground. This includes new forms of dialogue, but also giving local politics greater importance again, not writing off federalism and not overloading the successful Basic Law with new state goals. Furthermore, it is part of the CDU’s identity to discuss and weigh ethical issues particularly carefully.

- **The CDU must build on** its initial programmatic commitments on foreign policy by strengthening more clearly than before the character of the European Union as an area of law, by adhering itself strictly to the treaties concluded within the framework of the EU, and by strengthening Franco-German cooperation as the engine of European integration. But also with regard to Germany’s role in the world, the CDU must push even harder than before for Germany to show more responsibility for its own security and defense capabilities, for the transatlantic alliance, and for a world that does not abandon multilateralism.
- **The CDU is by far** the most successful German party that has shaped the state. Compared with the Christian democratic parties and people’s parties in Europe, it is still in a good position, but there is no guarantee of eternity for it either. For this reason, it is important for the future of the party to repeatedly go through “political moults” with the firm orientation mark of the Christian image of man and to adapt to changing conditions, but at the same time to hold fast to the constants and directional decisions mentioned. This also includes maintaining the party’s internal unity and professionalism, which have always been part of the CDU’s success and have distinguished it from other parties.

**A**pparently there is an eloquent Chinese curse which states: “May you live in interesting times”. In our times it is quite obvious why this sentence would be designated as a curse. We are certainly living in “interesting times”, in turbulent times which are characterized by a tremendous dynamic of change and which the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas described as a time of “new complexity”<sup>1</sup> more than a decade ago.

This is manifested by some of the following developments: A progressive individualization, an increasingly evident secularization in Germany and Europe; increased intensification of globalisation with all its positive and negative effects; a global economy which finds itself in an industrial revolution while transitioning to digitalization. In Europe there is also the refugee crisis which is far from over due to the unstable conditions in the Middle East and in North Africa as well as the increasingly intensive alienation of citizens from politics as well as a significant increase of populist tendencies; a period in which the unrestrained use of natural resources and our environment has already exerted a noticeable impact on the global climate; a time in which what was known as “The West” has already lost a large chunk of its cohesive power. And, as if these are not enough changes: A world-wide pandemic which will most certainly affect both our society and our economy in Europe and also in Germany. Overcoming the Corona crisis is a huge undertaking and undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges confronting Germany and Europe since the post-war period. At this time, during which in the subjective perception of people we stumble from one crisis to the next, the need for orientation and stability has certainly not lessened.

There is no way this crisis can be talked away and each generation needs to pass its own acid test but it is also important to note that the “interesting times” in which we are currently living and during which the Christian Democratic Union is able to celebrate its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, cannot possibly be compared to the period during which this extraordinary par-

ty was established in the landmark year of 1945 – simultaneously at two different places in Germany.

After the devastations of the Second World War, after the moral catastrophe of the National-Socialist terror regime which the majority of Germans did not resist, after the Holocaust the extent of which was only revealed gradually and only penetrated the general consciousness after several decades, after the world-wide condemnation of the country, after the almost total destruction of the industrial core and the extensive eradication of a sensible infrastructure, after a period in which families were torn apart, beloved family members were killed as a result of the war and its consequences, at a period in which all life certainties were in question and prospects for the future were uncertain, the country was literally and extensively in ruins.

Right in this seemingly hopeless situation a revolution occurred within the German party system, which was to shape political developments in Germany and in Europe for the remainder of the century up to the present time, like few other factors. In Cologne and in Berlin and many other places the first Christian democratic party was founded, which deserves this name in Germany. Konrad Adenauer, who was subsequently so instrumental in shaping this party and who was not directly involved in its founding in Cologne, provided this drastic description of the starting point: “The establishment of a new party was difficult during the dismal situation in which Germany found itself at the time. There was great material hardship, and the political problems and the indifference towards political matters exhibited by most Germans were discouraging. For us Germans the present was depressing and the future precarious and uncertain. The German people were the heirs to the atrocities committed by the National Socialists and were hated all over the world. It required a great deal of courage to revive the former parties and even greater courage to found a new party.”<sup>2</sup>

It was Konrad Adenauer who, on the way to the first genuine party program at Neheim-Hüsten, swept the petition for “true Christian socialism” off the table.

It required even more courage to establish a party, which had not existed in this form before. The outstanding contemporary historian Karl-Dietrich Bracher, who co-founded the contemporary history research in Germany after the war, described the CDU party as the “actual new factor” of the democratic fresh start in 1945. Why is it possible to talk about a “supernova” in the political night sky without any exaggeration? What is so special about the CDU and its Bavarian sister CSU and why did it appear to be so much brighter than all the other new party establishments or revivals? First of all, there was the explicit reference to the Christian understanding of humans and the values derived from it, which was exceptional and a clear rejection of the totalitarianism, which had precipitated the entire continent into political turmoil.

Secondly, the CDU positioned itself as a collective party and thus, for the first time, established a people’s party aimed at all social classes and population groups: from the Christian social (in part even (Christian socialist), to the liberal and the conservative-national sections of the population. Identifying as a workers’ party encompassing trade union to business camps, by contrast with the SPD party which even after the war consciously clings to its old and venerable tradition as a class party.

