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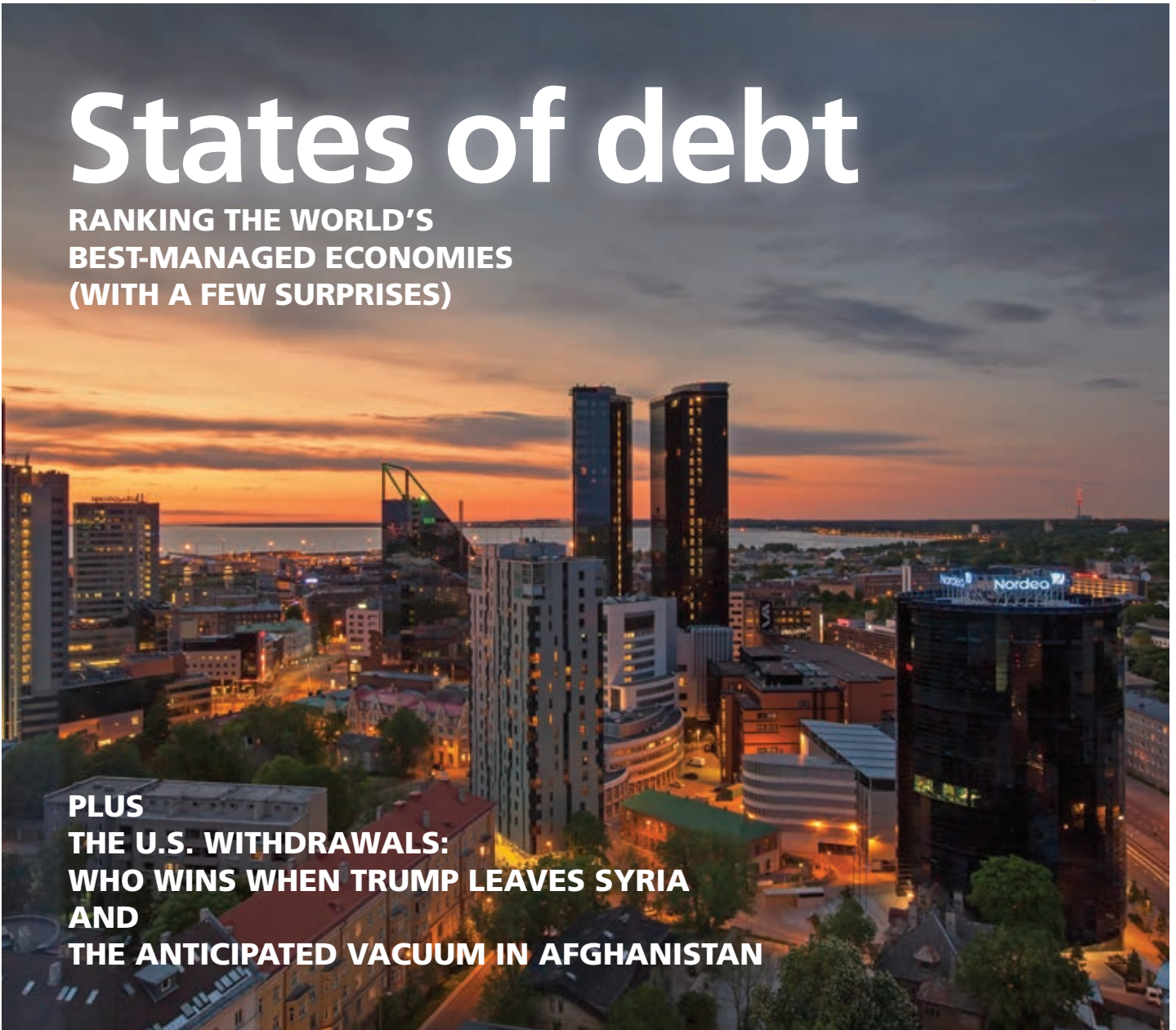
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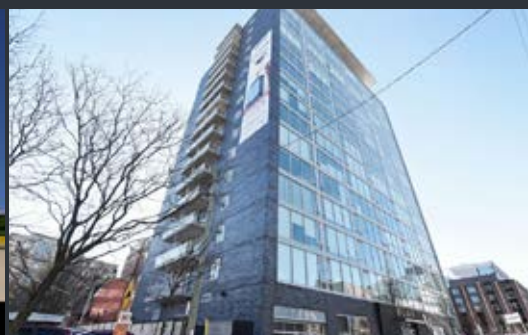
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Table of CONTENTS

DIPLOMATICA |
Cartoons from around the world 14
Fen Hampson on malaise in Europe 20
Questions Asked: Canada's former ambassador to China 22
Good deeds: Helping Friends of NACO 28
Notes from the field: Right to Play enables education 30
Trade Winds: Algeria and Nepal 32
Diplomatic Agenda: Jordan's unique role in the Middle East 36

DISPATCHES |
The world's best financially run countries
Ten global leaders in debt-to-GDP ratio 38
The five worst debt offenders 48
The U.S.'s troop withdrawal
Donald Trump's withdrawal from Syria benefits Iran and Russia . . . 50
The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan leaves peace less certain . . . 54
Africa's economies analyzed 60

DELIGHTS |
Books: China's effect on Canada, Stephen Harper's remedies for populism and Michelle Obama's memoir 64
Food: Easy entertaining for spring 70
Peter Simpson on the art of diplomacy 74
Wine: The beauty of Beaujolais 78
Residences: The Italian ambassador's manor 81
Envoy's album 90
Photo Finish: Mike Beedell's mating puffins 108

DIGNITARIES |
New arrivals in the diplomatic corps 86

DIPLOMATIC LISTINGS 96

DESTINATIONS |
Patrick Langston on spring adventures around Ottawa 100
Destinations: Israel's many tourist attractions 102

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Jennifer Campbell

Best fiscally managed OECD countries

As Canada faces a federal election and global trade is undergoing a serious reconfiguration, thanks to U.S. President Donald Trump's disputes with trading partners and his protectionist policies, there is no question the economy will be a major issue that Canadian voters will have to weigh.

Debt is a powerful force across the globe, where it's estimated to exceed \$65 trillion, up from \$37 trillion a decade earlier. The U.S. alone has \$20.9 trillion in debt. Indeed, as writer Wolfgang Depner reports, the U.S. could soon pay more in interest on its debt than it spends on its military and social programs combined.

As such, we thought it would be interesting to figure out, empirically, which 10 OECD countries have shown the greatest prowess in money management, as measured by their debt-to-GDP ratio. Some among them might surprise you — who knew Turkey had its debt in check? — while others — Switzerland and Norway, for example — are more predictable. And I'll let you guess which region has all three of its countries in the Top 10. Hint: Each of the three is a former Soviet republic.

Meanwhile, in his recurring Africa column, Robert I. Rotberg continues with the economic theme by analyzing Africa's economies. The situation has bright spots, but there's plenty to be concerned about.

Also in our Dispatches section, we look at two significant developments that come as a result of Trump's changes in policy. Professor Paul Taillon, who teaches at RMC and served in Afghanistan, looks at how the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan will change things on the ground there. As Taillon points out, the announce-

ment of the withdrawal came just as the U.S. was negotiating an end to the war with the Taliban. He argues the vacuum created by the U.S.'s withdrawal will likely be filled by regional competitors such as Russia, China, Iran, India and Pakistan. And he questions whether the Taliban is actually even interested in peace.

In a companion piece about another potential vacuum, Taillon also tackles the repercussions of the U.S. withdrawal from Syria, where the consequences may be more widespread and dramatic, with players such as Russia and Iran directly in the mix, along with regional interests' side battles such as the one between the Kurds and the Turks. And, he posits that Iran will have land access to its Hamas allies in Lebanon, a reality that may pose a renewed existential threat to Israel.

Up front, Fen Hampson gives us a look at what's happening in Europe, economically and politically. Again, there's much to keep one awake at night. We also have my interview with David Mulrone, Canada's former ambassador to China, who shares his views on the Meng Wanzhou extradition.

Staying with the China theme, books columnist Christina Spencer reviews Jonathan Manthorpe's latest book, *Claws of the Panda: Beijing's Campaign of Influence and Intimidation in Canada*, along with Stephen Harper's latest title and Michelle Obama's worthwhile memoir. In the Delights section, we introduce our new arts columnist, veteran journalist Peter Simpson, who was the *Ottawa Citizen's* arts editor and arts editor-at-large for 15 years.

Also in Delights, food columnist Margaret Dickenson offers four easy recipes that will make for a pleasant spring dinner party and Patrick Langston takes us on a tour of the residence of Italian Ambassador Claudio Taffuri and his wife, Maria Enrica Francesca Stajano. In addition, wine columnist Alex McMahan offers a fresh take on Beaujolais and Langston gives us travel ideas between April and July, all within driving distance of Ottawa. If you're looking for a bigger trek, Israeli Ambassador Nimrod Barkan serves up an insider's guide to the sights in his country.

Jennifer Campbell is editor of *Diplomat*.

CONTRIBUTORS

Col. J. Paul de B. Taillon



Col. J. Paul de B. Taillon (ret'd) is honorary Lieutenant Colonel of the Canadian Grenadier Guards and adjunct professor at the Royal Military College of Canada. He holds a PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Science and has authored more than 60 books and papers. Specializing in counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, intelligence, defence and national security, he has advised the Department of National Defence and the commander of the Canadian army. He served in Great Britain, the United States, Oman, Bosnia, Kosovo, Ukraine and with Canada's JTF2 in Afghanistan.

Peter Simpson



Peter Simpson, our new arts columnist, was arts editor and arts editor-at-large at the *Ottawa Citizen* for 15 years, with a focus on the visual arts. He also worked as a feature writer and as the opinion page editor during his time at the *Citizen*, which spanned a total of 17 years. In 2016, he was named to the Irving Chair of Journalism, a fellowship at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, N.B. The native of Prince Edward Island continues to live and work in downtown Ottawa with his wife, one cat and more than 100 paintings, drawings and sculptures.

UP FRONT

Our cover image of Estonia salutes the tiny country of just one million inhabitants for having the best debt-to-GDP ratio in the OECD. Our cover story examines the Top 10 countries with the best-managed economies. The story begins on page 38.



