



Hi ,

The word “sovereignty” is having a moment. It’s punchy! It’s everywhere! And it’s also... slippery. What does it actually mean to make a decision or a product that is good for our country’s “sovereignty” (or not)?

At the Canadian SHIELD Institute, we’ve been working to make that word do real work. Our north star is economic sovereignty: restoring Canadian control and ownership over the systems and platforms that structure daily life. Think power over the stack — from pipes and plants to platforms and protocols — so more of the value created in Canada is retained here.

To make that practical, we built [the SHIELD Score](#). It’s not a ranking or a dunk meter, but a repeatable framework that stress-tests policy choices. It asks, plainly: *Does this shift control, competition and value toward Canada — today and tomorrow?*

We borrowed good habits from the OECD’s [competition assessment](#) toolkit and the Competition Bureau’s [competition assessment toolkit](#), then adapted them for sovereignty.

Our score looks at two intertwined dimensions of policy decisions:

- **Sovereignty:** Does the decision increase Canadian ownership, control and governability of critical systems (infrastructure, data, IP, compute, supply chains)? Does it reduce dependence on foreign-controlled chokepoints or digital rent-taking from Canadian users and firms?
- **Economic Transformation:** Does it build a more value-added economy (not just jobs today, but capabilities tomorrow)? Are we setting standards, growing domestic firms, retaining IP and strengthening resilience?

By forcing these trade-offs into the open — *who pays, who benefits, what alternatives exist* — the SHIELD Score serves two purposes:

- **Ex-ante:** a sober, pre-decision hygiene check (basically asking: will this subsidy, standard, or procurement choice accidentally lock us into somebody else’s rules?);
- **Ex-post:** a clear way to hold decisions to account, and consider how they might have been strengthened.

It’s deliberately simple. The point of the assessment is to build a new habit. If Canada wants to rebuild sovereignty, we need to practice assessing it, modelling it, and just think about achieving it more often and more concretely.

There have been too many instances where foreign platforms have been allowed to quietly decide Canada’s defaults: which products are available here, how social feeds work, when our data is used to train someone else’s model. Canadian firms aren’t flawless, but pairing sovereign ownership with smart regulation reliably delivers better outcomes for people than outsourcing decisions to distant, unaccountable actors.

The SHIELD Score turns big promises into testable choices. It’s a quick gut-check you can use in your world: when your team, your city or your ministry is weighing a policy, a procurement or a partnership, ask: *Does this expand Canadian control and future value, or erode it?*

We’ll start publishing scored examples of real-life policies, and you can send us candidates to assess.

Does this framing resonate? What’s missing? What feels off? Hit reply or email hello@canadianshieldinstitute.ca — we want to think about this with you.

Meanwhile, SHIELD has been showing up in big conversations this week, bringing a sovereignty lens into the rooms where Canada’s future is being debated:

- In Ottawa, we presented to heads of mission as part of a North American Trade and Innovation Dialogue facilitated by the Embassy of Canada to the United States, sharing ideas on how Canada can co-steer its digital and industrial future alongside our closest partners.
- In Toronto, we joined the [Heinrich Böll Foundation](#) and our friends at [The Dais](#) for *CanadaStack meets EuroStack: How Canada and Europe Can Align on Digital Sovereignty* — comparing notes on how to build open, democratic and values-based digital infrastructure.
- At the [Elevate Festival](#), we moderated the panel *Beyond Crypto: Canada’s Digital Asset Opportunity*, which explored how digital finance can support real-economy value creation rather than speculation.
- Also at Elevate, we took part in a panel with our friends at [Gander Social](#) called *Elbows Up: Building a Tech Stack with Canadian Values*. It was a lively discussion about what it takes to design systems that reflect who we are, not just what’s easiest to import.

What we’re reading

Bloomberg - [Can Canada Survive Donald Trump?](#)

Francis Wilkinson’s opinion essay captures what many in Ottawa still hesitate to say out loud: that Canada’s economic and security model was built on the assumption of a stable, rules-bound United States. Decades of integration without insulation have left us vulnerable to democratic decay next door. In this reading, sovereignty is risk management.

The Globe and Mail - [Pushed by Trump, Canada enters a new era of economic nationalism](#)

Mark Rendell’s reporting tracks a striking pivot: Canada is quietly reviving the idea that the state can and should shape markets. Prime Minister Mark Carney’s “Buy Canadian” toolkit looks less like nostalgia and more like realism in a post-free-trade world. It’s a reminder that sovereignty doesn’t mean shutting the door; it means deciding who gets to walk through it.

CIGI - [A Sovereign Advisory System for Canada: Rebuilding Strategic Foresight in Trade and Innovation](#)

Barry Appleton’s essay argues for a formalized, foresight-driven mechanism to anticipate geopolitical and technological shocks before they become crises. It proposes a “sovereign advisory system” — a permanent capacity inside the government to map strategic risks across trade, digital infrastructure and industrial development. Think of it as building our own intelligence system for economic sovereignty so we can stop reacting to external events and start designing for resilience.

Noema - [A Third Path For AI Beyond The US-China Binary | NOEMA](#)

This essay reframes AI geopolitics as a fight over stacks. Using Vietnam’s FPT-led “third stack” as the case study, it shows how countries can practice infrastructural nonalignment so that they author, rather than rent, machine perception. The core claim is sovereignty as epistemic control: licenses, data paths, and deployment rules decide what AI is allowed to know and do. It’s a blueprint for modular, governed openness that borrows across blocs without being captured by them.

Happy Thanksgiving

We are grateful for readers, builders, public servants and partners who are doing the unglamorous work of making Canada more self-determined. May your weekend include a long walk, good pie, and at least one conversation about how sovereignty isn’t just a fancy word, it’s a framework for deciding who really holds power.

Until next time,

Vass Bednar

P.S. Got a policy announcement we should run through the SHIELD Score? Reply here or email hello@canadianshieldinstitute.ca.

Thirty,” by [The Weather Station](#) — the project of Toronto singer-songwriter [Tamara Lindeman](#) — captures the uneasy poetry of adulthood by blending the personal and the political. Amid vivid, observational lyrics, the song grounds intimate moments in broader social context. When Lindeman sings, “*Gas came down ... the joke was how it broke the economy anyhow*,” she folds macroeconomic change into the texture of daily life, showing how our private years unfold against public forces. Elsewhere, lines like “*I noticed fucking everything*” reveal a hyperawareness — an almost aching attentiveness to small details that, in hindsight, feel monumental. Together, these layers suggest that our lives are shaped not just by feeling, but by the shifting economic and social conditions that surround us.

Send us the Canadian music you’ve been listening to lately!

