

Canada First or Canada Strong? :

A Comparative Analysis of Nationalist Discourse in the Rhetoric of Pierre Poilievre and Mark Carney

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Theory and hypothesis

Research Questions: What kind of nationalism for Liberal Party and for the Conservative Party?

Theory: National narrative

« All nations formulate their identities and narratives and tell national stories that are important to citizens. Such constructions are invariably ambiguous. » Raymond B. Blake, *Canada's Prime Ministers and the Shaping National Identity*, Vancouver et Toronto, UBC Press, 2024, p. 3.

In this regard, and returning to Canada, Canadian prime ministers, due to their political pre-eminence, play a crucial role in this dynamic, each of them having put forward, to a greater or lesser extent, a narrative or story about what Canada should be.

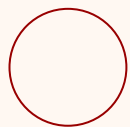
Context



Since President Trump took office, Canada has faced a constant threat of tariffs and potential annexation. Our relationship with the United States dominated the 2025 Canadian federal election and was accompanied by a need to **redefine Canadian identity**.

Faced with a threat, Canadians saw their leaders express themselves with a **renewed sense of nationalism**.

The aim of this research is to analyse and compare the national narratives of Pierre Poilievre and Mark Carney during the 2025 campaign.



Methodology

In order to analyse the nationalist rhetoric of the two leaders, we took the following elements into account:

- Speeches in press conferences
- Speeches during rallies
- Party platforms

We prioritized a **qualitative** approach to analysing the speeches, with **quantitative** elements to supplement our findings.

The **inductive** research method allowed us to classify the data and apply common themes after consulting the sources above.

Within these sources, we noted all mentions of terms and phrases related to:

- Canadian identity
- Pride or national unity
- Canadian symbols or references to history
- Relationship with the United States

Historical nationalism

Carney

William Lyon Mackenzie King

Gander

Confronting our past with
Indigenous peoples

« Each time, Canada chose to step up to assert ourselves as a free sovereign and ambitious nation to lead the path of democracy and freedom and because we are Canadian, to do so with compassion and generosity » (Carney, April 28, 2025).

Poilievre

John A. Macdonald, Wilfrid Laurier,
Brian Mulroney

Terry Fox, Famous Five

Military history

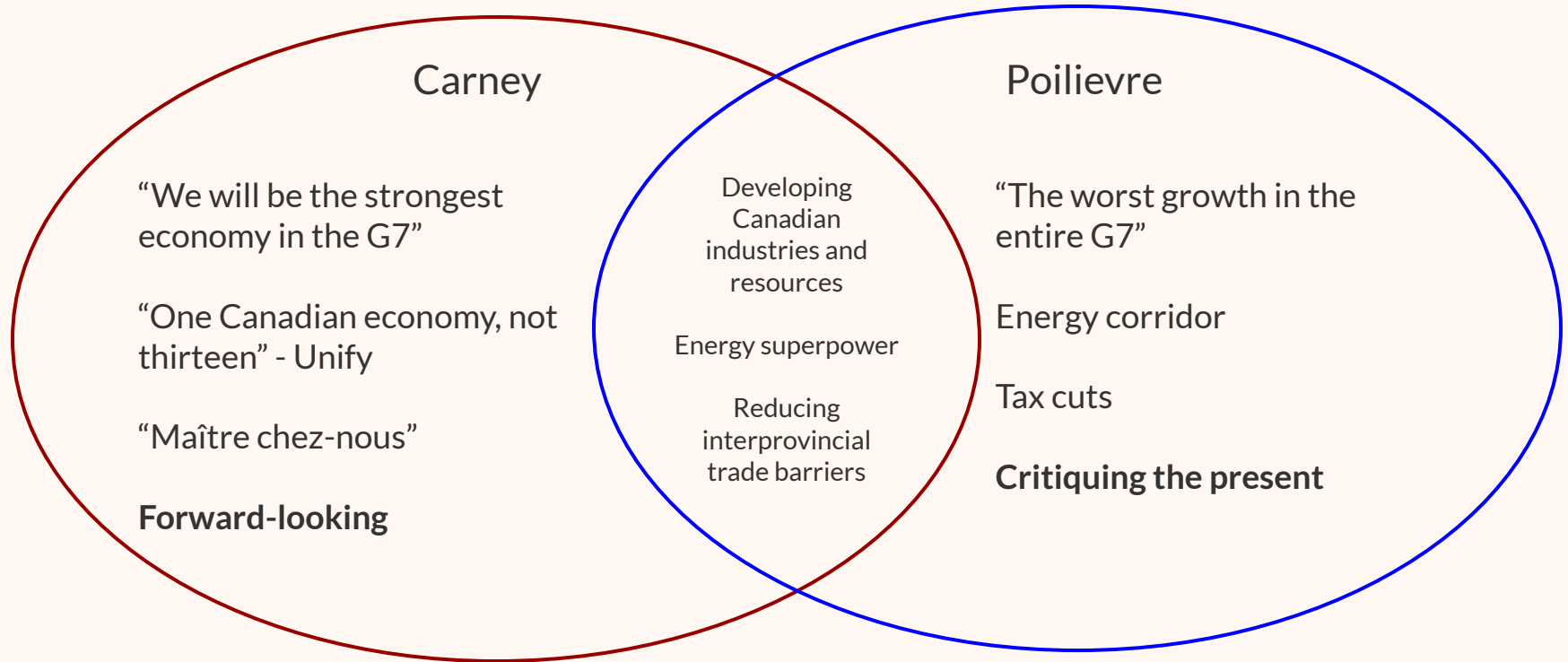
“to be a truly proud nation we have to honor the history of those who came before us no more knocking down statues no more taking down our flag no more erasing our heroes” (Poilievre, March 27, 2025).