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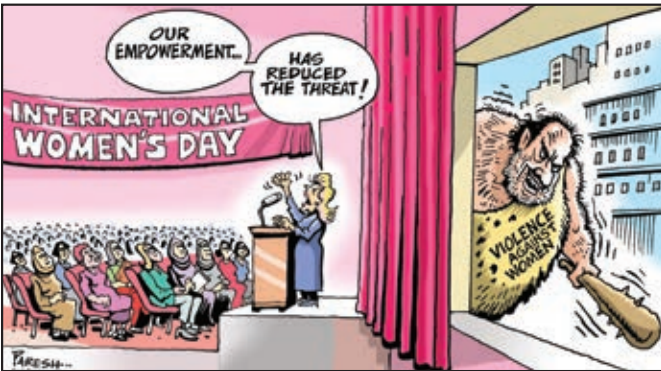
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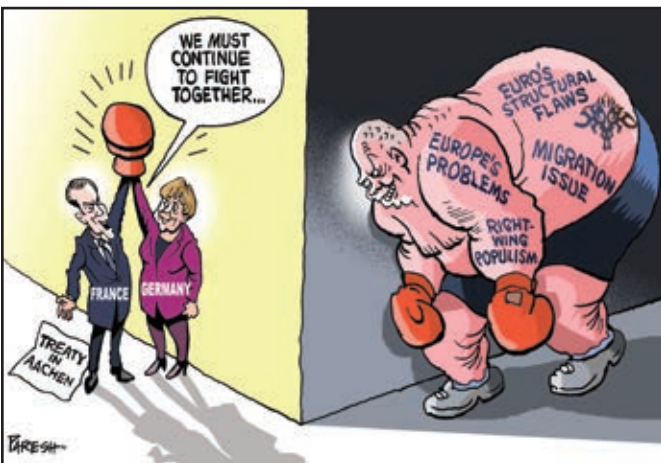
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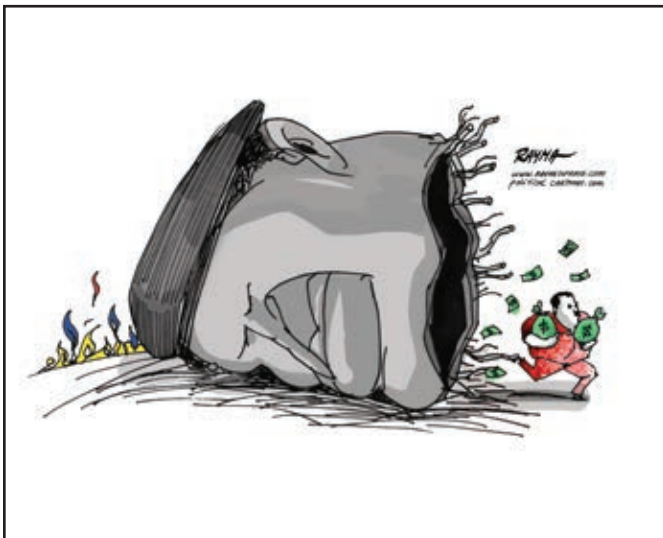
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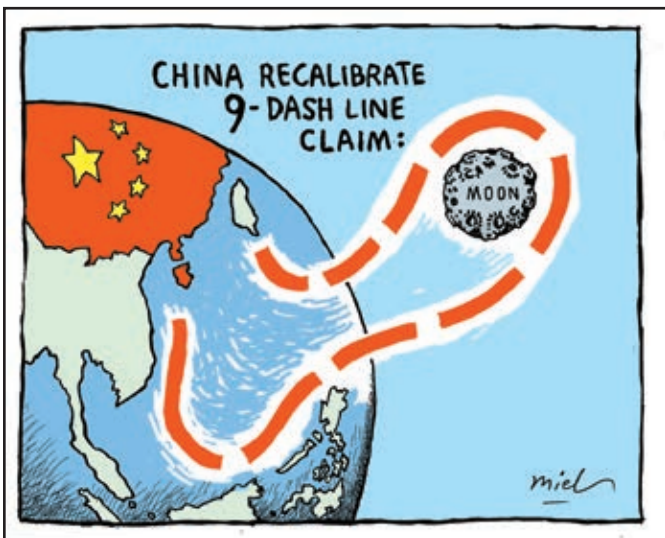
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China moon claim, by Deng Coy Miel, Singapore



Power game in Venezuela, by Paresh Nath, *The Khaleej Times*, UAE

Europe's ever-deepening malaise



French President Emmanuel Macron, someone many saw as Europe's white knight, is now under pressure from yellow vest protesters, seen above, over a new fuel tax that was designed to promote energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.



Fen
Hampson

The European Union's mounting woes over Brexit and its aftermath are just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Europe has many other problems, some below the waterline, some above, that threaten its future. They include the fragmentation of the political landscape with a proliferation of extremist parties on the left and right that make it harder to form viable coalitions that can govern from the political centre; the anti-democratic, authoritarian proclivities of Europe's eastern members; and the prospects of another looming Eurozone crisis triggered by the default of its third-largest

economy, Italy, which, in addition to having an economy that is shrinking, suffers from double-digit unemployment and a public debt of 2.3 trillion euros.

Take the first problem. It is not populism per se that threatens Europe's governance arrangements and prevailing open-market, open-borders orthodoxy, but the steady erosion of public support for centre-left and centre-right political parties that have traditionally governed from the middle of the political spectrum. Their traditional bases of support are evaporating as new parties on the extreme left and extreme right curry favour with voters either by being extremely "green" on environmental issues while favouring a return to "big state" welfare socialism (on the left) or promoting virulently anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and nationalistic policies (on the far right).

The October 2018 Bavarian state elections in Germany, which knocked the wind out of the sails of the Christian Social Union (CSU) party, the CDU's (Christian Democratic Union) political partner, offer

a good illustration of the fragmentation problem. It was not just the CSU that took a drubbing from the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, resulting in the CSU losing its parliamentary majority. Germany's leading opposition Social Democrats (SPD) were even bigger losers, dropping down to single digit numbers in terms of the popular vote and faring as poorly as their counterparts in recent elections in France and the Netherlands, while the Greens made the same big gains they've made in Belgium and Luxembourg.

The fragmentation problem affects not only Germany, but also countries such as Italy, whose politics are volatile and unpredictable at the best of times. In recent years, however, the country has suffered a rapid succession of multi-party coalition governments, each of which has fallen apart in internecine squabbles between euro-skeptics and those who are pro-European. As a consequence, no political leader has been able to take the tough decisions that would reduce Italy's deficit, bring

spending under control and clear the overgrown bramble of business and labour market regulations that stifle investment, job growth and innovation.

As *The Guardian* notes, throughout Europe “the party system, including the left and right blocs, has become more fragmented. Not only in terms of the number of parties that gain entry into the parliament, but particularly in terms of their relative size. Few party systems still have one, let alone two, parties that gain more than a third of the vote.”

Europe's older democracies and political parties are suffering from hyper-partisan extremism on the left and right where, to paraphrase W.B. Yeats, things fall apart, the political centre cannot hold, chaos and anarchy are “loosed” upon the world. Indeed, Europe's newer democracies are experiencing a serious bout of political atavism which, if left unchecked, will almost certainly threaten the future of democracy and human rights in those countries and perhaps have a contagion effect on others.

For example, Hungary's Fidesz party, led by Viktor Orbán, has won three consecutive elections on highly nationalistic, anti-immigration platforms. In an attempt to boost Hungary's declining birth rate, Orbán has promised women who bear more than four children that they will never have to pay income tax. His government also passed a law allowing employers to force their employees to work overtime without additional pay, in order to address the country's growing labour market shortage. Freedom of the press is a growing problem as some media outlets critical of government policy have been forced to close their operations or been taken over by the government.

In Poland, the country's new controversial Holocaust law makes it a crime for anyone, regardless of whether they live in Poland or not, to accuse “the Polish Nation” of complicity in crimes committed by the Nazis during the Second World War. As *Time* magazine explains, “The initial aim of the law, which is contrary to Poland's obligations under international human rights law, was to prevent people from describing Nazi death camps in occupied Poland as ‘Polish camps.’ But its scope actually goes much further. The issue at stake is not about the events surrounding the Second World War, but freedom of expression and the excessive use of the law to crack down on dissenting opinions.”

Europe's other big problem is a yawning leadership deficit, especially at the core, where it really counts.

Europe's two biggest countries, France and Germany, have traditionally been the captains of the European enterprise. Beginning in 1951, when a group of forward-thinking French bureaucrats urged the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the two have led the process of European economic and po-



Polish President Andrzej Duda signed his country's Holocaust law, which makes it a crime for anyone to accuse Poland of complicity in crimes committed by Nazis in the Second World War.

litical integration. That special relationship was formally consummated by chancellor Konrad Adenauer and French president Charles de Gaulle when they signed the Élysée Treaty of friendship between France and West Germany in 1963, formally ending years of rivalry while agreeing to co-operate in foreign policy as well as economic and military affairs.

Although German and French leaders have not always seen eye-to-eye, they have understood the importance of working together to ensure that the greater European enterprise does not fall off the rails, even as the boundaries of Europe have expanded to include Eastern Europe, the Baltic states and the more economically advanced countries in the Balkans.

In recent years, no European leader has been more critical to securing the region's future than German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has played a key role in steering Europe through a succession of financial, economic and political crises. But Merkel's own political star is dimming fast as a result of public dissatisfaction with her open-door policy on refugees, particularly in southern and eastern Germany, and her willingness to cut Europe's prof-

ligate Mediterranean spenders (Greece, in particular) in the interests of keeping the Eurozone intact. Merkel's purported successor, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, a low-key, Catholic conservative career politician, who was elected leader of Germany's Christian Democrat Party in December 2018, is untested and relatively unknown outside the country.

French President Emmanuel Macron, who turned the tables on the French political establishment with his meteoric rise and was also someone many saw as France's — and Europe's — white knight to the rescue of an ailing economy, has fallen off his horse. His radical plan to resuscitate the French economy through a combination of Thatcherite tax cuts for businesses and investors, various measures to “thin” France's crippling labour laws and a new fuel tax (to promote energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions) provoked a massive political backlash. With civil unrest — led by the now famous *gilets jaunes* (yellow vest) protesters — approaching 1968 levels, when de Gaulle was forced to flee the country as workers and students took to the streets, Macron was forced to do a 180 on his unpopular taxes and also show that he was willing to eat humble pie by engaging in a series of marathon town-hall meetings across the country with French voters.

There is perhaps no better illustration of Europe's growing inner tensions than the row that erupted between France and Italy (who are supposed to be friendly neighbours) when the Italian vice-premier met with the *gilets jaunes* to express Italy's support for their anti-government protests. The French were outraged and withdrew their ambassador to Rome in protest. Although the fracas was dismissed by some commentators as an opera buffa, it underscored a much deeper malaise. The Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* could not have said it better, “What is happening to Italy? The economy is in trouble, children are no longer being born and the political vessel is navigating without instruments.” The same could be said about the rest of Europe.

Fen Osler Hampson is Chancellor's Professor at Carleton University and a distinguished fellow and director of Global Security and Politics at the Centre for International Governance Innovation. He was co-director of the Global Commission on Internet Governance and is the co-author with Eric Jardine of *Look Who's Watching: Surveillance, Treachery and Trust Online*.

David Mulroney: Canada's former ambassador to China

'Canadians need to think about being in China. It's always been risky and this is a reminder to them.'*Photos by James Park*

David Mulroney is a career diplomat who finished his career as Canada's ambassador to China between 2009 and 2012. Using expertise he gleaned there, he penned the book *Middle Power, Middle Kingdom: What Canadians Need to Know about China in the 21st Century*. Prior to his posting in Beijing, he was deputy minister responsible for the Afghanistan Task Force, overseeing the department's role in Canada's engagement in that country. He also served as associate deputy minister of foreign affairs and as prime minister Stephen Harper's personal representative to the 2007 G8 Summit. In addition to postings in Taipei, Kuala Lumpur, Shanghai and Seoul, he served as executive director of the Canada-China Business Council. He is currently a distinguished senior fellow at the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto. He spoke with *Diplomat's* editor, Jennifer Campbell.

Diplomat & International: With respect to the imprisonment-without-charges of Canadians Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, was the Chinese government trying to get revenge or was it using them as a bargaining chip to gain Canadian co-operation in preventing Meng Wanzhou from being extradited to the U.S.?

David Mulroney: I think it's both punishment and leverage. They're striking out [at us]. They probably don't want to strike out at the United States because they're too powerful and they're in the midst of trade negotiations. So they're going to pick on Canada. This is hostage diplomacy we've seen before and China has practised before on us and on others.

DI: Can you name a previous Canadian example?