Thirdly, the party fulfilled a dream which had already been expressed more or less loudly during the time of the Weimar Republic by a former centrist politician like Konrad Adenauer, a Christian trade unionist like Adam Stegerwald, chairman of the General Association of Christian Trade Unionists who was also the Prussian Minister for Social Welfare. The dream of a party that would overcome the contrast between the Catholic and Protestant religions, which in the Weimar times had prevented the parties from being able to effectively oppose the extremists. This dream had not been abandoned during the National-Socialist terror regime. It lived on in the Resistance, which caused the resistance fighter and subsequent CDU politician and president of the Bundestag, Eugen Gerstenmaier, to create the formula according to which the “constituting of the CDU in the prisons of Tegel had begun”.<sup>3</sup>

Konrad Adenauer, who belonged to the Resistance but also suffered persecutions during the national-socialist period, concludes from the

failure of the parties during the Weimar Republic that only a new party “rooted in broad Christian standards, based on firm ethical principles, supported by all classes of the German population, would be able to lift Germany out of its misery”. He envisaged a party, which did not promote a fragmentation into individual interests, be it religious, economic or ideological, but was a collective movement which unified as many democrats as possible under one roof.

It therefore seems quite absurd that the patriarch, embodied by Konrad Adenauer, who had shaped the first decades of the CDU like no other, had not been directly involved in the establishment of the party in Cologne. Not infrequently he is erroneously attributed a decisive role in the foundation act of the party in Cologne and in the so-called “Cologne Guiding Principles”, the first programmatic writings. However, this was not the case. What actually happened was that the British occupying power, which had removed him from his position as Mayor of Cologne, initially prohibited all political activity and secondly that, when one of the authoritative Cologne party founders, Leo Schwering, visited him at his home in Rhöndorf, he viewed the party founders’ plans in this form with scepticism. This was also connected with the initial economic policy stance of the new party. Especially the Christian trade unionists, who were co-founders of the party, promoted the idea of “Christian socialism”. They did this, because they were of the opinion that materialism had contributed to national socialism, but also because after the collapse of the German economy the prevailing impression was that the lack of basic necessities could only be overcome by socializing the economy and by state control.

It was Konrad Adenauer who, on the way to the first genuine party program at Neheim-Hüsten, swept the petition for “true Christian socialism” off the table. He did this in his laconic and typically pragmatic-strategic Adenauer manner by voicing the opinion that by including “Christian socialism” in the program one would gain five people and “ten would run away”. Adenauer furthermore considered that the guidelines contained far too much emphasis on Christianity. Here, too, he feared that a program which seemed like a profession of faith might have a deterrent effect on broad sections of the population.



Despite Adenauer's objections the very first programmatic commitments, the Cologne Guiding Principles and also the Berlin Appeal, both of which were created only a few weeks after the unconditional surrender, contained all the "hereditary information" which still constitutes a large part of the CDU's DNA. Firstly, there was the commitment to the dignity and personality of the individual, derived from the Christian concept of humans which had not previously existed in politics, which turned the Cologne Guiding Principles into a "forerunner" of the German Basic Law, our constitution, which is the envy of many countries throughout the world.

Furthermore, these programmatic outlines – which is all they are at this point - also contain a strong emphasis on the rule of law, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom to form a coalition and to assemble, but also federal state structure, commitment to self-government of the municipalities and so on. The definition of family and educational policy also remains valid 75 years after the formation of the party. For instance, the explicit reference to the role and importance of the parents, their parental rights and obligations, is once again given top priority. They are the primary decision-makers, not the state. They should receive all the assistance and support they require for this assignment. In place of the dominance of a totalitarian dictatorship the responsibility is transferred to the individual.

On the basis of these ideological principles, the party made three political policy decisions of paramount importance during the first years after the war, which continue to be the core of its self-image to this day, despite the fact that all three fundamental decisions are more than ever at issue or have come under pressure.

The purpose of the three policy decisions was not just to restore the lost confidence from outsiders as well as internal stability in Germany. It also promoted the idea of preventing concentrations of power and decentralizing power not only in a national but also in a European context. Following the catastrophe of National Socialism and with the knowledge that far too many Germans had not resisted the dictatorship, Konrad Adenauer was nevertheless motivated by a certain amount of distrust concerning the democratic stability of his fellow citizens, despite his confidence in his people's desire to rebuild their destroyed homeland.

And the second constant which co-determined these three policy decisions was the fear, manifested in Konrad Adenauer even before the end of the war, that Bolshevism might subordinate Germany and possibly large sections of your Europe to its rule. At any rate, Adenauer was deeply convinced of the Soviet Union's urge for expansion. However, Adenauer's fear was combined with scepticism whether the victorious Western allied powers would really do everything in their power to defend Germany's and Europe's freedom and stand firm against Moscow.

The first policy decision of fundamental importance which continues to have an impact today, is the orientation towards the West. This is a new, ultimately revolutionary direction of German foreign policy. Since the creation of the empire in 1871, which took place exactly 150 years ago, there has never been such a clear definition of foreign policy.