Vimy + Juno Beach

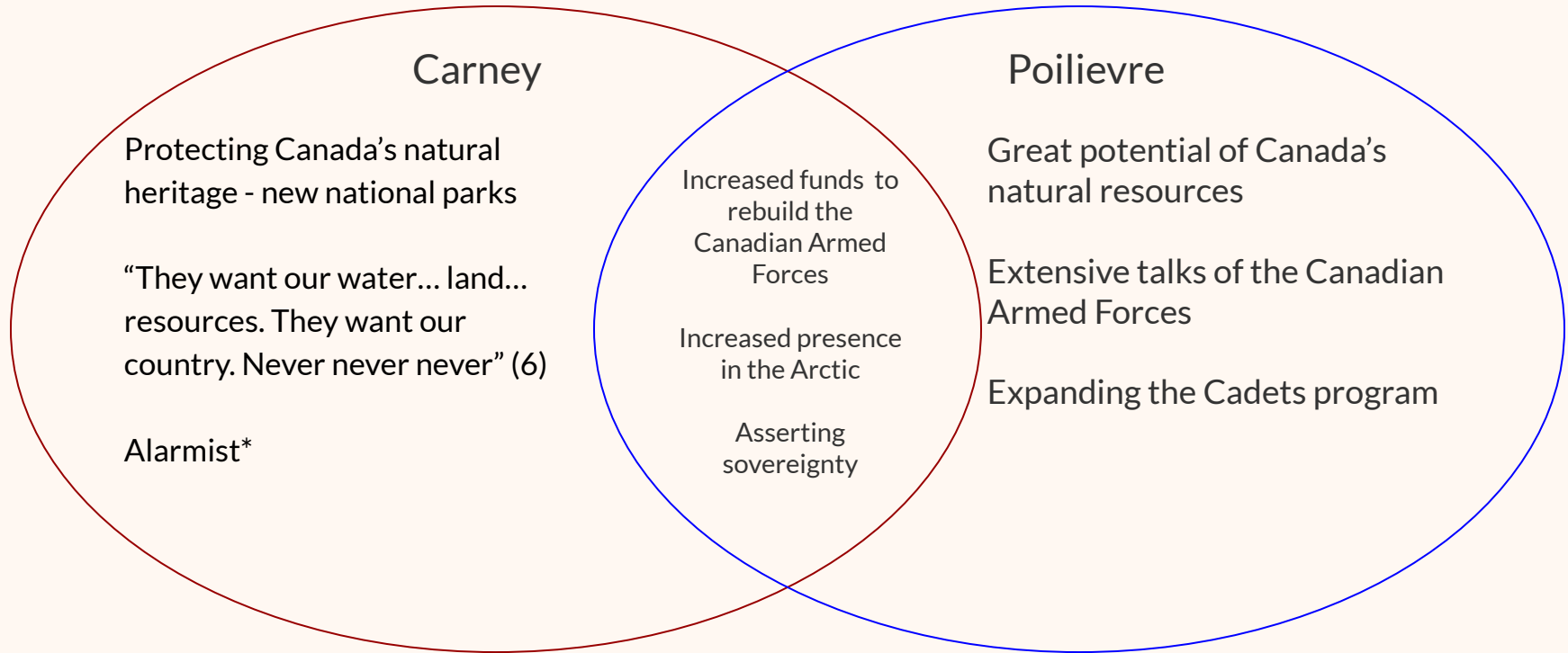
Veterans + military
victories

Nation-building
projects : St
Lawrence Seaway,
Railway, and
Trans-Canada
Highway

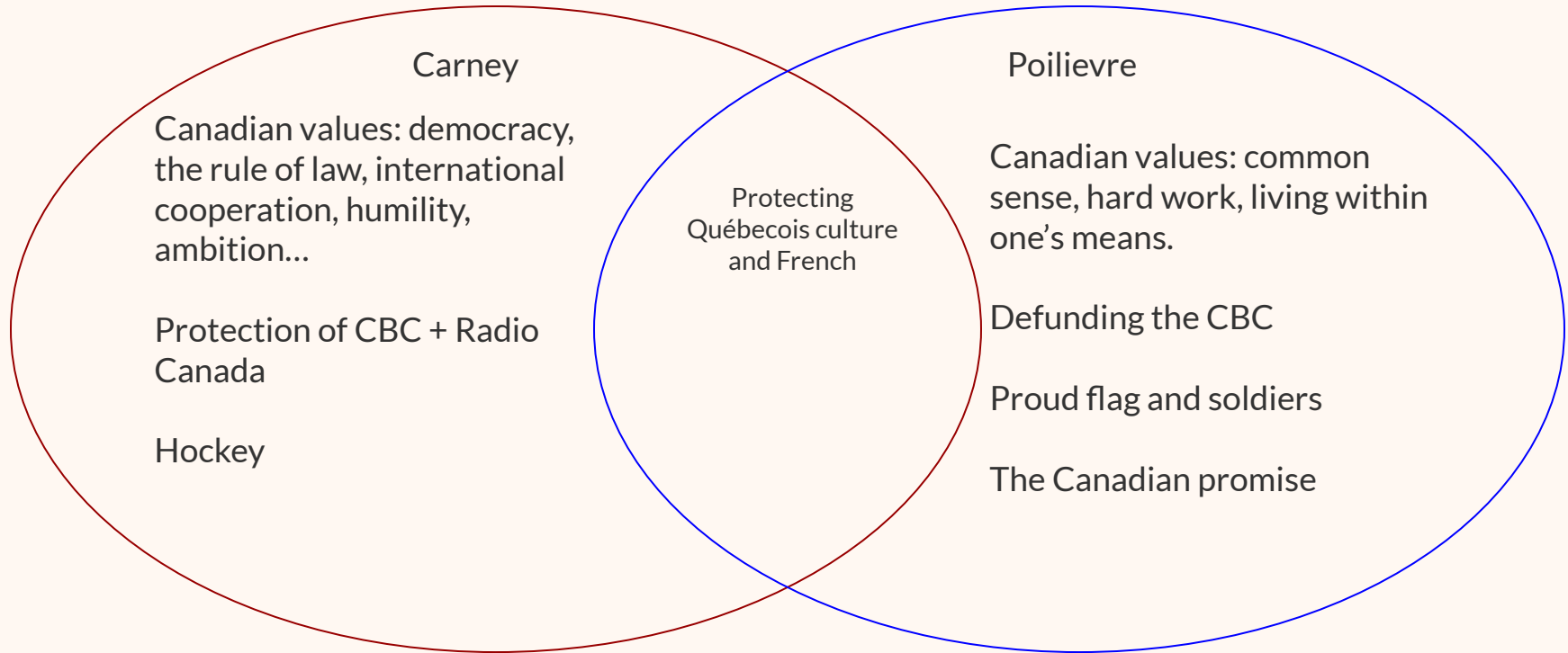
Economic nationalism



Geographic nationalism



Canadian values and identity



Conclusion



Both Mark Carney and Pierre Poilievre expressed civic nationalism in their national narratives

Poilievre position as the opposition forced him to be highly critical of the state of the nation under the Liberals. Instead he showed a nostalgia for a Canadian nation ten years ago.

Carney's campaign focused on national identity and Canada's place in the world in the face of American threats. He tried to position himself as a staunch defender of Canadianness in the present day, which made him appear more nationalistic.

References

Blake, R. B. (2024). *Canada's Prime Ministers and the Shaping of a National Identity*. (1st ed.). University of British Columbia Press. <https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774869652>

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