DM: [Kevin and Julia] Garratt — the Canadians who operated a café up on the North Korean border. They were detained shortly after a Chinese aerospace engineer was sent to the U.S., alleged to have [stolen] U.S. military secrets. [Kevin] Garratt wasn't released for 19 months. Sweden and Australia have

faced similar detentions. This, unfortunately, is an increasingly common technique against countries that really do care for their citizens.

This is a reality in our relationship with China. Occasionally you fall afoul of it. This has happened to us now a couple of times. We need to think about how we deal with it and how we prepare ourselves. And I think Canadians need to think about being in China. It's always been risky and this is a reminder to them.

DI: Would you go to China right now?

DM: I haven't had the need. I'd think carefully about going to China right now.

DI: Because of your profile?

DM: Yes, but I think the risk is higher for everybody. And my advice would be that unless you absolutely have to go, postpone. I think it would be less of a problem for tourists. The highest vulnerability is for diplomats, former diplomats, journalists and human rights workers, who are speaking to people that China considers problematic and are going to places that China considers sensitive. A dossier is kept on you and if they need to pick someone up and you've been up to North Korea or Xinjiang, you're going to be on the list. Where it gets tricky is with, for example, hockey teams. Let's say there's an altercation or people are celebrating with too much exuberance. In the past, the police might be involved, but it would be settled quickly. Now you just don't know.

DI: Is it possible that Meng's arrest was carefully orchestrated by the U.S., and perhaps its allies, to drive a wedge between Canada and China to prevent Huawei equipment from being used in Canada's 5G network?

DM: I think it's highly unlikely. My inclination is to look at the highest possibility. The U.S. is pointing to a serious and troubling case — they haven't proved it yet — that she misled foreign financial institutions about Huawei's involvement with Iran and whether or not it [the company] was involved in sales to Iran.



"The unfortunate thing in this — but I think it may be inevitable — is that I don't think Huawei is a company that only copies and steals technology."

That's the reason. Of course, Huawei is caught up in larger political issues. Some people have said [the U.S.] never targets CEOs or senior people. In this case, [they targeted her] because she made the pitch to the banks.

DI: There seems to have been conflict between the Communications Security Establishment's initial dismissal, as recently as October, of the danger of spying that Huawei presented versus advice by Richard Fadden, former head of CSIS and Peter MacKay, former defence minister, about the high-stakes security risks of spying. CSE has since reconsidered. Where do you stand on the security risk?

DM: I was a great believer, prior to the 5G era, in what I call risk mitigation. It's what the British have done in the U.K., where Huawei has established a lab and [where] British technicians look at the equipment for signs of back doors. I'm not a technology person, but I'm led to believe that 5G is of a nature that makes it more difficult to do that kind of risk mitigation.

The unfortunate thing in this — but it may be inevitable — is that I don't think Huawei is a company that only copies and steals technology. I think Huawei is a really interesting company on many levels that makes good technology at affordable prices. So the cost to us on this is that we build a wall between the West and China that blocks Chinese technology that's really, really interesting. When I talk to Chinese friends who come to Canada and look at our retail sector, they say 'Wow,



"Our prosperity depends on working with China. Global health issues, global climate change issues — China is part of the solution to a lot of them."

this is pretty backward.' There are so many innovations in China that we're not aware of and we're misleading ourselves if we say China just copies us. It does copy us in some areas, but in others, it's a leader in technology. We need to think carefully if the result of this is that we're totally cut off from some of the really interesting things that China's doing.

I'd like to hear more on risk mitigation. It's easy for security agencies to simply say 'Don't engage.' China isn't the Soviet Union, which was only a threat. Our prosperity depends on working with China. Global health issues, global climate change issues — China is part of the solution to a lot of them. I think it's too early to say we give up on risk mitigation. China poses a lot of risk compared to other partners, but it remains to be seen how we can construct a new kind of engagement that is smarter, but still works to our benefit.

DI: Do you predict that Canada will ultimately restrict or block Huawei, much like allies such as Japan, New Zealand and Australia?

DM: Huawei is under a very significant cloud. To the extent that we have to make decisions before that cloud dissipates, I think it's unlikely that this relationship is going to grow.

DI: The company does have a number of employees in Canada.

DM: Yes, and a billion dollars in infrastructure that they've installed through Bell and Telus. So, it's an expensive decision. What also interests me about Huawei: When I've visited Chinese state-



"[An ambassador] should avoid giving an opinion as to how strong a person's case is and whether a decision would be good or bad."

owned enterprises in Canada, very few of them have succeeded in Canadianizing their operations. They look very much like Chinese organizations in China. It's not bad or good, it's just different. It doesn't have a Canadian look and feel, but Huawei was really effective in getting into the Canadian space. It got Canada in a way others didn't. Its advertisements were very slick and its work at the provincial level, with universities, was very sophisticated. And depending on how you look at it, that's either good or bad. That's why China sees Huawei being constrained as a big setback for Chinese ambitions.

DI: You called comments by John McCallum, Canada's former ambassador to China, on Meng's extradition request by the U.S. "mind-boggling." Why?

DM: An ambassador to China has no standing — there's no role for him to comment on an extradition process in Canada. He can explain to people in China about how the process works, but he should avoid giving an opinion as to how strong a person's case is and whether a decision would be good or bad. I think that was misguided. The real problem was the amount of confusion it's sown. It's confused the Chinese, it's confused Canadians and it's probably confused Americans. What's hard to understand, or maybe hard to believe, is that he was in Canada meeting with cabinet and colleagues and he never mentioned that to them? We've been led to believe that they would have said 'That's not our policy, you shouldn't say that.'



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and John McCallum, his now-former ambassador to China, in happier times. McCallum overstepped in his comments about the case against Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, according to David Mulroney, who also served as Canada's ambassador to China.

There's a mystery there that has yet to be clarified.

DI: It's hard to imagine he'd say those things without the blessing of the Prime Minister's Office.

DM: If this was your theory and you were invited to brief cabinet, you wouldn't tell them that?

DI: Hard to imagine you wouldn't, but do you think he didn't?

DM: I think he did. That's where the story becomes improbable. If I was about to do a press conference and I was briefing the minister, I'd be in a lot of trouble if I'd kept that from the minister. That's where this becomes improbable, unless he misunderstood it. But that generates other questions.

DI: Reports say that on Jan. 11 — two weeks before Trudeau fired him — McCallum voiced the same views when he told Canadian business executives in Toronto that the case against Meng was weak and that he hoped the U.S. would withdraw its request for her extradition.

DM: Again, that's part of the improbable side. If the government didn't know what he was saying, they weren't paying much attention at a highly sensitive time. I can't imagine coming back to

Canada as ambassador at a time of this much tension and then going off on a series of speeches. When I came back, they wanted to know what I was going to say, to whom I was going to say it; they wanted someone to accompany me. Not because they didn't trust me, but because governments have very specific ideas on how things should be managed and what the major message of the day is going to be. If you're back as an ambassador, they don't want you stepping on their major message, so that's why they tend to have an excessive degree of interest in what you're saying. I find [the McCallum situation] puzzling.

DI: You were posted to China as ambassador from 2009 to 2012, when Stephen Harper was in power. Was the same true of the PMO then?

DM: If I was coming back and I were speaking, I'd be asked: 'Is it for media, not for media?' I'd always prefer it be for media and I was generally trusted, but I was careful about what I said. Your job is not to make policy, your job is to explain policy and to tell the story of what Canada's doing in China.

DI: If it were up to you, whom would you send to China to replace McCallum?

DM: I want to stay out of that. I think

there are some very good people at the department.

DI: So a career diplomat?

DM: Yes, I'd say that. And here's why: Because I never believed that this idea that if you were a minister, you could pick up the phone and speak to the prime minister really mattered. Can current ministers pick up the phone and speak to the prime minister or do they speak [with an adviser]? That I wonder about.

Secondly, on a really important issue, if the prime minister is coming [to the country to which you're posted], you have a way of communicating with him. But knowing China, knowing how foreign affairs works, is important. I'm confident we have some very strong people, some of whom I've served with in various places, who could do that job. But, we also have to continue to invest in that pool of China officers. [Michael] Kovrig was in the pool of upcoming rising stars. We need to keep that pool well stocked and attach priority to having a very strong team of China specialists in the department.

DI: You say Beijing foreign ministry officials followed you whenever you left the capital. Why and how far did they shadow you? Do you suppose it's worse now?

DM: It wasn't necessarily Beijing officials. Every province and every municipality had a foreign affairs bureau. I would have to tell the foreign ministry when I was going somewhere and where I was going, and they would meet me and insist on accompanying me to every event. A few times, I changed it up. When I went to Tibet, we had pitched battles. I had to get permission to go to Tibet in the first place, and the first time, they said, 'OK David, you can go to Tibet in two weeks.' That was May, which is the season when every parliamentary delegation comes, every premier comes. I said 'I'm booked solid; I can't go.' They said 'Well, we offered you a chance.' I didn't have a chance for another year. We had very strong arguments about my going. I insisted on being able to go out and walk around and meet people and see people and I succeeded to a certain extent.

I was very interested in issues of religious freedom so I'd go to Tibetan areas, Muslim areas. I'd go to Protestant churches and I was very interested in what was happening with the Catholic Church. I heard about a Catholic seminary where the rector had been replaced by a Chinese Communist Party official and

the seminarians went on strike. I said ‘I want to meet these people.’ That’s one of the neat things about being an ambassador — you can find out what happened. I’d gotten to know some of the priests in that community so I told [one of them] I wanted to come and see him. He said: ‘David, if you do, please tell the provincial foreign affairs people, because I don’t want to get in trouble.’ I duly informed them and there was kind of an intake of breath on the phone.

So I get to the train station and the priests were coming to the train station in a van to take me to the seminary. And there’s this young guy from the local foreign affairs bureau. This guy, who was very junior, is yelling at me on the train platform and wagging his finger in my face and saying that these people are trouble-makers. It was embarrassing.

He said ‘You have another meeting and it’s very important and with a senior person and you can’t [miss] this meeting.’ I asked when it was and it was really tight, but I said I was still going to the seminary. I still had a very good meeting with them. They were very happy I’d come. I went to this other meeting and it was with a retired official. It was totally bogus — they just wanted to trim my time.

On another occasion in Xinjiang, they insisted that they accompany me. I had made arrangements to meet a family that was important to us and I’d made [the arrangements] on my own. At 5 p.m., I told [my Chinese escort] I had another meeting and asked to be dropped off at a particular restaurant. They said ‘We know you have this meeting and we’d ask you not to go.’ As we pulled up to the restaurant, I said ‘I’ve taken note of your request, thank you, and I’ll see you again at 9 a.m. tomorrow’ and I jumped out of the car. The thing you worry about is getting the family in trouble. I knew I was being watched



Huawei’s headquarters in Canada, a country still reviewing whether to allow Chinese companies to be involved in its 5G infrastructure, is located in Markham, Ont.

in the restaurant, so we were careful.

One of my hardest cases like that was there was a moot court, a competition for the best law students in China. The ambassadors of Canada, Germany and the U.S. were invited to speak to them. The meeting was in a province where there was a very famous dissident who was under house arrest. He’d been released from prison, but he had thugs guarding him and they’d even roughed up some of our diplomats who’d gone to see him. This dissident was a lawyer, so I asked myself ‘How can I speak to these law students and not mention this incident in their province?’