As far back as October 1945, just five months after the capitulation and three months after the creation of the CDU, the Mayor of Cologne, Konrad Adenauer, who had just been deposed by the British occupying power and had quickly become a leading figure in the new party, wrote a remarkable letter to the then mayor of the City of Duisburg, Heinrich Weitz, in which he not only predicted the division of Germany and the entire European subcontinent but also clearly outlined that in such a case the Western occupying powers would have the duty to "calm those parts of Germany not occupied by the Russians both politically and economically and restore them to health."<sup>6</sup>

According to the perspective of the former Mayor of Cologne and an opponent of the National Socialists, this recovery should ensure that at least the western part of Germany should once again become dependable to the neighbouring states and regain their trust after the violent excesses of the NS dictatorship. It was important to him that the Federal Republic should abide by the rules over which Germany had previously ridden roughshod. This included respect for international borders, clear and transparent foreign policy principles, and last but not least strict respect for international rights and obligations. This represented a clear rejection of the Bismarck seesaw policy between East and West.

In his opinion the expression of Western thought should unconditionally include the following: Democracy, freedom and rule of law. The allegiance to this West, which stands for these values, is also expressed in his first government declaration in 1949: “There is no doubt in our minds that according to our origins and convictions we belong to the Western European world”.<sup>7</sup>

It is significant that the policy of alignment with the West had to be linked to the German division at all times. The German issue had to be kept open. Accordingly, the federal government asserted the so-called “claim to sole representation” as early as 1949. As a democratic government elected by free vote it felt legitimised to speak on behalf of all Germans.

The fact that Adenauer established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1955 and achieved his greatest political success, at least in the eyes of the public, with the associated release of the German prisoners of war was not a return to the old “free hand” policy, no reminiscence of Rapallo nor a turning away from the Western connection. Firstly, Adenauer was aware of the problematic consequences of this step in relation to the so-called claim to sole representation, which was after all an at least implied recognition of the status quo and led to the so-called Hallstein Doctrine which considered it an “unfriendly act” when countries established relations with the GDR. Secondly, this made a fear harboured by Adenauer against the West more controllable despite his decision, namely that the former victorious powers, who had decided the fate of the German people in 1945 in Potsdam, might make another far-reaching decision concerning Germany’s future over the head of the Germans.

With the central guiding concepts “freedom - peace - unity” Adenauer described not only his politics but also the order of priorities. Adenauer never gave up his hope for a German unification, but his vision was that one day in the distant future the Communist East would capitulate due

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to the pulling effect of the idea of freedom and the economic power of the West. A dream which was fulfilled in 1989, 22 years after his death.

The second policy decision cannot be separated from the first decision for the West. In addition to the aforementioned improvement of the bilateral relations and the intensification of the transatlantic relations, the third element of the decision for a European integration with the goal of an irreversible linking of the European states was the critical element of German politics.

The decision for a European integration can also be traced back to Konrad Adenauer in significant measure. In Adenauer's aforementioned letter to Heinrich Weitz, which he composed at the end of October, Adenauer wrote a sentence of visionary power: "France and Belgium's desire for security can only be achieved in the long-term through economic interdependence between West Germany, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Holland. If England were to decide to also join this economic interdependence this would bring us considerably closer to the highly desirable ultimate goal of a "Union of West European States."<sup>8</sup> The reference to the importance of the United Kingdom for the European unification process makes the fact that 75 years later we are in the process of discussing that country's exit from this centennial project particularly painful.

Even if nowadays - over 75 years since May 8, 1949, the date of the German capitulation - one no longer remembers the fact that in its beginnings the European Union was an out-and-out peace project, this was one of the action-guiding motives for Konrad Adenauer. The historian Hanns Jürgen Küsters writes: "His actual goal of interdependence had always been a political union. Once a certain degree of interdependence was achieved among the European states, each of the states would think very carefully before resorting to military means, because in each case the damage would be far greater than the benefit, according to the sober pragmatist Konrad Adenauer."<sup>9</sup>

For him the inclusion of Germany in this structure fulfilled two fundamental goals: On the one hand, the aforementioned peace-keeping through an institutionalised balancing of interests (e.g. in the Coal and Steel Union). On the other hand, the purpose of the European integra-

tion was to prevent a resurgence of exaggerated nationalism. Adenauer was fully aware of the fact that for the sake of national unity some parties in West Germany would even accept an all-German “construction” which is fraught with uncertainty.

Both the Western connection as well as the European integration had a joint imperative: In the aforementioned government declaration in 1949 Adenauer explained explicitly what this binding element was: “The German-French differences must be eliminated permanently”. He knew that the creation of a lasting peace in Europe could only be achieved with a reconciliation between the supposed “archenemies”. This also started the drive which to this day continues to promote the development of the European integration: The frequently invoked German-French motor.

