

Mark Carney: Special Address

World Economic Forum, DAVOS (January 21st 2026)

<https://www.weforum.org/stories/2026/01/davos-2026-special-address-by-mark-carney-prime-minister-of-canada/>

Personality Type (MBTI)
ENTJ 



ACT I: "A Rupture, not a Transition"

Thank you, Larry. It is both a pleasure, and a duty, to be with you tonight in this pivotal moment that Canada and the world going through. Today I will talk about a rupture in the world order, the end of a pleasant fiction and the beginning of a harsh reality, where geopolitics, where the large, main power, geopolitics, is submitted to no limits, no constraints.

On the other hand, I would like to tell you that the other countries, especially intermediate powers like Canada, are not powerless. They have the capacity to build a new order that encompasses our values, such as respect for human rights, sustainable development, solidarity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the various states.

The power of the less power starts with honesty. It seems that every day we're reminded that we live in an era of great power rivalry, that the rules based order is fading, that the strong can do what they can, and the weak must suffer what they must.

And this aphorism of Thucydides is presented as inevitable, as the natural logic of international relations reasserting itself. And faced with this logic, there is a strong tendency for countries to go along to get along, to accommodate, to avoid trouble, to hope that compliance will buy safety.

Well, it won't.

So, what are our options?

ACT I
2:09

ACT II: The Greengrocer & The lie we've been living.

In 1978, the Czech dissident Václav Havel, later president, wrote an essay called The Power of the Powerless, and in it, he asked a simple question: how did the communist system sustain itself? And his answer began with a **greengrocer**. Every morning, this shopkeeper places a sign in his window: 'Workers of the world unite'. He doesn't believe it, no-one does, but he places a sign anyway to avoid trouble, to signal compliance, to get along. And because every shopkeeper on every street does the same, the system persist – not through violence alone, but through the participation of ordinary people in rituals they privately know to be false. Havel called this "**living within a lie**".

The system's power comes not from its truth, but from everyone's willingness to perform as if it were true, and its fragility comes from the same source. When even one person stops performing, when the greengrocer removes his sign, the illusion begins to crack. **Friends, it is time for companies and countries to take their signs down.** For decades, countries like Canada prospered under what we called the rules-based international order. We joined its institutions, we praised its principles, we benefited from its predictability. And because of that, we could pursue values-based foreign policies under its protection...

ACT II
07:16

ACT III: The Choice & the Path Forward

Now Canada was amongst the first to hear the wake-up call, leading us to fundamentally shift our strategic posture. Canadians know that our old comfortable assumptions that our geography and alliance memberships automatically conferred prosperity and security – that assumption is no longer valid. And our new approach rests on what Alexander Stubb, the President of Finland, has termed "value-based realism". Or, to put another way, we aim to be both principled and pragmatic – principled in our commitment to fundamental values, sovereignty, territorial integrity, the prohibition of the use of force, except when consistent with the UN Charter, and respect for human rights, and pragmatic and recognizing that progress is often incremental, that interests diverge, that not every partner will share all of our values.

So, we're engaging broadly, strategically with open eyes. We actively take on the world as it is, not wait around for a world we wish to be. We are calibrating our relationships, so their depth reflects our values, and we're prioritizing broad engagement to maximize our influence, given and given the fluidity of the world at the moment, the risks that this poses and the stakes for what comes next. And **we are no longer just relying on the strength of our values, but also the value of our strength.** We are building that strength at home...

We are taking the sign out of the window. We know the old order is not coming back. We shouldn't mourn it. Nostalgia is not a strategy, but we believe that from the fracture, we can build something bigger, better, stronger, more just. This is the task of the middle powers, the countries that have the most to lose from a world of fortresses and most to gain from genuine cooperation. The powerful have their power. But we have something too – the capacity to stop pretending, to name reality, to build our strength at home and to act together. That is Canada's path. We choose it openly and confidently, and it is a path wide open to any country willing to take it with us. Thank you very much.

ACT III
07:43

Time:	17:08
Words:	2,137
Speaking: (Words per Minute)	127
Readability Score (GFI)	12.58
Lexical Density	50.60

 Problem	The world is pretending that the old international order still works – even though power has already replaced rules – and that collective self-deception is now the greatest source of global instability.
 UVP	Carney keeps reiterating a central moral argument: stop pretending. The speech repeatedly attacks ritual compliance – "living within the lie." The speech doesn't try to manage the audience's anxiety. It assumes they are strong enough to face the truth. That assumption – about the audience's maturity – is rare.
 Surprise	What's surprising about this speech is not what it says about geopolitics – it's what it refuses to do. For a Davos audience, that refusal is unexpected, even disorienting. "We are in the midst of a rupture, not a transition." "Living within a lie." "We knew the story... was partially false." At Davos – a place built on that story – this is a quiet bomb.
 Urgency	"We are in the midst of a rupture, not a transition." Why this creates urgency: " Transition " implies time, management, adjustment. " Rupture " implies damage already done. It removes the comfort of gradualism. "The strong can do what they can, and the weak must suffer what they must." Effect on the audience: Either accept fatalism or act now to resist it.
 "But"	B 13X (0:79 secs) "but he places a sign anyway... But more recently, great powers have begun... But let's be clear eyed about where this leads. And we are no longer just relying on the strength of our values, but also the value of our strength."
 Credibility	"It is both a pleasure, and a duty, to be with you tonight in this pivotal moment..." [Ethos signal: I didn't come to impress you. I came because this matters.] "The strong can do what they can, and the weak must suffer what they must." [Ethos Signal: Shows the speaker understands power, not just values. Signals to elites: this is not naive idealism.]