So I did. I said ‘I’m a guest here, and I don’t want to give offence, but in speak-

ing to you as law students, I have to say that we should all be concerned about the safety of this person, who is a lawyer like you are going to be and he’s on the other side of your province under house arrest.’ We had coffee, the students were keenly interested in this. Later, the university president invited us to lunch and he was very nice to the other two [visiting ambassadors], and then he just lays into me. He says, ‘That was inappropriate, you don’t understand, our legal system is changing; we’re making so much progress.’ I understood what he was saying, and I didn’t want to get him in trouble either, but I didn’t believe I could just not mention that. So it’s always tough.



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DI: Would you say dealing with China is diplomacy at its most difficult?

DM: Yes. I mean, I used to go to Kabul and that was more difficult because your physical safety is at stake. But China is very difficult. I would be told, for example, 'We would be grateful if you could make sure Prime Minister Harper doesn't raise the following things...' I'd say 'Not only can I not do that, but I wouldn't do that. He's here to mention those things and he will.'

DI: You've written that freeing Spavro and Kovrig would go a long way toward reassuring world governments about China. Do you think the world is watching this situation?

DM: Yes, and I think it's something of a turning point. What's interesting about this incident is the amount of interest that's coming from the wider world. I've been talking to Australia, the U.S. and the U.K. and there's a great deal of interest. It's a turning point and I think it's been a tremendous miscalculation by China.

Up until now, China's relationships are plateaus and valleys and you go into a valley when something happens that the Chinese don't like. When you happen to be the country in the crosshairs, everyone else just looks the other way and says 'Wow, I'm glad that's not me.' Norway got in trouble after Liu Xiaobo got the Nobel Prize. Sweden's been in trouble, Australia's been in trouble, the U.K.'s been in trouble. I think now there's more interesting conversation about how we deal with this. Not that we're ganging up on China, but in a way that others will raise their voices. I think if China hears from enough serious countries — and it doesn't have to be public — it will take that seriously. They may not change right away and they won't say this is why, but they will.

This is one place [where] Chinese President Xi Jinping is vulnerable. There's still a constituency in China that says 'Don't push too hard because we're not that strong yet.' If other countries are seriously worried about China's assertiveness, that's a problem for Xi.

DI: What do you predict for the future of Canada-China relations in trade, diplomacy and foreign policy?

DM: I think we need to be prepared for the fact that there will be a chill and that will have some impact on trade, more in terms of public signings and high-profile events. China likes to convince us that trade is a favour they do for us. But Chinese people buy things from

Canada because they need them and they want them and that will continue, so we shouldn't be unduly worried about that.

I do think there will be a rethinking of the relationship that says we still respect China and we still engage with China broadly, but perhaps not as broadly. We don't pretend that China is just like us. We don't contribute to false beliefs about



Meng Wanzhou, CFO of Huawei, is the person at the centre of the current Canada-China dispute.



U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping are said to be closer to a trade deal.

the extent to which China has changed. We're not afraid to work individually or with others to make clear our expectations for China in the world. Just as much as we welcome its rise, we need to communicate what our expectations are, just as China has expectations for us. I think, to a certain extent, we've operated according to China's playbook, so we've internalized the idea that it's never appropriate to talk

back to China or to disagree. That's just counter-productive.

The other thing we do [that is counter-productive] is to accept China's notion that it's so complicated that the only people who can understand China are people of Chinese origin. That creates a sense that the relationship has to be very complicated. We're lucky we have a lot of people who speak the language and understand the culture, but the relationship doesn't have to put such a burden on the diaspora. We should treat everyone as Canadians and not enlist them as representatives for the country they used to come from. No one asks my opinion on how to deal with the Republic of Ireland, right? It's crazy and it creates more problems than it solves. We're very lucky to have those insights, but we need to raise our China competence as a country.

DI: You recently said you think [U.S. President Donald] Trump might be right in not giving China a pass. How should Canada approach China at this point?

DM: I think we have a stake in seeing progress on some of the technology issues the Americans are raising. The requirements for foreign companies to hand over their technology; efforts to take that technology through clandestine means, we all have a stake there. Trump has surprised, and to a certain extent, discomfited the Chinese. [The Chinese] haven't read him correctly and it's unusual to see this, but they're playing catch-up in terms of the trade negotiations. It's in our interest to see those negotiations come to a successful conclusion because our interest is in seeing a strong U.S. economy and a strong Chinese economy. But this is one example where taking a tougher approach has worked, I think.

DI: Are Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland doing a good job on this file?

DM: I think we've come a long way in a year, from when we were trying to do a progressive trade agreement with China. We probably shouldn't have had to cover that ground but I'm glad we covered it. What worried me about the McCallum comments is that there's still a constituency in Ottawa that just believes that all we have to do is solve this problem — and it seems we both have this problem, it's not just one China has inflicted on us — and we'll get back to the relationship as it was. People are desperate to get back to this relationship. I think we need

to be convinced the government is thinking about the future and a new kind of relationship and I'm not sure we've seen that yet. To me, you've got to manage the crisis and I think now, after the debacle of the McCallum comments, we're doing a better job, but you also need to think about the future and the jury is out on their ability to do that.

DI: You were executive director of the Canada-China Business Council from 1995 to 1998. How has the relationship changed since then?

DM: It was very different then. Canada and China occupied slightly different positions. We were closer to China than we are now. As we've become smaller in China's eyes, [the relationship has] become much more difficult to manage. We were all more optimistic about directions for China and China's opening. We had reason to be. Back then, the leadership was still committed to what seemed to be a reform course.

DI: Where do you think the China-U.S. trade war will end up?

DM: The most ambitious U.S. deal would see China agree to systemic change, which is unlikely. My sense is that al-

though the U.S. has the upper hand, they may be persuaded to allow China to buy its way to a truce by announcing some major commitments to step up imports of U.S. goods. What will be interesting is whether the U.S. can get China to agree in return to some kind of compliance mechanism, which would allow tariffs to snap back if China failed to meet its commitments. That would at least allow the U.S. to argue that they've finally broken new ground. The big unknown is whether President Trump will attempt to offer some linkage to Ms. Meng's fate, possibly offering to drop the prosecution in favour of some kind of trade concession. That's a very bad idea that can't be entirely ruled out.

DI: Along the same vein, you've recently talked about how negotiating with China is now more of a zero-sum game. Can you give a couple of examples of your experience with this?

DM: In the past, I would find that even if China won the negotiation, you'd leave with some face and something [gained]. When I returned in 2009, it was much tougher and [Chinese negotiators] leaving you with nothing was A-OK. What I admired about China in my younger

days was they really valued every relationship because they realized they'd need to call on other countries and they treated them with respect.

By 2009, it was so evident they were feeling their status and their power, that they had to make you feel somehow inferior. That's always bad strategy and tactics. They tended to want to dominate every discussion and you were expected to put up with walking away with nothing. That's been catastrophic for Chinese diplomacy. Their position in Asia is weaker in some respects because of their assertiveness. They were premature in their celebrations and having behaved the way they have in southeast Asia, people may later agree to go along to get along, but they won't forget how you acted and they won't ever trust [China]. The change in Chinese diplomacy is bewildering because it's counter-productive and it makes it hard for countries to be as friendly and helpful as China would like them to be.

[If] everybody says the sun rises and sets for you, it's hard not to believe that. And everyone buys into it. It's a system where deference is very important. This is why I think they miscalculated with the U.S., because they weren't sufficiently self-critical. That's a Chinese weakness. ▣

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Raising funds for music students

Over its 50-year history, Friends of the National Arts Centre Orchestra (FNACO) has raised thousands of dollars for music education for students. But it couldn't do what it does without the help of dedicated diplomats.

FNACO launched in 1969, at the same time as the National Arts Centre opened its doors. Then, the organization's mission was to fill seats in the concert halls, but that's since morphed into a role in which it now raises money for the NAC music department. The role has evolved because the National Arts Centre Foundation, which was formed in 2000, also raises funds to support the NAC's work.

The two fundraising models FNACO now uses are both hosted by diplomats. In the first, an ambassador offers to host an intimate dinner for 12 to 20 people, each of whom pays about \$150 a ticket. There's always a small musical performance, usually by student musicians, beforehand. For the second, at a \$100 ticket price, the ambassador hosts a concert, usually with NACO musicians, for between 30 and 400 people followed by a buffet dinner.

For 2019, the embassy of Japan kicked things off with a concert for 50 people. The Swedish ambassador hosted a dinner in February and the Hungarian and Filipino ambassadors will each do two events — a sit-down dinner and a buffet. The Moroccan, German, Pakistani and Austrian missions will also hold an event this year.



Japanese Ambassador Kimihiro Ishikane and his wife, Kaoru, hosted a concert to raise money for FNACO. From left: Violonist and NAC Orchestra concertmaster Yosuke Kawasaki; Albert V. Benoit, president of the FNACO; Ishikane, pianist Vadim Serebryany and Kaoru Ishikane.

With that participation, FNACO is forecasting revenues of \$50,000 this year, a fitting amount for a 50th anniversary.

"We have almost an event per month," says FNACO president Albert Benoit. "There's a lot of eagerness [on the part of diplomats] to support us."

Many embassies sign on once and then make a yearly commitment thereafter. Turkey, for example, hosted an event five years in a row.

"It's a win-win for us and the ambassadors," Benoit says. "The win for them is to be visibly supporting an activity in the community. Many of the ambassadors have an interest in music. The ambassador of Hungary is a musician himself. It helps to get them out of the diplomatic circle and meeting other Canadians, as well. An ambassador's spouse once said: 'We're delighted to meet some real people.'"

Hungarian Ambassador Balint Ódor is

an enthusiastic supporter.

"I was honoured to host two special concerts last year," he says. "My residence is a perfect venue for smaller house-style concerts. I thought it would be great to invite talented Canadian musicians to perform at the embassy and, at the same time, to support the National Arts Centre. The only thing I asked from FNACO is that the musicians perform at least one piece by a Hungarian composer. Classical music brings people closer — especially in a house-style concert format."

Philippines Ambassador Petronila Garcia says music is a way to share culture.

"Music is something all cultures share and it is a language that we can all understand regardless of our background," Garcia says. "We are happy to support music in the Ottawa community and, at the same time, share the culture of the Filipino people with them." ▣




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Right To Play: Opening doors to education

By Rebecca Cuthbert

The following wise words came from Julienne, a 12-year-old girl in Rwanda who has become a community hero: “School is where lives can be changed for the better.”

Julienne is part of a Right To Play leadership club of 125 members, who range in age from 8 to 14. She created the Let Girls Go Back to School campaign to “show how education is vital to a secure future” in a region where thousands of children do not have access to it. For many, this is because they are forced to work in dangerous conditions to supplement their family’s incomes.

In just three months, Julienne’s campaign helped 78 children attend school for the first time or return to school after dropping out. Through creative play, Julienne learned the skills to challenge adults’ deep-seated beliefs and face sometimes hostile parents to deliver her message that “all children, especially girls, deserve school and the right to choose any career that will make them contribute meaningfully to society.”

Julienne and her team accomplished all this by going door to door and engaging with parents of absentee children and calling on influential community figures to help reinforce their message. They also performed inspiring public theatre skits that focused on children’s rights and how an education is a powerful tool to combat child labour.

Julienne is the perfect example of the power of play’s ability to protect, educate and empower children. Right To Play believes play is one of the most powerful and fundamental forces in a child’s life and the organization harnesses it to help 1.9 million children each week to stay in school and out of work. It also works to prevent life-threatening diseases such as HIV and malaria and to keep children safe from exploitation and abuse.

