

CONCLUSION

It should be stressed that by prevailing world standards of political, economic, and social stability, even the "worst-case" outcomes of the Canadian constitutional crisis (however those might be defined) are extremely unlikely to produce dangerous international destabilization, although continued political instability and paralytic introspection in the northern half of North America would carry its own very real costs.

There is no valid comparison between a law-based and democratic Canada and the dissolving "federations" of the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia. After two hundred years of practice, all parts of Canada have deep-rooted democratic standards and constraints, and some of the world's highest standards of respect for human rights. Any narrower political units than that of present-day Canada would likely be constrained and dominated to a much greater extent than now by the overwhelming economic, strategic, and cultural realities of sharing a continent with the world's most powerful state.

Canada's neighbours in the United States would have little tangible reason to fear even a breakup of Canada — it would be Canadians in all regions who would stand to lose more of their independence of action, and more of the distinctiveness of their national and constituent societies. Many outward-looking Americans, it should be added, like many elsewhere in the world, would greatly regret the failure and dissolution of an alternative model of plural democratic society on this continent, and the disappearance of another, often distinctive, North American contribution to world affairs.

One final link between the changing international environment and the resolution of Canada's constitutional directions is one that is frequently under-estimated by Canadians but one to which all of Canada's international partners are sensitive. In a world where a pressing challenge is the accommodation of ethnic, linguistic and regional diversity with the demands of interdependence and integration, Canada has long been valued as one of the most successful role-models, and rightly so by any objective yardstick. The European community itself is gradually moving, following acceptance of economic integration and common standards in vital areas