

The Parti Québécois gets it wrong again
William Johnson
September 7, 2019

Does the Parti Québécois never learn? Now, with only nine elected members sitting in the National Assembly – which puts it in fourth place – the PQ attempts to regain credibility by issuing Wednesday (Sept. 04) a thundering « *Déclaration de principes.* »

The statement was formulated by the PQ's executive committee and is to be debated at a special relaunching party convention to be held on November 9 and 10. Trouble is, the statement begins with a lie in its very first sentence: « *Le Québec est une nation francophone ancrée en Amérique.* »

Quebec is not, in law and in fact, a nation. It is a territorial province created for the first time by the Constitution Act of 1867. Quebec contains in its territory at least 10 aboriginal nations which were recognized as such by previous Quebec Governments. Quebec's territory also contains a substantial part of the Canadian nation.

Moreover, to claim that Quebec is “a francophone nation” is to ignore the existing constitution that governs Quebec. Since 1867, the constitution requires that the Quebec Government recognize two official languages, English as well as French. Every law ever passed in the Province of Quebec to this day had to be adopted in both French and English, or it was found to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada. That recognition of English as an official language cannot be reversed by any bill passed merely by the National Assembly, such as Bill 101, the Charter of the French Language. Since the official status of English is entrenched in the constitution, it could only be abolished by an amendment to the constitution of Canada, carried out by the terms of the amending formula adopted by the Constitution Act, 1982.

A second fatal flaw is the assumption that the Province of Quebec has an unconditional right to declare its independence from Canada, without any reference to the requirement for a constitutional amendment. That would violate the rule of law, as the Supreme Court of Canada spelled it out in its reference decision of August 20, 1998.

Here are some of the propositions in the Declaration of Principles that fail to recognize the existing constitutional restraints on secession and so offer the prospect of a revolutionary overthrow of the Canadian federation:

“*La nation Québécoise* [...] must seize all the powers necessary for its emancipation.”

“The independence of Quebec is the most logical and desirable outcome of nationalism.”

“On the strength of our values and conscious of the challenges, we are convinced that the independence of the *nation Québécoise* is at once a necessity, a destiny and an inevitable conjoining of our pragmatism and our most profound aspirations.”

Attempting secession, as world history amply demonstrates, is one of the most dangerous undertakings known to humankind. Think of the U.S. civil war in the 1860s or the contemporary mutual killings between India and Pakistan. The rosy dream of a painless secession projected once again by the Parti Québécois is a most dangerous illusion.