Right To Play was established in 2000 and is already planning for its 20th anniversary next year. The idea for the organization stretches back to 1994, when Norwegian speed skater Johann Olav Koss visited the newly formed African country of Eritrea as an ambassador of Olympic Aid (which later became Right To Play) on a humanitarian trip.

Koss witnessed the effects of a country



Julienne, third from the left, plays a Right To Play game called Catch the Dragon’s Tail with her friends in the leadership club.

rebuilding after decades of conflict. But amongst the wreckage of war, children were still running and playing. One boy in particular caught Koss’ eye. When asked why he was so popular, the children replied it was because he owned a long-sleeved shirt that they could roll up and tie into a ball to play soccer.

Koss was inspired by the children’s resilience and ingenuity. When he returned to Eritrea on another trip, he brought sports equipment for the children. After criticism from media, Koss met with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki and apologized, saying, “you need food and I have brought sports equipment. I made a mistake. I’m sorry.” The president then said something that would inspire Koss to build Right To Play into the global organization it is today. He said, “This is the greatest gift we have ever received. For the first time, we are being treated like human beings — not just something to be kept alive. For the first time, my children can play like any child.”

Right To Play is the only global development organization focused exclusively on using play to transform the lives of

children and youth affected by poverty, war, disease and inequality. It does this in 15 places (Mali, Uganda, Pakistan, Jordan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Thailand, Canada, Lebanon, Mozambique, China, Ethiopia, the Palestinian Territories, Burundi and Ghana) through five pillars: quality education, gender equality, health and well-being, child protection and peaceful communities.

For children such as the boy in Eritrea or Julienne in Rwanda, the organization has helped them find their way back to hope. It has unlocked their potential and allowed them to envision a brighter future for themselves.

Julienne’s efforts are opening doors to big dreams. “Our club taught me to look after myself, my friends and others. Now I want to be a doctor, because I enjoy helping people.” Julienne’s mission will continue to help many communities by dismantling barriers and empowering other children to discover their own potential.

Rebecca Cuthbert is the communications co-ordinator for Right To Play Canada.



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Algeria: A gateway for Europe and the Middle East



By Hocine Meghar

Algeria's economy ranks among the most attractive in the North Africa and Middle East region in terms of gross domestic product, opportunities to invest and doing business. It offers a buoyant market for trade and industrial capacity-building.

Algeria is the largest country in Africa and has the largest economy in North Africa. It also borders six neighbouring countries. As such, it has developed road connections with most of them, notably through what is called the "Trans-Sahara Highway," which stretches north to south across the desert, from our capital of Algiers to Nigeria's capital, Lagos.

My country is endowed with huge natural resources, including oil, gas and minerals of all kinds, and we take pride in our modern communications networks, industrial infrastructure, dynamic hydrocarbon and petrochemical industries and our great potential in agriculture.

A coastline of 1,200 kilometres and modern ports facilities, make Algeria a formidable gateway to neighbouring European countries, as well as the Middle East and Southern Africa.

Over the past 20 years, the economy has undergone deep structural reforms to keep up with the needs for modernization and expansion, all with a view to gaining better access to foreign markets.

The government has revamped legal and administrative frameworks and implemented measures to attract domestic and foreign investments through simplified procedures, a cluster of incentives and advantages that particularly encourage foreign direct investments.

So far, the reforms have yielded good results. Partners are responding to our improved opportunities to do business,



Algeria has a 1,200-kilometre coastline and modern port facilities, making it a gateway for many European countries and countries in the Middle East.

which are bolstered by our strong legal assurances when it comes to investment protection. The country is signatory to all international covenants that govern investments.

One of Algeria's main economic objectives is to take steps to reduce its economic dependency on fossil fuels, the hydrocarbon sector being its backbone. All efforts are geared toward finding alternative paths for diversification with keen interest in renewable energy and green technologies.

Our foreign trade regulations have also been revised and modified with a view toward fostering diversification. The challenge, again, is to promote exports outside of the hydrocarbon business, which accounts for 93 per cent of total exports and, at the same time, to cushion oil-price fluctuations on the world market.

The global value of Algeria's foreign trade was approximately US\$80 billion in 2018, with exports accounting for \$38 billion and imports at \$42 billion.

Besides hydrocarbons, Algeria's other exports consist of fertilizers, chemical products, minerals, oil and agricultural and food products, while imports are mainly industrial equipment, food and agricultural products.

Our major trade partners are located in the European Union (France, Italy, Spain and Germany), followed by China and South Korea. Surprisingly, trade with Af-

rican and Arab countries is still modest.

With Canada, two-way trade amounted to \$1.5 billion in 2017. As such, Algeria is Canada's largest trade partner in Africa. The main Algerian exports to Canada are hydrocarbons, which go primarily to the province of Quebec.

Even so, there is a long tradition in economic and trade relations between the two countries, but there's much more potential. Besides our traditional oil and gas exporters, new sectors worth exploring include agriculture, mining, food processing, solar energy and high-tech, to name a few.

There is also much room for partnerships, especially in the mining industry, where opportunities are limitless.

When it comes to flight connections, it is good to know that Air Algérie operates regular flights year-round from Montreal and, in the summer, Air Canada offers flights to Algiers. Our bilateral air transport agreement was recently amended to allow each company to operate 10 flights a week.

One of the assets at hand is, without a doubt, the talented Algerian diaspora in Canada, which numbers 100,000. It continues to be a driving force for building a global partnership.

Hocine Meghar is Algeria's ambassador to Canada. Reach him at (613) 789-8505 or info@embassyalgeria.ca.



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Trade with Nepal: Ripe for growth



By Kali Prasad Pokhrel

Nepal and Canada established diplomatic relations in 1965, and have enjoyed longstanding friendly ties ever since. Canada has always supported Nepal's socio-economic development. But recently, bilateral interactions between the two countries have entered a new phase, following the first bilateral meeting between our prime ministers and the subsequent signing of a memorandum of understanding establishing a bilateral consultation mechanism in September 2018.

Bilateral trade between Nepal and Canada is modest and therefore ripe for growth. Nepal's main exports to Canada include carpets, garments, pashmina, headgear, handicrafts, tea, coffee and herbal oil. Nepal's main imports from Canada include vegetables, aircraft and parts, nuclear reactors, paper, oil seeds, oleaginous fruits (those used to make oil) and electrical equipment, among others.

Nepal is eligible for Canada's least-developed-country-tariff treatment, which extends duty-free, quota-free access to almost all products imported from Nepal. Even so, it seems sustained demand and easy market access, including trade support incentives, are essential for increasing trade volume. In addition, exchanging trade delegations, participating in trade fairs and exhibitions, and making regular contact with potential buyers are also necessary for boosting bilateral trade. Both our countries must exchange trade delegations and facilitate and support participation in trade fairs.

Nepal will be happy to explore trade-supporting measures in light of Canada's enhanced focus on trade. Trade Facilitation Office (TFO) Canada and the Trade and Export Promotion Centre (TEPC) of Nepal could collaborate to seek opportu-



Nepalese Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau chat during a bilateral meeting held in New York in late 2018.

nities for enhancing bilateral trade.

With the formation of a stable government in the country following the federal elections held in 2017, the Nepalese government is squarely focusing on an agenda of development and prosperity to realize the vision of "Prosperous Nepal: Happy Nepali." In order to realize this overarching goal, the country must focus on trade and investment. Nepal welcomes foreign investment in almost all sectors. Priority areas include energy, agriculture, transport, infrastructure, tourism, industry and information and communication technology. There have been increased investments in the limestone and cement industries in recent years.

Nepal's bilateral trade treaty with India allows products manufactured in Nepal to enjoy duty-free market access in India. Similarly, a large number of products made in Nepal also enjoy duty exemptions in Chinese markets. This provides immense incentives for foreign investors to establish plants in Nepal and leverage the vast markets available in neighbouring India and China. Furthermore, the availability of cheap, English-speaking labour and reduced tax rates offer extra incentives to potential investors.

Nepal has tremendous hydropower potential, which is estimated to be more than 43,000 MW. In the hydro-energy sector, Nepal has signed power trade agreements to export its energy to neighbouring countries. Similarly, cross-border transmis-

sion lines are under construction to foster energy-grid connections and energy trade. Harnessing hydroelectric potential will not only provide Nepal with a more reliable source of electricity, but it could also meet energy deficiency in the South Asia region. Canada's own Manitoba Hydro Consulting Company is currently engaged as a consultant for ADB in the 140 MW Tanahu Hydro Electric Project in Nepal.

Nepal is fully aware of the fact that foreign direct investment does not come in the absence of an enabling environment. It is in view of this that the country has adopted a very liberal legal foreign direct investment regime. Nepal's 2015 FDI policy identified the priority areas for foreign investment in many areas, including hydropower (generation and transmission). The policy is much more investor-friendly, with many provisions revised and updated to attract and facilitate foreign investment. In addition to this, foreign investors are also allowed 100-per-cent ownership of a company in most sectors. Repatriation of capital and profit is permitted without any restrictions. Nepal's tax regime is very transparent, predictable and investor friendly. Canadian investors are cordially invited to explore the opportunities available in Nepal for mutually beneficial ventures and projects.

Kali Prasad Pokhrel is ambassador of Nepal to Canada. Reach him at nepalem-bassy@rogers.com or (613) 680-5513.



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Jordan: A beacon for peace in the Middle East



FIRST NAME: Rima

LAST NAME: Alaadeen

CITIZENSHIP: Jordanian

STARTED CURRENT POSITION:
June 22, 2017

PREVIOUS POSTINGS: Postings to the UAE and Geneva and ambassador to Australia and New Zealand

Jordan, as a modern, moderate Muslim Arab country, has achieved remarkable successes in many fields, including education, health, infrastructure, information technology, industry and tourism.

Short of natural resources, Jordan has focused on the strength of its human capital. The enormous challenges that Jordan faces have not deterred it from continued structural reforms and the modernization of its health and education sectors, as well as continuing to be the single major contributor to the Arab information technology revolution. More than 75 per cent of the Arab world's contributions to the internet have been Jordanian, which serves to showcase what a highly educated, tech-savvy workforce the country has. Jordan is a centre of excellence in health, education and IT in the Middle East and North Africa region, placing it at the heart of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

While Jordan is a small country situated in the middle of a dangerous neighbourhood, it continues to choose bridges over borders, acceptance and inclusion over rejection and exclusion, values that are part and parcel of the makeup of the Jordanian identity and character. These values have been honed and tested by shock and by one crisis after another. Jordan often plays a vital, sometimes critical, role as a beacon of peace, hope and reason in a very complicated and turbulent region of the world.

For the past eight years, the Syrian crisis has continued to drag on and Jordan has served as host to the second-largest number of refugees per capita in the world. Between 2011 and 2018, we've received 1.3 million Syrian refugees, which

has cost more than US\$14.7 billion. Our people have opened their hearts, homes, hospitals, schools and public services and shared our country's scarce natural resources, most notably, the vital food-

water-energy nexus,

on behalf of the international community and in full accord with our country's longstanding humanitarian traditions.

How the world responds to the global crisis of the plight of refugees will determine the future of our world. Stronger recognition and international collaboration are the key if we are to succeed in this endeavour.

Taking into consideration the fact that children make up more than half of the

refugee population in the world, it's imperative to overcome the crisis they have endured, in order to unlock the potential they hold for the collective future of humanity.