However, as Hanns Jürgen Küster phrased it, the Western integration through European collaboration was “not only politically the only way out of the isolation into which the Germans had been manoeuvred by National Socialism. For the Federal Republic the rapprochement with the West, together with gaining political sovereignty, offered the chance for an economic reconstruction in close connection with the Westernised global economic system. In 1949 the West Germans had not merely opted for a liberal democracy. They also knew that reconstruction and greater prosperity could only be achieved through a Western integration of the German economy.”<sup>10</sup>

In addition, the concept of a social market economy as third policy decision, which is new, groundbreaking and no less revolutionary, was deliberately selected as a “third option” between sprawling and random Capitalism and rigid, constricting National Socialism and the collectivism of the Socialists and Communists. In this way an economic system was created and implemented, which unlike Marxism is not a closed “political religion” nor is it a purely economic theoretical approach but a political and moral concept of order which links “the ethical demands of the Christian concept of humans with the theoretical assumption of ‘ordoliberalism’ to a political action orientation - a political economy.”<sup>11</sup> On the one hand, the roots of this economic system can be found in Catholic social teaching which were initially formulated in the papal social encyclicals “*Rerum novarum*” (1891) and “*Quadragesimo anno*”

(1931. On the other hand these concepts were supplemented by the ideas of the so-called “Freiburg School” which were coined by mostly Protestant economists such as Walter Eucken and Franz Böhm. In this economic model the state representing a strong government lays down the rules for the free economy in a regulatory framework. It monitors their compliance like a referee but does not presume to actively participate in the game.

There are three guiding economic principles here: Firstly, economic self-determination is of paramount importance. Unlike in the case of a planned economy, political liberty and economic liberty are closely linked in this concept. The second aspect is to ensure fair competition and a marketable development of prices within the framework of this competition. Thirdly, independent supervision which prevents monopolies and price fixing cartels, is a crucial column of this concept.

The economist Alfred Müller-Armack, who is incidentally a former chairman of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, linked the need for social security to these three “liberal” principles. Just as, in his opinion, a strong government is needed to keep the economic forces in fair order, a strong government is also required which would be in a position to correct social imbalances which might prevent some from participating in this fair competition. In his opinion the role of social policy is firstly to ensure the equality of the starting conditions and secondly to provide minimum income support for those who are unable to secure their livelihood by their own efforts. The fundamental idea of a social market economy, which continues to have a special appeal even nowadays, is – in the words of Müller-Armack – “to combine the principle of freedom in the marketplace with social equity”.<sup>12</sup>

The politically integrative force which emanated from this model was important right from the beginning. In the local establishments of the

The role of social policy is firstly to ensure the equality of the starting conditions and secondly to provide minimum income support for those who are unable to secure their livelihood by their own efforts.

CDU party, the different currents were evident right from the first day – the Christian unionists, who consider that social equity has a calming effect, as well as the “market economists”. With the social economy both operate under the same heading. These principles are codified in a program whose topicality remains striking to this day: In the so-called Düsseldorf Guidelines which were designed in 1949 as an economic programme to assist the CDU to win the first federal elections.

75 years after the formation of the party it is relevant to wonder what has become of the determinations which were made by the party at the time. Or, to formulate it according to Konrad Adenauer: “They must never forget the historical contexts (...), Today is based on Yesterday and Tomorrow is based on Today. And it is most useful to follow the threads as they run through the whole course of events. Only then can you get the proper attitude towards Today.”<sup>13</sup>

This much is obvious: Even if the party, which is currently working on its fourth manifesto, has developed programmatically, it is nevertheless amazing what guiding effect the setting of the course at the beginning continues to have to this day and how, in Adenauer’s words, it is possible to “follow the threads”.

Today there is no doubt whatsoever that the concept of social market economy contributed quite considerably to the economic successes of the Federal Republic and continues to do so nowadays. The fact that the European Union has adopted this system as a basic principle for its economic area supports this success story, as well as the fact that many countries in the world, including Canada, are in favour of the concept of a social market economy.

However, from a political point of view the CDU “succeeded to death”, if you will, with the tangible successes of this concept. Meanwhile all the democratic parties in the German Bundestag support the social market economy as our country’s basic economic system – albeit in widely varying intensities. This support is combined with the attempt to put one’s own party-political stamp on this concept. This phenomenon conceals political risks for the CDU: Firstly, there is a danger that linking this term with the history, the present and the future of the CDU, in other words the

“ownership” of the party, will be viewed less frequently in this way. The second risk is that the term will become contour-less and will flatten due to this sort of charge and interpretation. The main thing to be feared in this connection is that the social market economy in everyday political life will be increasingly reduced to the attribute “social”. This places the party, which can justifiably claim to have been the crucial assistant at the birth of this model, under a certain amount of pressure, because greater competences are traditionally attributed to the political contenders on the left side of the political spectrum when one is dealing with “social equity”.

For this reason the CDU, which is consciously aligning the current basic policy program process to the future of the social market economy, will have to sharpen its regulatory contours and consider more consistently what this regulatory model means in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, it is also confronted with a challenge on a gigantic scale: In an intertwined global economy there are hardly any problems which can only be solved at a national level. Environmental and climate protection and the need for more sustainable management in future is only one area of application, albeit a particularly important one.

On a global scale this also includes the major new requirements connected with the current digital industrial revolution which place massive demands not only on the economy but also on the working world and the orientation of educational systems. There is no doubt that in view of the meanwhile considerable number of globally active companies the “old” regulatory virtues play an important role in preventing market-dominating positions and the formation of cartels.

