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Pragmatist Carney knows how to beat the bully Trump

Mark Carney’s moment in leading world affairs has come. As a pragmatist, he knows how to beat the bully Trump. In facing outward, the 24th and now 25th Canadian prime minister will hold Canada together as a sovereign nation.

OPINION | BY DOUGLAS ROCHE | April 29, 2025

EDMONTON—The fragile government of Prime Minister Mark Carney now has a mandate to fight the trade war launched by United States President Donald Trump, but that is not the only war Carney faces: there are the relentless wars in Ukraine and Gaza, the war against migrants, the war against poverty, the war against the planet itself. The route to Carney’s success at home lies through raising the stature of our country in a tumultuous war-torn world now desperately trying to hold itself together.

I do not mean to present the erudite elected prime minister as a world saviour: not at all. He is, however, a highly principled and internationally acclaimed economist who has shown, on the way to his election, that he is a pragmatist. His main job now is clearly to fight off Trump, and Canadians have empowered him to do this.

Trump respects strength. If Carney must work with only razor-thin strength in the Canadian Parliament, he can claim international strength by successfully using Canada’s G7 presidency, as the Liberal platform puts it, “to protect the rules-based international order from those who want to destroy it.”

The 50th anniversary G7 summit will meet in Kananaskis, Alta., June 15-17. As host, Carney is charged with steering the agenda to strengthen international peace and security, build global economic stability and growth, advance the digital transition, and otherwise find “shared solutions” to today’s global challenges.

News agency Reuters reported the morning after the election that Carney is “positioning himself for a global role as a champion of multilateralism” against Trump’s protectionist policies. The first person to lead two G7 central banks has the experience to earn immediate international credibility.

“Canada is ready to take a leadership role in building a coalition of like-minded countries who share our values,” Carney said on April 3 in Ottawa. “We believe in international co-operation.

We believe in the free and open exchange of goods, services, and ideas. And if the United States no longer wants to lead, Canada will.”

Rather than bemoaning the fact he fell short of an unassailable majority in Parliament, Carney is determined to implement the final words of many of his speeches during the campaign: “Canada forever independent of the United States.”

From the launch of his leadership campaign in Edmonton back in January, to his closing rally in Edmonton on April 27, the day before the election, I saw Carney evolve from a boardroom analyst to a political slugger. He is no longer a neophyte in the political arena. He knows that the small number of elected NDP members, though they lack official status, possess the votes to solidify his advantage in the coming confidence votes. And when Carney once again makes Canada a significant player in international councils, they will love him all the more.

Whatever the final numbers of seats, Carney will be able to act with the strength of a working majority.

It goes without saying that the newly empowered prime minister should launch—as the Liberal platform promised—“a new, full foreign policy.” Such a full-scale review has not been done since 2005. It is urgent to assert Canada’s sovereignty by strengthening Arctic security, and fostering better relations with Indigenous Peoples.

Carney has promised to strengthen this country’s military and to raise our defence budget to two per cent of GDP by 2030. But the prime minister, who has also pledged immense amounts of money to boost the critical housing supply in Canada, should resist going any higher in military spending.

It is a political canard that Canada is not pulling its weight in NATO. Only 18 of the 32 NATO countries have reached the two per cent target, and the complete NATO spending is 55 per cent of global military spending now at the astronomical annual level of \$2.7-trillion, as just revealed by the Stockholm International Institute for Peace and Security. Enough with military spending as the way to global peace. Carney’s platform called for “increased funding to accelerate progress on the UN Sustainable Development Goals,” and to boost the international climate finance program.

As a former United Nations adviser at the highest levels, Carney knows that the UN must be brought back into play as a place where the global security problems involving climate change and nuclear weapons can be solved. By using his prestigious G7 position, Carney can leverage Canada’s weight in calling for reform and expansion of the Security Council. That move alone would lessen Trump’s influence on the political and financial systems of the world and be a direct benefit to Canada.

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bully Trump. In facing outward, the 24th and now 25th Canadian prime minister will hold Canada together as a sovereign nation.

Former Senator Douglas Roche's latest book is *Keep Hope Alive: Essays for a War-free World*(Amazon).

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