While upholding its longstanding, principled position of an open border policy towards people fleeing the horrors of war, Jordan has been dealt a tough hand, given the massive numbers of refugees arriving on our doorstep, particularly over the past eight years. The Jordanian economy has also taken a hit. Jordan, in collaboration with bilateral and multilateral partners, amongst which Canada has been playing a leading role, is undertaking concerted efforts to present its economic narrative of the country's transition to become a more productive, competitive and export-led economy. Jordan is moving towards generating growth by attracting investments and increasing exports, thanks to strong international support for its economic transformation and resilience in the face of major economic challenges, including, but not limited to, the influx of Syrian



Jordan has several refugee camps for fleeing Syrians. In seven years, it has accepted 1.3 million Syrians.

refugees, and the cutoff of significant trade routes due to the closing of borders with Iraq and Syria. Despite these socio-economic pressures and more, the government of Jordan has managed to cut its deficit and has stabilized its public debt levels through the implementation of massive fiscal adjustments.

Jordan continues to articulate the true social essence of Islam, a religion based on the pillars of tolerance, compassion, mercy and respect for the dignity of all mankind. We address bigotry and hate through interfaith dialogue, and uphold the principles of coexistence and mutual respect amongst all people of the world.

Jordan has always been a champion for peaceful conflict resolution, which is why we strongly believe that the long denial of justice and statehood for the Palestinian people is the most destabilizing factor for our region. This issue has far-reaching global ramifications. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been a critical disruptor of global peace and security. Efforts for peace in the Middle East continue to end in injustice, occupation and violence. The fact that it's been more than eight decades not only points at the failure of the concerned parties, but also amplifies the failure of international norms and values.

The answer to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a durable two-state solution, one that meets the needs of both parties and one that is in full conformity with international law and United Nations



The Syrian refugee crisis has cost the Jordanian government US\$14.7 billion since 2011.

resolutions. It should give the Palestinian people — the only people under occupation in the 21st Century — a viable, independent, sovereign Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. It should also ensure peace, security and full regional integration for Israel. Anything unilateral

that results in unequal rights or less than a lasting peace will be a moral disaster that serves only to ensure the continuation of this conflict.

King Abdullah II, as the custodian of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, continues to work tirelessly to protect those sites and preserve their historic Arab, Muslim and Christian identity while carrying the Hashemite Custodianship close to his heart. "To me, and to all Jordanians, the Hashemite Custodianship of Jerusalem's Islamic and Christian holy sites is a binding duty."

Jordan has been vocal in calling for an end to global terror and extremism, and has flagged the urgent need for a collective holistic approach. That's what we need if we are to defeat this evil that continues to target all countries of the world. Our response must address the security, military and ideological aspects of this peril. It must address the global threat, but also counter the radical narrative through adhering to moderation and inclusion, providing all people, especially the youth, with hope and a stake in the endless possibilities and promises of our times.

Rima Alaadeen is Jordan's ambassador to Canada.

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Among the eight Eastern European countries that joined the European Union along with Malta and Cyprus on May 1, 2004, the Czech Republic currently boasts the highest per-capita GDP with \$35,234, according to the OECD, based on 2016 figures.



The world's best national debt managers

Debt is a powerful force, with total global government debt exceeding US\$65 trillion, up from \$37 trillion a decade earlier. **Wolfgang Depner** examines global debt and gives shout-outs to the world's best financial bosses.

It was a small but symbolic occasion. For the first time in 20 years, Germany's debt counter reversed direction in January 2018. With every passing second, Germany's total public debt of US\$2.37 trillion shrinks by \$572. At this rate, it will take Germany 800 years to pay back its current debt. Whether Germany or any other country still exists in the early 29th Century is another question.

This debt reversal invites several points. First and foremost, it draws attention to the massive mountain of debt that confronts governments around the world. At the end of 2018, total government debt exceeded \$65 trillion (all numbers expressed in U.S. dollars) — up from \$37 trillion a decade earlier. The U.S. government alone owed US\$21.9 trillion in early 2019, and the current trendline of U.S. debt has known only one direction — up.

Historical and contemporary reasons for this reality are many, but include tax cuts, social entitlements, stimulus spending, military spending and the debt itself.

As the *The New York Times* reports, the U.S. could soon pay more in interest on its debt than it spends on military and social programs combined. This point speaks to one of the fundamental dangers of debt. It starves socially productive causes of scarce resources that benefit the public.

Money that goes towards paying off debt won't go towards building roads, schools, hospitals and scientific research, and limits the financial flexibilities of government when faced with genuine emergencies, such as a war or an economic depression, which require counter-cyclical stimulus.

Debts also raise interest rates, causing inflation that discourages private investment and weakens consumer purchasing power.

Finally, debt is also a question of inter-generational equality. Rising debt levels in the present will leave future generations with unappetizing choices: They can either raise taxes, cut spending, or both, to deal with the burdens created by past generations.

Canadians of a certain age will likely remember the difficult choices that Canada faced in the 1990s when the federal Liberals, under prime minister Jean Chrétien and finance minister Paul Martin, cut social programs across the board to undo the damage caused by previous Liberal and Tory governments.

Or more drastically, consider the effects that the sovereign debt crisis of 2011 had on societies across Europe, especially Greece, but including Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Cyprus. Briefly, these countries were unable to service their public debts, forcing them to accept financial help from the international community in exchange for policy reforms, whose social legacies will remain for generations.

By that measure, German officials have reasons to crow about their financial management skills. But smugness would be misguided.

Debt is not just an economic variable, but also a political object. No small number of economists, including French economist Thomas Piketty, have argued that an excessive focus on debt is detrimental to the quality of governance.

Within this context, Piketty has been especially critical of Germany in its role as an advocate for austerity throughout the European Union generally and the Eurozone specifically. (Under the Maastricht Treaty, signatories must limit their debt-to-gross-domestic-product (GDP) ratio to 60 per cent and their annual deficit must be no greater than 3 per cent of GDP).

This critique reached a crescendo in the mid-2010s when Germany insisted on — some say, imposed — harsh austerity measures as Greece and other Eurozone members struggled with their debts in the aftermath of the great financial crisis — a crisis initially caused by private banks rather than governments.

Germany, in this reading, was causing unnecessary harm to millions, while undermining solidarity in the European Union, ultimately to its own detriment. Critics also pointed out that Germany itself had been the benefactor of significant debt relief in the respective aftermaths

BY NATION: DEBT-TO-GDP RATIO

Country	Debt-GDP-Ratio (2017 unless otherwise noted)
Australia	65.7
Austria	94.9
Belgium	121.9
Canada	109.1
Chile	29.6
Czech Republic	44
Denmark	50
Estonia	12.6
Finland	73.2
France	124.2
Germany	71.5
Greece	188.7
Hungary	91.4
Iceland	107.6
Ireland	77.2
Israel (2016)	75.2
Italy	152.6
Japan	234.5
South Korea	N/A
Latvia	47.3
Lithuania	47.8
Luxembourg	27.7
Mexico	51.8
Netherlands	70.0
New Zealand (2015)	121.6
Norway	42.8
Poland	68.2
Portugal	145.4
Slovak Republic	58.1
Slovenia	88.2
Spain	114.7
Sweden	57.9
Switzerland	45.2
Turkey	35.2
United Kingdom	116.9
United States	135.7

CREDIT: [HTTPS://DATA.OECD.ORG/GGA/GENERAL-GOVERNMENT-DEBT.HTM](https://data.oecd.org/gga/general-government-debt.htm)

of both world wars in the first half of the 20th Century. Germans themselves might also concede that their government's eagerness to cut debt has left behind a crumbling social and physical infrastructure.

(On the other hand, Germany's experience with hyperinflation in the early 1920s, caused by debt related to the First World War and reparation payments, con-

tinues to scare contemporary generations.)

Finally, debt is also a moral category with religious overtones. The German word for debt — *schuld* — can also translate as guilt or transgression. Accruing debt thus appears as a sinful act. Readers of Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and Capitalism* will also be familiar with the argument that frugality is close to godliness in some corners of the world.

Others may disagree, but debt has been an undeniable part of human history, as David Graeber shows in *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*.

To paraphrase Karl Marx, Graeber's tour-de-force leaves the impression that the "history of all hitherto existing society is the history of debt."

Or as François Rabelais says through his character, Panurge, debt "is the whole Cement whereby the Race of Mankind is kept together; yea, of such Virtue and Efficiency that, I say, the whole progeny of Adam would very suddenly perish without it."

Or, put in a less stilted manner, civilization itself might collapse without it.

No G7 countries made Top 10

In light of these complexities, we have decided to highlight the 10 countries that have shown the greatest skills in managing their public finances as measured by their debt-to-GDP ratio.

Specifically, we have chosen to highlight developed countries as identified by their membership in the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) with debt-to-GDP ratios below 60 per cent, the prudent debt limit for developed countries that appears in the literature and is used by the European Union. (All figures are from 2017, as recorded by the OECD, to ensure comparability at a definitive point of time.)

So what does this list reveal? It suggests that the most frugal nations fall into two broad categories: small, technologically advanced countries with specialized economies and efficient institutions, and up-and-comers with emerging social systems. Notably, none of the world's leading economies, as represented by the G7, made the list, although Germany currently hovers just above the 60 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio as of this writing.

1. Estonia: 12.6 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio

Estonians, 30 years ago, joined Latvians and Lithuanians in a human chain that connected their respective capitals of Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius. The occasion of



Estonia has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio among OECD countries, a result of several smart decisions since its 1991 independence. Today, the country is a free and efficient society.

their protest was the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, whose secret protocol consigned the Baltics to the Soviet Union.

This “Baltic way” contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and catapulted Estonia onto an exceptional path of economic growth during which it has not only defied expectations, but also defined standards. One such standard is the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio among OECD countries, the outcome of several decisions.

Successive governments, starting with the radical reform administration of Mart Laar, have made the Estonian government less corrupt and more efficient.

Estonia has risen to 21st spot in Transparency International’s *Corruption Perceptions Index (2017)* over the years, approaching the standards of the Scandinavian neighbours from which it draws inspiration. Businesses can set up shop with speed and bureaucrats always look for efficiencies.

Estonians can already file their taxes, order various public documents and even vote online, through a system that allows citizens and residents to identify themselves online and supply legally binding digital signatures.

The Estonian cabinet — already working paperless for years — has since announced additional measures to completely digitize government in all but a

few areas. According to *The New Yorker*, digitization reportedly saves the Estonian state two per cent of its GDP per year in salaries and expense — about the same amount that it pays for its military. This has led to the joke that the country gets its national security for free.

Its status as “most advanced digital society in the world,” according to *WIRED* magazine, not only saves Estonia money, but also stokes a digital economy that fills public coffers by drawing global talent and money. Tallinn has emerged as a hub for high-tech industries, which account for 15 per cent of GDP, and if you have ever used Skype to connect with business partners and family members around the world, you can thank, among others, a group of Estonian programmers.

An e-residency program has also attracted investors who want to take advantage of Estonia’s flat-tax system, efficient administration and membership in the European Union (EU) and Eurozone — clubs Estonia increasingly shapes through the New Hanseatic League, a Dutch-led coalition of northern EU members calling for more frugal, effective governance.

E-residents of Estonia include not only several venture capitalists, but also His Holiness Pope Francis and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose government has been studying Estonia as a model for digital governance.

Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid

told *The New York Times* that Estonia is the first digital society in the world to have its own state. Her assessment is not far off; in many ways, Estonia is the ultimate startup.

When Estonia regained independence after decades of foreign domination, its backwardness offered a blessing in disguise. The country could start with the latest technology, which it married with an entrepreneurial spirit and public investments in the educational system, which is among the best in the world.

