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The Trudeau government thinks it has a monopoly on 'Canadian' values. It doesn't

*Politicians are always trying to sell their values as being those of the people and country they represent. Mr. Trudeau is not some magical exception to this rule*

Donald Trump's slogan in his campaign for the Republican nomination – Make America Great Again – is simple, straightforward and utterly ridiculous. It is also a helpful tool in the understanding of the successes of the Trudeau government after 100 days in office, and of the dangers ahead.

Canadians don't generally express their country's greatness by using the garish term "great." We are satisfied with using the adjective "Canadian." When a person says, "I'm Canadian" to a border agent, they are identifying their nationality. But when the same person says, "I'm Canadian," in almost every other context – late at night in a drinking establishment; on a beach in Cuba; at an annual meeting of global political and business elites in a Swiss resort – they are pretty much saying, "I'm great and I come from a great country."

Because of this immodest quirk, our political debates have at times revolved around an odd question: Is Canada Canadian enough? This is especially true since the rise of the modern Conservative Party. There's a reason for this.

From that time in 1965 when the Liberals painted our national flag the same colour as their party logo, the Liberals have behaved as though they have a copyright on the marquee values that make Canada a great – sorry, Canadian – country: diversity, equality, protected freedoms, universal health care and peacekeeping.

The Stephen Harper Conservatives challenged that copyright. When Mr. Harper came to power in 2006, he argued, quite rightly, that Canadian values are not the sole jurisdiction of one political party. He also tried hard to expand the repertoire of official Canadian values by adding some overtly Conservative ones, such as smaller government, parliamentary accountability, respect for the military, veneration of pre-1960s history (a lot of which has to do with military victory and sacrifice) and a muscular foreign policy.

That went okay until Mr. Harper started playing cynical identity politics, alienating his party and many of his supporters. By 2015, his government was tired and the Liberals, led by Justin Trudeau, were the fresh wind of change blowing across the land. That wind carried a message that was related to Mr. Trump's simplistic slogan, but with a Canadian twist.

Make Canada Canadian Again, the Liberal wind sighed.

That is the subtext of everything the Trudeau government does. From its election platform, to its systematic undoing of Conservative laws and policies since taking power (something we support in many cases), to its recent announcement that it will pull our fighter jets out of the battle against the Islamic State, the Liberal government is forever invoking its version of the "Canadian" way. "Our new policy in Iraq, Syria and the surrounding region reflects what Canada is all about," Mr. Trudeau said just last week.

There are, of course, some rather big differences between Mr. Trump's and Mr. Trudeau's sloganeering. Mr. Trump's is overt, something you can slap on a trucker hat, whereas Mr. Trudeau's is implied. More importantly, Mr. Trump's slogan is cheesy rhetorical cover for a campaign based in meanness, divisiveness and racism that will make America worse, not better. Mr. Trudeau has always rhetorically appealed to Canadians' better angels, even if he was often only doing it to stake out different territory from that of Mr. Harper.

No, Mr. Trump and Mr. Trudeau are two very different politicians. But it is worth letting Mr. Trump's vapid sloganeering remind us that politicians are always trying to sell their values and those of their party as being those of the people and country they represent. Mr. Trudeau is not some magical exception to this rule. That's not a criticism; it's just a fact.

The Trudeau government's new policy in Iran and Syria, for instance, has nothing to do with "what Canada is all about." It is, rather, the direct outcome of the Liberal Party's need to differentiate itself from the Conservatives during the election campaign. It is Canada's new policy because the Liberals are the government and they get to set policy; it is not inherently Canadian any more than the previous policy was un-Canadian. Policy is good, bad or indifferent. It doesn't have a national identity.

There are 5.6 million Canadians who voted Conservative in the general election. They and their values, biases and beliefs are no less Canadian than those of the 6.9 million who voted Liberal. The same goes for the 3.5 million who voted NDP.

The Liberal Party swears fealty to diversity and is obliged in its current role as the ruling party to represent everyone in the country. But too often the Trudeau government resorts in its messaging to the not-so-subtle implication that there is only one "Canadian" way to do things, and that it knows what it is.

That hubris was the downfall of Canada's so-called "natural-governing party" in the past, and probably will be again.