And another problem is on the agenda which has meanwhile become a fundamental issue in most of the other “Western” countries: The demographic development and hence the ageing society have a massive impact not least with regard to the affordability of conventional social security systems.

The CDU, which is still exercising a kind of leadership role among the globally active Conservative and Christian Democratic parties, must assume the political task of reflecting on the regulatory approaches in line with a social and ecological market economy in global dimensions.



If the party needs to keep its head in the “global” clouds, it is all the more important to keep its legs on the ground both regionally and locally, in the spirit of the bon mot of the US politician Tip O’Neill, “all politics is local”. A new source of strength for the presence of Christian democracy in Germany can arise from the CDU’s 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, from the Cologne Guiding Principles and from the Berlin Appeal, provided the CDU recollects its strength at birth - and for once this does not refer only to the much-quoted interdenominational principles, which turned the union into a modern party. Rather, the strength mentioned here are its regional origins.

Unlike with other parties there was no central act of foundation. Neither the Cologne nor the Berlin foundation cells ever claimed that they were the only valid founders of the CDU. On the contrary: The Cologne Guiding Principles and the Berlin Appeal made it quite clear that additional local party formations would occur throughout Germany.

This continues to have an effect nowadays: Even those decidedly political critics and columnists, who are always quick to predict the imminent demise of people’s parties, have had to concede that the CDU continues to enjoy good regional anchoring. A characteristic which earned it the reputation of being “the last people’s party”<sup>14</sup> bestowed by clever observers like the journalist Mariam Lau.

In this context the sometimes mentioned postulate “back to the roots”, referring to the CDU, should rather be “back to the grassroots”: The CDU was created locally as a movement to which the sociological term “grassroots movement” would be applied nowadays and it ought to maintain this character and re-activate it: By using new participation methods to carry the dialogue to where the party was originally created, i.e. right to the local citizens.

This also illustrates the historical experience. The party gained recognition whenever it managed to take up existing movements and integrate these. This occurred, for instance, when the CDU was a member of the Opposition for the first time. Based on the concept of the “New Social Question” supported by Helmut Kohl and coined by Heiner Geißler und Kurt Biedenkopf, the CDU managed to achieve a “stroke of genius”

according to Frank Bösch, particularly since it dismantled the socio-political competence of the social democrats in a highly emotional way and hence beat the SPD on its very own territory.<sup>15</sup>

This is both appropriate as well as incomplete: Because this positioning was not merely a simple swing to the left, nor an imitation of social democracy, but rather an attempt to combine all the programmatic roots of the CDU into a coherent concept: Building on the foundation of values of Catholic social teaching and Protestant social ethics and hence the approaches which played a role in practical politics already in the Adenauer era – subsidiarity and personality as the core of Christian-democratic views. A concept also for those who up to now had not been represented by large organizations: the truly weak, the elderly, single mothers, etc.

By contract the party lost social connections and also support, whenever they were unable to present such movements with a convincing concept. An example of this is the environmental movement, with which the CDU has had a hard time and basically still does. Even when it was Helmut Kohl, who – in response to the reactor catastrophe in the Ukrainian Chernobyl in 1987 – set up a dedicated ministry of the environment at federal level for the first time – the idea of justifying something like ecological conservatism was not really successful. Nor did the claim raised by Angela Merkel in her capacity as “climate chancellor” really pay off in terms of a recognition of the party in this field. This was further demonstrated by the attacks of the YouTube blogger Rezo in 2019, who fantasized about the “destruction of the CDU”, because the CDU did not pursue sufficient environmental and climate policy goals. Excessive and in part factually refutable as these accusations were, the Union was unable to come up with any convincing responses.

However, the ability to integrate with movements and also the self-perception as a “movement” are also important for a different reason. You don’t need to be a pessimist to realize that both in Germany and in many other western industrial nations, including Canada, an alienation exists between politics and the local population. The parties carry some of the blame for this, which is often disclosed by their choice of language: In the German discussion the treacherous terms “pre-political sphere” or

“the people out there” are sometimes thoughtlessly mentioned during political debates. This choice of terminology puts a finger on the weak spot: Whether a dividing line between citizens and politics should be permissible in a democracy?

This alienation has recently produced a dynamic, which however is increasingly losing balance and stability on the part of the citizens. A closer look needs to be taken at one particular species in Germany which has meanwhile – horrible dictu – become part of the “endangered species” in the true sense of the word: That of the volunteer local politician, who is committed to helping his fellow neighbours but who nevertheless often receives threats to life and limb as was shown by the tragic example of Walter Lübcke. The District President of Kassel was assassinated in front of his apartment building by a right-wing extremist perpetrator, who took exception to Walter Lübcke’s local reception of refugees. Unfortunately this is no longer an isolated event: A recent survey of around 1000 German mayors illustrated this effect very clearly. According to this, 40 percent of those surveyed had already been exposed to stalking, insults and threats. Around 30 percent had received hate-mail. 7.8 percent stated that they themselves or other members of the local government had been exposed to physical attacks and more than 1200 offences against public officials were on file.<sup>16</sup>

The aforementioned alienation between national representatives, political office holders and citizens cannot be bridged by any advertising slogans, clever PR campaigns and certainly not by Sunday sermons, but only by trying to resume talking to each other again. Who could be better placed to do this than a party which, since its formation in Cologne, Berlin and other locations has been winning the lion’s share of approval especially in rural areas? Even after 75 years the CDU should not forget that it started off as a municipal party. The 9<sup>th</sup> Guiding Principle, which

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traverses all the CDU programs, continues to be a sort of “life insurance” of the CDU to this day. The party which abandons its entitlement to be active locally and to be present and politically visible there, is in danger of abandoning itself.