What has emerged is a trim but free and efficient society, largely unencumbered by the expensive legacies that burden other countries. Whether others can copy Estonia — a country of 1.3 million people — remains unclear. But it shows that countries can overtake without first catching up.

2. Luxembourg: 27.74 per cent

This founding member of the European Union (1957) and the Eurozone (1999) is Europe’s version of Singapore. Despite its small population (605,000), area (it’s a little smaller than half of Prince Edward Island, or 2,586 square kilometres,) and absence of natural resources, Luxembourg ranks as the fifth-wealthiest place on the planet, with a per capita income of \$105,100, according to the *CIA World Factbook*. Luxembourg, like Singapore, has leveraged



In the No. 2 spot, Luxembourg is a founding member of the European Union and the Eurozone and is considered Europe's version of Singapore.

a strategic location with efficient institutions to become a global hub for financial services, logistics — and increasingly — technology. Its multilingual, multinational workforce lends it an international flair.

Measures of this success include not only Luxembourg's high per capita GDP, but also its positive trade balance and low level of public debt, at 27.74 per cent of GDP in 2016, the lowest rate in the region. Compare: The OECD shows Germany, Belgium and France with respective rates of 71.5, 121.9 and 124.2 in 2017. While not a direct neighbour, the nearby Netherlands records a rate of 70 per cent. So some, if not the most important members of the EU and the Eurozone, do not come across as models of fiscal discipline.

It is difficult to draw like-to-like comparisons in light of Luxembourg's size. But its broader influence on fiscal policy should not be underestimated. Luxembourg hosts the European stability mechanism, responsible for the euro's permanent rescue fund and the height of the Greek debt crisis during the summer of 2015 coincided with the country's presidency of the Council of the European Union.

This episode thrust two politicians from Luxembourg into the maelstrom — Jean Asselborn, Luxembourg's minister of foreign and European affairs, and Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, the cabinet-like executive of the European Union.

Juncker, especially, found himself torn. Critics from the left, such as Piketty, accused him of being too harsh towards Greece, while fellow conservative Wolfgang Schäuble, then Germany's finance minister, accused Juncker of not being harsh enough.

Juncker's agenda of financial support in exchange for reforms eventually prevailed, but history's judgment of his role in the Greek debt crisis remains to be seen.

As European affairs correspondent Caroline de Gruyter argues, Luxembourg is the bellwether of Europe, whose policies reflect larger European tensions.

Luxembourg fully supports European integration, but has also shown a lack of solidarity by exploiting — even encouraging — questionable business practices at the expense of its tax-deprived neighbours and allies, as the 2014 LuxLeaks scandal exemplifies.

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists revealed in 2014 how the government of Luxembourg was sheltering taxes for 340 companies, with IKEA, Amazon, Deutsche Bank and Canada's Yamana Gold, Fairfax Financial Holdings and Brookfield Asset Management among them. One of the central figures in this scandal was none other than Juncker himself, whose time as Luxembourg's prime minister (1995-2013) and finance minister (1989-2009) coincided with the worst practices. Having survived a vote of censure

from the European Parliament, he was also, strangely, put in charge of overseeing reform of Luxembourg's tax-dodge policies. Subsequent leaks have since revealed that Juncker's commitment to tax fairness before and after becoming president of the European Commission has been shaky at best.

Like the rest of Europe, Luxembourg faces what de Gruyter calls "enormous" future pension liabilities because of its aging yet well-paid civil servants, whose salaries are on par with the private sector.

This ticking time bomb, coupled with competition from other niche countries, and the populist threat of European disintegration, could well rob Luxembourg of its exemplary status.

3. Chile: 29.65 per cent

As the first Latin American country to join the OECD (2010), Chile is often held up as a model, showing the benefits of trade, deregulation and private-market solutions during its ascension into the club of developed countries, ahead of Latin American powerhouses Argentina and Brazil. This case rests on the growth that Chile experienced after the end of the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship in 1988.

Between 2003 and 2013, real growth averaged almost 5 per cent. Others may point to the commodity boom of the early 2000s, during which the price of copper surged. (Chile is the world's largest pro-

ducer of copper. It accounts for 43 per cent of its exports and 20 per cent of government revenue).

Chile also pursued broader social reforms that fought corruption, reduced tax evasion and protected consumers during the two decades that followed Pinochet's departure.

"The tiger of Latin America," as *The Economist* called it, is now looking to regain its bounce after a period of stagnation that exposed Chile's dependence on copper, but also deeper social tensions over the right economic approach. Perhaps the most obvious was the Chilean Winter, during which university students demanded relief from crippling debts caused by expensive for-profit universities.

These protests — which started in 2011 and lasted for two years — also appeared as a critique of the neo-liberal policies promoted by Sebastián Piñera, the country's first right-wing president since Pinochet.

Piñera's socialist predecessor and eventual successor, Michele Bachelet, seized on this sentiment to regain office in 2014.



Chile's financial management is a model of the benefits of trade, deregulation and private-market solutions. Shown here are former president Michele Bachelet and current President Sebastián Piñera.

But her turn towards the left scared business, and Piñera now finds himself back in office, having to navigate a divided society at home and an uncertain economic climate abroad, with copper prices now pointing downwards.

Chile's debt-to-GDP curve neatly captures these general trendlines. In 2003, its

rate was 23.9. By 2007, it had fallen to 11.3 per cent. It rose as Bachelet's government pumped money into the economy to counter the effects of the Great Recession.

It has been rising ever since — through Piñera's first term and Bachelet's second term, with the trendline pointing up during the early phases of Piñera's second term, reaching 29.65 per cent in 2017.

Chile's debt remains low compared to its neighbours, but economists fear it might find itself in a middle-income trap, unable to expand economic growth after reaching a certain level, while faced with growing expectations from its expanding middle class.

4. Turkey: 35.17 per cent

Future historians of Turkey who are studying the era of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his AKP will likely distinguish between two broad periods: the period before the failed coup of July 15, 2016 and the period after.

The start of the first period in 2003 — when he took office as prime minister — may well go down as the start of a golden era in Turkey's economic history. During this prosperous period, the country recovered from a banking crisis at the start of the decade that had required an intervention from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The country experienced sustained economic growth, with GDP

growing more than 6 per cent annually until 2008.

Exports, especially into the neighbouring European Union, rose, inflation fell and the public debt melted away. Consider the numbers: In 2001, the IMF recorded Turkey's debt-to-GDP ratio at 77.94. By 2008, it had fallen to 39.98 per cent. In short, it nearly halved in six years.

While GDP plunged and debt rose in the immediate aftermath of the Great Recession (2009), growth soon recovered. Debt levels once again dropped. In 2010, Turkey recorded a debt-to-GDP ratio of 49.2 per cent, according to the OECD. By 2015, it had to fallen to 32.8 per cent, in line with the IMF, which pegged the debt-to-GDP ratio at 32.93 per cent in 2015.

Accordingly, Turkey's status rose, especially among its Arab neighbours, who considered its mixture of democratic governance, capitalism and mildly Islamic policies a model worthy of emulation during the Arab Spring.

Turkey under Erdoğan has since become a synonym for political instability and authoritarianism, with an economy that is reeling. Galloping inflation, rising trade deficits and a slumping raised global fears about the stability of Turkey, a geo-strategic hinge between the Western world, Russia and the Middle East.

The problems besieging Turkey's economic model of consumption and



In 2010, Turkey recorded a debt-to-GDP ratio of 49.2 per cent, according to the OECD. By 2015, it had fallen to 32.8 per cent, in line with the IMF, which pegged the debt-to-GDP ratio at 32.93 per cent in 2015. Now it sits at 35.17.

construction did not start with the amateurish military putsch against Erdogan, but his response to it deepened them.

Erdogan's refurbishing of Turkey into a presidential system tailored to his needs has delayed economic reforms, the need for which predate the coup. Mass arrests of political opponents and property confiscations have scared off investors, who are leery of losing their investments at the hands of an unpredictable political system with a waning commitment towards the rule of law and democratic rule.

Tourists — an important source of foreign revenue — have stayed away on general fears of further instability and reports that the regime has arrested foreigners for making anti-Erdogan comments.

This institutional paranoia is personal. Erdogan sees enemies plotting against him everywhere, and his obsession with defeating them has not only caused diplomatic rows with allies, but also blinded him to the causes of Turkey's problems. Contrary to his claims, Turkey's economic problems were not some Western plot. But the institutions that could have told him to act otherwise refused to resist the Bully of the Bosphorus, whose grasp of economics revealed itself to be questionable during the crisis. True, it could have been worse, but it has been bad enough, as Turkey officially experienced a recession last year.

5. Switzerland: 42.46 per cent

Leave it to the supposedly staid Swiss to have started a revolution in public financial management.

Between 1990 and 1998, the country's debt-to-GDP ratio rose from 31 per cent to 54 per cent. As Stephan Danninger wrote for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2002, this ratio was "not excessive" by international comparison, but nonetheless remarkable, because several European countries, including the Netherlands and Denmark, had taken steps to reduce their respective ratios.

The reasons Danninger cites for Switzerland's rising debt included economic stagnation because of low productivity growth and high unemployment (by Swiss standards). Perhaps the central piece of Swiss reforms during this period was the introduction of a debt brake through a constitutional amendment approved by 85 per cent of voters in a national referendum in 2001 and effective since 2003.

Switzerland's *Schuldenbremse* [debt brake] links expenditures with revenues over the course of an economic cycle to



Switzerland's government links expenditures with revenues over the course of an economic cycle to ensure that expenditures don't exceed revenues. It allows the federal government to run deficits during recessions while generating surpluses during booms.

ensure that expenditures do not exceed revenues. Its rules allow the federal government to run deficits during recessions, while generating surpluses during booms. It also contains an escape hatch to deal with extraordinary circumstances.

So has the debt brake worked? On the surface, yes. While other countries have seen their debt levels rise, Switzerland has reduced its outstanding obligations, granting itself more fiscal room and lower interest payments.

Consider the following: In 2003, Switzerland's debt-to-GDP ratio hovered around 59 per cent. Between 2007 and 2016, it ranged between 45.6 and 42.46 per cent. By comparison, the average debt-to-GDP ratio within the OECD exceeded 80 per cent in 2015. More fundamentally, the debt brake has changed the budgetary process. It discourages ministers from spending surpluses during good times, forcing them to prioritize, because the expenditure ceiling drops during booms.

This Swiss self-restraint not only reflects the general loathing of debt in German-speaking countries, it has also become a source of Helvetic pride as Swiss officials tout their debt brake as a model for others to follow.

It certainly inspired Germany, Europe's largest economy, to introduce its own debt brake in 2009. Germany has since touted this attitude to the rest of Europe as an apostle for austerity, much to the chagrin

of other EU members and notable economists such as Piketty.

But if the statistics tell one story about the Swiss debt brake, it is also important to acknowledge that it exists in a specific context. Switzerland, one of the world's most advanced economies, already possessed relatively low debt levels by international standards before introducing its debt brake, and some economists have argued that the Swiss federal government is actually not spending enough.

6. Norway: 42.8 per cent

What if Venezuela had acted like Norway? Would the country with the fifth-largest oil reserves in the world have avoided its current economic catastrophe if it had placed portions of its oil earnings in a sovereign wealth fund?

While hypothetical questions are of no assistance in the current situation, they draw attention to the dangers of managing newfound wealth — dangers Norway has been able to circumnavigate with careful planning and growing confidence.

