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World Geography

November 27 2023

(There was no set direction for this response, so I am just going to go with what I thought was the most interesting.)

The geography of the United States (and Canada) make the two states potential economic juggernauts, but only one of these states has realized that latent economic potential in any significant way: the United States. This is not a comparative assignment between the two countries, rather an investigation of why the United States has been so successful in realizing its economic potential, and why Canada has not in relation to their geography.

In short, Canada is COLD. While not a strict delimiter of economic potential, it is a very significant factor: just look at Sweden, Norway, or Finland as analogous examples. While agriculture is certainly possible in Southern Canada, it has some of the most expensive farmland in the world because much of the country's enormous landmass is desolate, impenetrable, and inhospitable. This is not to say that you can't have a prosperous nation in the cold, or when importing the majority of your food, but it is significantly easier to build a strong economic foundation when you have a large amount of arable land. Canada has certainly developed a strong economy that leads to a high standard of living, but it is heavily dependent on oil and natural gas exports and technology imports.

Now, the complement to Canada's export-import dilemma is this: who are they trading with? Simply put, the United States. Despite globalization and the shuttering of many factories, the fires of American industry are still burning - and they are burning with Canadian oil. The United States is Canada's largest trading partner, and the two countries have a very close relationship. American geography is arguably some of the best in the world, with the south and midwest being extremely fertile and with a massive number of navigable rivers. The Northeast and West have a wealth of natural resources, and manufacturing (especially of technologically advanced goods) are still a major part of the economy. In effect, simply by being warmer and having accepted far more immigrants to grow its population, the United States has been able to realize its economic potential far more than Canada.

Neither country is doomed to continue their economic trends, both nations should push hard to accelerate economic and technological growth. Both countries, as shining lights of democracy and freedom, should act as torchbearers for the rest of the world.