

CANADA AND THE FUTURE OF BREAK-AWAY NATIONALISM

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It is timely to assess the future of Quebec nationalism in the light of the worldwide emergence of resurgent, break-away nationalism since the globally significant events of 1989-90. The new global trends and conditions are establishing a different climate for urban development and sub-regional nationalism. John Naisbitt has recently assessed the future of cultural nationalism in *Megatrends 2000*. Marvin Cetron has sketched out a scenario of Quebec independence and Canadian unification with the United States some time in the 21st century.

In Quebec evolving circumstances have also created a campaign for a new referendum on sovereignty. This campaign will be a major preoccupation in Canadian and North American politics for the next several years.

Trends and Conditions

The development of a global marketplace is well accepted. What is less accepted is the development of what could be called a global "society". A dictionary defines society as "an association of organizations, both formal and informal".

In preparing the book, *Cities in a Global Society*, we compiled a list of "trends and conditions" that operate on a global scale to impact upon urban development. These are presented in **figure 1**. Although these trends and conditions are primarily related to economic change and the spread of technology, they also have an important societal dimension. Howard Perlmutter (University of Pennsylvania) has gone further and has begun to articulate the concept of a global culture and a global civilization.

Globalization is a multi-dimensional process that will have numerous manifestations as we approach the 21st century.

Megatrends 2000

John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene, updating the original *Megatrends* (1982), have identified ten new megatrends in *Megatrends 2000* (1990). At least three of the new megatrends are related to globalization. These three are:

- the booming global economy of the 1990s
- global lifestyles and cultural nationalism
- the rise of the Pacific Rim

Figure 1

Global Realities: Trends and Conditions

TRENDS RELATED TO THE NEW GLOBAL MARKETPLACE

1. New satellite communications grid
2. Creation and continuation of OPEC and petro dollars
3. Post-affluent America and the decline of its economic domination
4. The Reagan deficits and U.S. dependence upon foreign investment
5. Global food franchising(fast foods, soft drinks, beer, etc.)
6. The economics of global tourism
7. Various accommodations to Third World debt.
8. New systems of foreign aid led by Japan, international institutions, etc.
9. Multinational "sourcing" for automobiles and other mass production manufacturing
10. Europe 1992, Hong Kong 1997, etc.

**CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING
TO AN EMERGING GLOBAL SOCIETY**

1. Global distribution of Third World middle-class professionals, merchants, and entrepreneurs
2. Global media culture of television, music, cinema and magazines
3. Terrorism and cooperative measures against it
4. Drug traffic and culture and cooperative measures for and against it
5. Global thinking in strategic planning
6. The social dynamics of global tourism
7. Global rescue responses to famine and other catastrophes
8. Global medical and public health responses to AIDS, nuclear radiation, etc.
9. Transnational responses to acid rain, ozone hole, greenhouse effect, etc.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIES

1. New assertions of regional identity and autonomy
2. New outlets for exports of goods and services
3. Repositioning in a new transnational system of cities
4. New opportunities to receive foreign investment
5. New civic and educational linkages and relationships
6. High-speed rail linkages to international airports
7. New tourism potential
8. New psycho-social visions of urban life
9. New occupations in a high tech, high touch, high tension global society.

Their analysis of the apparent paradox of a "new universal international lifestyle" and the resurgence of nationalism at the level of national sub-regions is incisive and significant. The outbreaks of cultural and linguistic nationalism include but are not limited to:

- a "Speak Mandarin" campaign in Singapore
- new Welsh language schools in Wales
- the reinstatement of Catalan in Catalonia and its capital, Barcelona
- the breakup of Yugoslavia
- the autonomy movements in the Soviet Union

In this context Quebec fits in with a powerful worldwide trend. As Naisbitt and Aburdene write:

"... even as our lifestyles grow more similar, there are unmistakable signs of a powerful countertrend: A backlash against uniformity, a desire to assert the uniqueness of one's culture and language, a repudiation of foreign influence." (p. 119).

The indication is that as lifestyles become more homogeneous, people will cling tighter to deeper values expressed in religion, language, literature and art. The irony is that the so-called global lifestyle "walks a thin line between greater options and greater homogenization, which decreases options."

They also conclude that "the most important factor accelerating the development of a single global lifestyle is the proliferation of the English language". The vehicle for this proliferation is the growing American export of TV shows, music, films and other forms of entertainment including sports.

In this context the Quebecois are no longer an anomaly. They have become a bellweather.

The Cetron Hypothesis

Another futurist, Marvin Cetron, has suggested that Canada may, "if not by the year 2000, then soon thereafter, become the 52nd through the 55th state of the United States". Puerto Rico will have been the 51st.

Writing in American Renaissance (1989), Cetron analyzes the long-term impact of the 1989 free-trade agreement. His iconoclastic conclusion is that "the other provinces may well secede first, leaving Quebec to fend for itself".

He writes:

"Once the free-trade agreement with the United States takes full effect, the next logical step will be to accept politically what has already happened economically - the integration of Canada with the United States." (p. 223).

In Cetron's political fantasy, he foresees two states being formed out of the Western provinces, two states out of the Eastern provinces and an independent but dependent Quebec.