This guiding principle which appears to be unassuming and almost banal has what it takes even nowadays: In times of demographic change the associated loss of financial flexibility almost automatically results in a loss of communal self-determination, because the local taxes and also the financial balancing mechanism are insufficient in many areas to deal with increasing local requirements. How is the distance to the citizens supposed to be reduced if the representatives elected by the citizens are only managing the shortages. For this reason the CDU, which takes its roots seriously, needs to do more to rearrange the financial relations between the federal government, states and municipalities in order to regain the ability to act with vigour.

This is an undertaking which is even fiercely contested within the party’s own ranks and is anything but trivial. In this context it specifically requires a great deal of strength to remain true to the 8<sup>th</sup> Cologne Guiding Principle, because it has become fashionable in Germany to be critical of federalism long before the advent of the Corona crisis. “Centralism is rejected as being un-German”, it states succinctly but clearly in the guidelines. What the founders had in mind has apparently sunk into oblivion in the past seven decades: The negative, even catastrophic repercussions of centralized control, which eradicate and level any cultural, social and economic distinctiveness locally, and thus enable an abuse of power. Before the seizure of power Germany had been a federally organized country. It is only the National Socialist who abruptly ended this tradition.

The fact that the Allies, but also the Cologne founders and later on the mothers and fathers of the Fundamental Law, vehemently supported the restoration of this tradition originally arose from the intention to limit power. However, the trust in the efficiency of this approach also played a role. The lamentations about some of the drawbacks of federalism – tussles over competence, complicated compensation mechanisms, actual deficits of the educational federalism – all too often cover up the joy about the undeniable splendour of this system: Especially in

the current crisis, the advantages of federalism have contributed significantly to the fact that by comparison with other countries Germany has so far mastered this crisis relatively well. The “economic guru” Lars P. Feld, one of the most important German economists, who incidentally acts as an adviser to the federal government on economic policy matters with “his” team of experts, emphasizes: “A federal system can recognize local crises at an early stage and effectively overcome their impacts. The cooperative federalism in use relies on collaboration between the federal government, the states and the municipalities - and practises subsidiarity: If a local problem occurs, then the state or the federal government only get involved if absolutely necessary. The most effective political unit is then entrusted with the problem solution, unlike with a centralized unitary state in France, a decentralized unitary state in Italy and an autonomous state in Spain.”<sup>17</sup> Especially for a party with a regional base the introduction of a federal system and a clever reform, which utilises such strengths, may continue to be a permanent obligation arising from the guidelines and the decades during which each of the CDU programs were committed to these principles. Despite a commitment to the aforementioned “cooperative federalism” which desires an explicit cooperation between the various levels, such a reform must also be associated with a clear division of the tasks assigned to each level. It is not uncommon for the provincial governments to “buy” financing commitments from the federal government in return for a handing over of competencies.

From the Cologne Guiding Principles in conjunction with the subsequent contributions made by the CDU towards the creation of the Basic Law one can derive that the CDU has a special responsibility towards this constitution as a whole which, although originally planned to be provisional, has not only become the backbone of our political system but has also developed into a shining example with a magnet effect internationally. This responsibility of the CDU for the German constitution includes remaining extremely sceptical towards any time-related

In 2019 alone the EU commission initiated 17 so-called “breach of contract proceedings” against Germany.

dilutions and new “charges”. Not all national target extensions of the past years automatically contributed to increasing the consistence of this constitutional system.

The guiding principles’ attribute as forerunners of the Basic Law is particularly obvious from the explicit reference to the concept of human dignity which occupies a prominent role in the guiding principles. During the concrete interpretation of the concept of human dignity the question of how to deal with ethical border issues, which are especially prevalent at the beginning and at the end of life, against this background was always important to the CDU - whether this includes the attitude towards abortions or the currently much discussed question of assisted suicide. One may not agree with all the resolutions adopted by the CDU in the past seven and a half centuries regarding this highly complex field. But not even the toughest critic would deny that the CDU gave these questions a lot of thought and that they conducted these discussions with far more earnestness than any other party in Germany, because these debates touched on the fundamentals of their self-perception. Ethical life issues remain the litmus test for the Christian image of humanity.

Even the statements regarding foreign politics, unsurprisingly few in 1945, which were made in the Cologne Guiding Principles remain of current relevance. This includes a statement expressed in old-fashioned language which mentions “faithful adherence to the contracts” and elsewhere it says: “Germany needs to be a leader in the realisation of the yearning of the nations for a lasting peace”. Germany’s foreign policy did not always exhibit the same verve in adhering to the contract on whose adherence it insists. In 2019 alone the EU commission initiated 17 so-called “breach of contract proceedings” against Germany. The credibility of the EU as a community of law, which persuaded so many East and Middle European countries to vote for joining the EU after decades of lack of freedom, depends to a large extent on the German contract compliance. And the credibility of Germany and also of the CDU as the main driving forces of the European integration depends on its own behaviour, especially in connection with the Maastricht Treaty and the Treaty of Dublin!