Cetron tends to be a more ebullient futurist than Naisbitt. The break-away nationalism of Quebec is a well established force in Quebec politics. Except for a few stirrings in Vancou-

ver, there is no political movement in the other Canadian provinces that would propose union with the United States. And traditional Tory anti- Americanism in Ontario remains a powerful reality in Canada's most populous province. That residual British stubbornness in Ontario is obviously a force that Cetron has not yet experienced or encountered.

The Naisbitt/Cetron prognostications provide a useful opportunity to assess some alternative scenarios for the future of Quebec in the decade ahead.

Alternative Scenarios for Quebec

In the province of Quebec, over 85 percent of the 6.5 million inhabitants are French-speaking. In 1976 the Quebec separatist movement, represented by the Parti Quebecois, was elected to serve as the provincial government. In 1980 a referendum to separate from Canada was defeated by a vote of 60 percent to 40. The Liberal Party led by Robert Bourassa then returned to power. With the death of Rene Levesque, the Parti Quebecois has been reorganized by Jacques Parizeau. The party today is described as "young, urban, educated, dedicated and middle-class". It represents a coalition of new political ideas and identities.

In the context of this paper, I do not wish to recap all the details of the recent failure of the Meech Lake accords, nor do I wish to elaborate on recent political history. Instead I want to identify and discuss several major structural dimensions that will be important to the future of Quebec and its place in Canada, North America and the world.

These dimensions include:

- the complexity of the quest for sovereignty-association
- the issue of monetary union
- the economic value of cultural distinctness
- the role of major land bridges and gateways
- the role of the Francophone nations
- Provincial Law 101

First, the popular press has always over-simplified the nature of the separatist movement. The proposals for sovereignty-association involve a rather complex, two-stage process. The assertion of sovereignty through a popular vote would be followed by lengthy negotiations with the Federal Government of Canada.

These negotiations would also address the nature of a new association with Canada or, if necessary, with the United States. Rene Levesque, in his *Memoirs* (1986), is quite eloquent about the efforts not to use the word "independence" in their early efforts to seek genuine equality with Anglophone Canada. To him Quebec had to become sovereign in order to escape from "the ceaseless see-saw of the Byzantine federal-provincial regime". (p. 223).

Unfortunately, the more radical movement represented by the Front de Liberation du Quebec with their bombings, the kidnapping of British diplomat, James Cross, and the murder of Quebec cabinet minister, Pierre Laporte, dominated the media and obscured the more thoughtful consideration of Quebecois nationalism. A second issue related to association is the prevailing belief among the Quebecois leadership that monetary union

could either continue with Canada or be negotiated with the United States.

Today more than ever the business community of Quebec believes that the cost of attaining independence would be small and the long-term economic impact would be positive. This message was recently discovered at a Johns Hopkins seminar by Pierre Fortin, head of the economic policy research center at the University of Montreal. He criticized Canadian federalism as a mess that threatens to "Argentinize" the Canadian economy through a large national debt, high interest rates, wasteful duplication of governmental services and a failure to invest in industrial training and research.

A third dimension relates to the economic value of cultural distinctiveness. Both Montreal and the rest of Quebec have enormous tourism appeal because of their cultural and linguistic differences. The cultural balance of payments with the rest of North America and the world is very positive. It can be said that the rest of the world recognizes the cultural sovereignty of Quebec. This is also another source of the self-confidence contributing to the new political support for some form of break-away nationalism.

The fourth dimension is the unique land bridges and urban gateways represented by Seattle-Vancouver, Windsor-Detroit, Buffalo-Hamilton-Toronto and the two Sault Ste. Maries. At the level of the important city-regions, a form of free trade and free movement of economic resources has existed for several decades. The free-trade agreement is not going to introduce a major exogenous shock to the existing settlement patterns except perhaps for Quebec manufacturers who are eager to expand their exports to more than border trade with the New England states. The Anglo provinces have already benefitted substantially from their land-bridge relationships to major urban markets in the U.S.

The modest to substantial employment impact in Quebec from the free-trade agreement is likely to be part of a rising tide that helps float the boat of Quebec sovereignty.

A fifth dimension that needs to be included in any assessment of the future of Quebec nationalism is the role that Montreal played in the association of the more than 45 or so Francophone countries around the world. Montreal is the "second city" after Paris of that peculiar association of nations that claim both the French language and French culture as part of their heritage. The particular pride of second place in the Francophone world has already created a unique global city role for Montreal. The Montreal-Quebecois identity is one that looks to Boston and Miami as sister cities, not to Toronto or Calgary.

Finally, Provincial Bill 101 - the infamous language legislation - has now been fully implemented in almost all of Montreal and the rest of the province. The English-speaking population of Quebec which is left have almost totally accepted the "real pulitik" of Quebec language policy. Anglo Quebec has become rather indifferent or at least ambivalent about the sovereignty issue this time around.

These six structural dimensions will be significant in the arguing political analysis of break-away nationalism in Canada in the case of Quebec. Whether with "status as a very special society" or with some form of sovereignty, the position of both Montreal as a global city and Quebec province as a very special "nation" seems assured as we approach the 21st century.

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