The CDU needs to engage itself even more actively to the implementation of the second principle. Almost ten years ago Poland's foreign minister, Radoslaw Sikorski, addressed an urgent appeal to the German federal government during a speech in Berlin: "Nowadays I fear Germany's power less than her inactivity". Sikorski said that he was aware of the fact that he was probably the first foreign minister in the history of Poland to have made such a statement. At the time the sentence related to Germany's role as the most important European economic power and as the biggest beneficiary of the Euro, which was therefore obliged to assume a leading role in the necessary reforms in Europe and to make a significant contribution towards the preservation of the Eurozone. In this context the CDU needed to be more consistent than before about building on the choice of direction which had been so vehemently pursued by Konrad Adenauer and which was continued by his successor Helmut Schmidt, of the Social Democrats, and Helmut Kohl of the CDU, who set their own accents: The impact of a German-French collaboration as the motor for the European integration protection.

However' Sikorski's statements could also be seamlessly applied to a common foreign and security policy. One hardly dares to repeat the banal realisation that Francis Fukuyama's dream that the "end of history" had arrived and that the victory of the West had become manifest, may have been premature. Instead, and abetted by the Trump Administration, we have been experiencing a worldwide erosion of the principles which have long been constituent for the Federal Republic. This relates both to the transatlantic alliance as well as to the overall collaboration of the "West". If the CDU takes its historical roots and its contribution to these choices of direction seriously, this means that the countless speeches stating that Germany must assume more responsibility in an international context should be succeeded by political actions.

Whereas one may rightly condemn Donald Trump's methods, the point that Germany should make a greater contribution to the substance of the defence alliance by investing in its parliamentary army is not entirely invalid. Who but the CDU, which credibly emphasized multilateralism and always stood for a pragmatic-realistic foreign policy, is better qualified to set new accents here.

This (incomplete) listing which outlines how the demands which the founding mothers and fathers of the CDU derived from the Christian concept of humankind can be implemented in current politics even today, also illustrates that the concept of people's parties offers no guarantee of eternity and a need for action exists.

Already in the 1980s the process of a gradual decline of the power of the people's parties began not only in Germany but also throughout Europe, be it the Italian Christian Democrats or the French Socialists. Formerly proud parties subsequently became mere shadows of themselves. By comparison with these the CDU held up relatively well. However, even the CDU did not escape scot-free in the past decades. Between 1983 and the last federal elections in 2017, the CDU lost around a third of its electorate.

What are the main reasons for this? In the past decades society has become considerably more heterogeneous and segmented. The classic social milieus have disintegrated together with the social lines of conflict - rich and poor, working class and middle class, religious and non-religious - which characterized the party for such a long time. This in turn changed people's expectations of the parties. Unlike in former times parties are no longer suppliers of ideologies, but are instead regarded as "problem-solving agencies" by citizens who have the purpose-driven expectation that the parties will provide them with benefits and will improve their living situation. This combines with the effect that the people's parties are losing their binding power and that the voters are more volatile during elections. This means that the people's parties and also the CDU face several dilemmas: On the one hand they are forced to permanently adapt to the "voters' market", which necessitates a certain amount of flexibility in their offerings, which in turn irritates those voters who numerically have already dropped off dramatically and who can only be described as loyal voters in the broadest sense. However, if the party exhibits a "clear edge" many undecided voters might back

Between 1983 and the last federal elections in 2017, the CDU lost around a third of its electorate.



away from voting for this party. And, as if all this is not complicated enough, the membership of the parties and the electorate diverge - and parties continue to be dependent on voters if they want to succeed on the ground. In the case of the CDU the voters are in the political centre, whereas the members occupy clearly conservative positions, which forces the party chairman to pursue an almost permanent balancing act between the divergent interests.

The centre is no longer just the “vineyard” which is alternately “managed” by the Union or by the Social Democrats, but here the Green Party, for instance, has become a serious competitor who with increasing frequency manages to attract middle class voters and to retain these more or less permanently, as was seen by the example of the green premier in the former CDU heartland of Baden Württemberg.

Despite these phenomena the people’s party CDU remains the determinant factor of the German party system. If you want to find the answer to the question why this is the case, you will need to revert to the beginnings and take a look at the Christian democratic “royal discipline” or the original roots of the CDU – if you will – which had been consistently worked out in the very first programmatic beginnings in Cologne and Berlin.

And that is the clear reference to the Christian concept of humankind which makes the party appear modern even today, even if this may sound paradox. This becomes apparent in this example: The principle of interdenominationalism may be outdated at a time when differences between Catholic and Protestant Christians no longer play a role in determining society. But its integrative power becomes apparent when it is nowadays defined as “interdenominationalism 2.0”. The idea behind it is that according to today’s understanding by the CDU the reference to the Christian concept of humankind is not exclusively reserved for Christians, but that the party nowadays reaches out to people who have nothing to do with the Christian faith because they are either secular or because they belong to a different religion, but who are prepared to accept those principles and values, which arise from this view of humanity, as binding. The current political manifesto of 2007 states: “The Christian understanding of humans provides us with the ethical basis

for a responsible policy. Nevertheless, we know that no specific political program can be derived from the Christian faith. The CDU is open to anyone who supports the dignity, freedom and equality of all people and as well as the basic convictions of our policies. Our common actions in the CDU are built on this foundation.”<sup>19</sup>

If you are looking for the much-invoked brand essence of the CDU, you will find it mainly here: The thing that distinguishes Christian democracy from other political movements is “the view of the essence of the human being: of the rationally gifted individual who is called to freedom”. This includes a rejection of those political movements like Socialism or a laissez-faire Liberalism which do not place the essence of the human being centre stage but just the dream of a system. The Christian image of humans does not emanate from a ready-made system, but from the need to constantly readapt the living environment based on fundamental ethical convictions. If the party manages to ensure that this reference to the Christian image of humans is not allowed to get lost but continues to be interpreted in a timely manner, taking account of current challenges, without becoming too rigid, then the party will continue to have a good chance of mobilizing majorities.

And here is another important characteristic, which the CDU has demonstrated again and again. It was expressed in a quote made by the then party chairman Helmut Kohl only two years after his election as chairman. And, considering the fact that the new party chairman had been selected in a more or less bitterly contested candidacy for (only) the third time in the history of the CDU after 1971 and 2018, this seems like a very contemporary admonition:

“It is about time”, Helmut Kohl admonished his party at the time, “that we should remember about two elementary laws of success - and act accordingly: (...) Internal discussions within the party, including critical and controversial discussions, are necessary, but demonstrating unity of action and solidarity with the cause in public are equally indispensable.” Helmut Kohl went into further detail and rebuked his internal party critics as follows: “Anyone who wants to profit at the expense of the party, (...) will catapult himself out of our society. We have already experienced far too many examples of disloyalty. Disloyalty is not a trivial

misdeemeanour but a sabotage of our success. Karl Arnold rebuked us as follows: The CDU cannot be killed off by anything or anyone – except by itself.”<sup>20</sup>

The CDU did not kill itself off at the time, nor has it done so to date. Not least because its leadership repeatedly managed to call for the unity demanded by Kohl and achieve it. And it is this professionalism and discipline which sometimes gained it the mocking designation of being a “chancellor’s election society” which distinguishes the CDU not only from the SPD obviously but has also contributed to turning the CDU into the dominant force in politics in the Federal Republic of Germany.

During the almost 72 years of the existence of the Federal Republic of Germany the CDU ruled the country for almost 52 years. Of the overall eight individuals who held the position of federal chancellor the CDU supplied five. In the nineteen federal elections held so far, the CDU and CSU obtained the largest number of votes sixteen times. Just based on pure statistics it would be reasonable to describe the party as the people’s party of the Federal Republic of Germany, but the term can also be used in terms of content. All the important policy decisions have been made by the CDU and most of the epochal turning points were either brought about by the CDU itself or at least supported. Apart from the previously described decisions concerning the social market economy, the Western connection and the European integration - areas in which all five CDU heads of government more or less left their own distinctive traces - the contribution of Helmut Kohl and his CDU towards the restoration of German unity will always be regarded as one of the high points in the history of the CDU.

Of course, all of this does not represent a guarantee of success for the future: The historian and political scientist Andreas Rödder emphasizes “whether the CDU will remain a strong party which will contribute to the stability of the Federal Republic and decide about its direction as an integrative force is an open question. How this is answered on the

“The CDU cannot be killed off by anything or anyone – except by itself.”

- Karl Arnold

one hand depends on external conditions, on future structural changes on the part of the public and on the development of increasingly volatile electoral behaviour. On the other hand it depends on whether the Union will manage to find a dynamic balance between programmatic breadth, Christian-democratic identity and realistic pragmatism, to provide its own answers to the questions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to represent a middle class in its various facets. Here lies the central political challenge for the CDU – and its responsibility for democracy 25 years after its formation”<sup>21</sup>. The only thing to be added is that whereas the banal and universally accepted realisation that absolutely nothing is built to last for eternity also applies to parties, the CDU has demonstrated repeatedly that it was always able to regain its claim to power out of seemingly difficult situations. The ability to cope with changes and nevertheless hold onto constants has been deeply embedded in this “party soul” since the formation of the CDU. The journalist Günter Bannas did a very good job of describing this ability of the Union: “The CDU is a party of political hues - from Adenauer via Kohl to Merkel. Its foundations, the Christian image of humankind and the Yes to Europe offer much scope for forsaking old certainties.”<sup>22</sup>

Above all, the fact is undeniable that despite the relative declines of people’s parties, no genuinely resilient alternative for political representation has emerged and a representative democracy cannot function without strong parties. For this reason let us hope in the interests of the political stability of the Federal Republic of Germany that following the “autumn of the people’s parties” prophesied by the political scientist Franz Walter no winter but soon a sort of “second spring” will begin, at least in the case of the Christian-Democratic Union.

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