Norwegians are not just among the happiest and healthiest people on the planet. They are also among the wealthiest thanks to their government's decision in 1996 to place revenues from the country's petroleum sector, which accounts for about 9 per cent of all jobs, 12 per cent of GDP, 13 per cent of revenues and 37 per cent of exports, in a sovereign wealth fund.

Norwegians could have easily chosen to indulge themselves. But as many countries can confirm, oil wealth is not only fleeting, but also distorting. It encourages expensive imports, diminishes long-term productivity by raising local wages, and much of it often ends up in the hands of a few, corrupting politics along the way.

Norway, however, chose a different path. It showed, in the words of current NATO general-secretary Jens Stoltenberg, the “political courage” to save most of its oil money. The Government Pension Fund of Norway has since become, in the words of *Forbes*, “the world’s biggest state piggy bank,” whose asset value surpassed \$1 trillion in September 2017.

To appreciate the size of the world’s largest sovereign wealth fund, consider the following. Valued at around \$1.1 trillion, it is worth more than twice the Norwegian economy, and would net every Norwegian man, woman and child around \$200,000.

By virtue of the fund, 5.3 million Norwegians hold about 1.5 per cent of all global stocks, an amazing figure considering that the world’s second-largest fund is in the possession of China, with a population of about 1.4 billion people.

This reality gives Norwegians considerable sway on global economics. If they do not like the investment decisions of their government for various ethical or environmental reasons, industries and companies around the world will feel their influence.

So what accounts for the success of the fund? First, the Norwegian petroleum industry is heavily regulated and taxed, with private oil companies paying a tax rate of 78 per cent. Second, the fund is transparent and subject to parliamentary control. Third, the Norwegian state continues to show restraint in the face of political pressure to spend more, leaving Norway with perhaps the best of all worlds: relatively low debt, a functioning social system and a healthy financial cushion for the future, once its current oil supplies have dried up.

7. Czech Republic: 44 per cent

Three decades after the end of the Cold War and 15 years after the expansion of the European Union into Eastern Europe, post-Communist countries continue to catch up to their Western neighbours and former political rivals.

Consider the Czech Republic. Among the eight Eastern European countries that joined the European Union along with Malta and Cyprus on May 1, 2004, the



Some of Norway's economic success is due to its responsible management of its oil wealth.

Czech Republic currently boasts the highest per-capita GDP with \$35,234, according to the OECD, based on 2016 figures. Only Malta tops all members who joined the EU in 2004 with a per-capita GDP of \$38,308. While still behind the EU’s average per capita GDP of \$40,210, the Czech Republic has undeniably benefited from the end of the Cold War and European integration as an important location for the European automobile industry.

One measure of the country’s success is its relatively low debt-to-GDP ratio, which currently sits at 44 per cent, down from 58 per cent in 2013. This said, the debt-to-GDP ratio was 18.2 per cent in 1996, and 32.9 per cent in 2004, when the Czech Republic joined the EU.

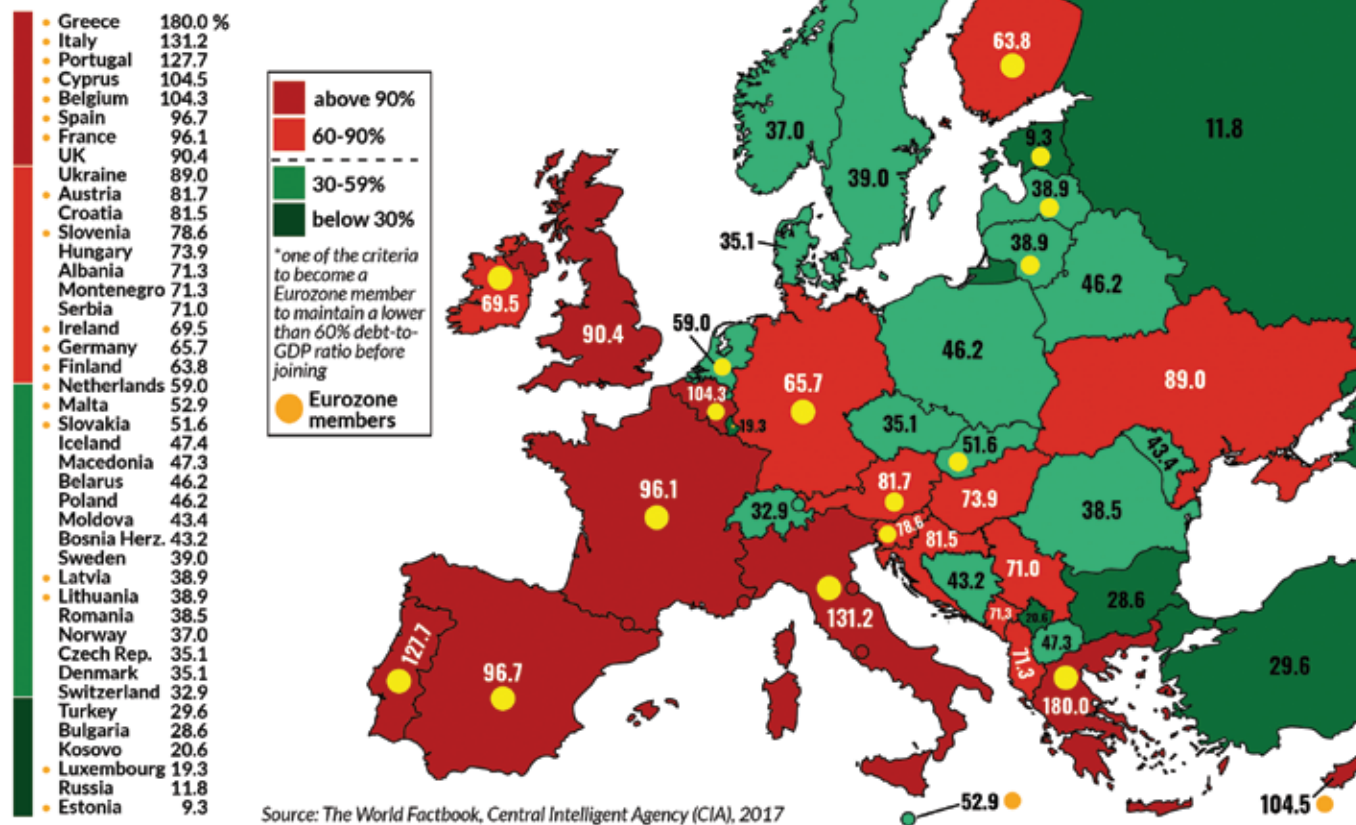
In short, the Czech Republic has been improving its public finances, but only

after seeing debt levels rise, with the proviso that rates have remained manageable when compared to the rest of the OECD. (Reasons for the rise in debt during the late 1990s, early 2000s included, among others, currency depreciation, sluggish growth and new accounting measures that identified previously hidden debt).

However, Czech officials are eager to note that international credit agencies show confidence in the country as an investment location with some investors calling the Czech Republic the Switzerland of Eastern Europe. But, as with the rest of Europe, the Czech Republic faces a demographic time bomb. As economists Nicholas Eberstadt and Hans Groth note, “inexorable demographic forces” are transforming OECD countries into a “grey zone” where fewer young people will

Debt-to-GDP Ratio in European Countries

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have to support more older people.

“Demographic projections today depict a radically different Western world 20 years hence,” they say, “one with stagnating populations, shrinking workforces, steadily increasing pension-age populations and ballooning implicit social spending commitments.”

The economic effects of these “impending demographic changes” include slower economic growth and higher public debt burdens.

While the Czech Republic is not aging as quickly as Western neighbours, such as Germany, it (like other Eastern European countries) is facing the same trend lines.

8. Latvia: 47.3 per cent

Why would anyone adopt the euro? That was the question facing Latvia when it applied for membership in the Eurozone in spring 2013. Two years after the start of the sovereign debt crisis, the financial state of several Eurozone members was destroying global confidence in the common currency as the crisis hurtled towards

its climax in 2015, when Greece nearly left the common currency. Why would anyone jump onboard a sinking ship, many wondered.

Latvians, too, had their doubts. Almost 60 per cent of them questioned why their country would exchange its currency — the lat — for the euro, some two decades after having restored it as a symbol of Latvia’s regained independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This reluctance reflected Latvia’s recent economic history. Between 2007 and 2009, it suffered the worst recession in Europe, as GDP dropped 24 per cent. The Latvian government responded by combining financial support from the European Union and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) worth \$10.1 billion with drastic austerity measures. Fully 30 per cent of civil servants lost their jobs and those who kept theirs earned 40 per cent less. New taxes appeared and old ones rose. These measures not only rapidly increased poverty among Latvians, but also encouraged tens of thousands of them to leave, no small

figure for a country of a little more than two million.

But this shock therapy worked insofar that GDP recovered. By 2012, the Latvian economy grew 5.6 per cent, the fastest in Europe. But it also made Latvians who, like their Baltic neighbours, see themselves as austere northern Europeans, weary of committing their financial futures to outsiders, especially spendthrift politicians in southern Europe.

Joining the Eurozone was not a question of fulfilling its technical criteria. While Latvian debt rose to 53.2 per cent of GDP in 2010 from 12.8 per cent in 2007 because of the Great Recession, the debt-to-GDP ratio has remained well below the 60-per cent criterion.

It was rather a question of whether Latvians were ready to wear a financial straitjacket with all its perks, but also responsibilities. In the end, arguments in favour of the euro rested on Latvia’s pre-existing financial ties with euro countries, and geo-strategic concerns in the face of the Russian threat. As one Latvian



Latvia, whose debt-to-GDP ratio is 47.3 per cent, joined the Eurozone in 2014, with 60 per cent of the population questioning why the country would do so. Today, 83 per cent of Latvians approve of the move.

entrepreneur summed it up at the time, “better the euro than the ruble.”

Five years after officially joining, the government has used Latvia’s Eurozone membership to raise the country’s international influence, and Latvians, while still stashing away lats, have come around, with 83 per cent of those surveyed supporting the euro.

9. Lithuania: 47.8 per cent

The last of the three Baltic countries to adopt the euro in 2015 after Estonia (2011) and Latvia (2014), Lithuania is also the last country to have joined the OECD (2018).

But it would be a mistake to think of Lithuania as a laggard. Between 2006 and 2017, it recorded the highest economic growth in the OECD with an average annual GDP increase of just less than 4 per cent. Not surprisingly, it has received praise for its economic growth generally and financial management specifically. “The financial system is resilient, and fiscal positions stabilized after a long period of deficits and rising debt,” the OECD wrote in its June 2018 survey of Lithuania.

Mixed with this praise is the acknowledgement that Lithuania has seen its debt levels rise, from 17.1 per cent of GDP in 2008 to a recent height of 54 per cent in

2015.

It is now trending downward, but other more pressing issues loom. They include



Between 2006 and 2017, Lithuania recorded the highest economic growth in the OECD with GDP growth averaging of just less than 4 per cent.

the need to raise productivity and address demographic challenges.

In terms of productivity, Lithuania remains 30 per cent below the OECD average. Lithuania — like Latvia — is also

losing population. In 1990, its population numbered 3.69 million. In early 2019, it numbered 2.86 million because of declining births and out-migration, mostly of the young. The OECD calls this trend “disquieting” because it deprives the country of its most dynamic people, while causing skill shortages.

Ultimately, developments such as those likely pose more significant threats to the long-term sustainability of any society than any specific debt number.

10. Denmark: 50 per cent

The Nordic model remains an object of uncritical admiration and misleading vilification. Its supporters on the left downplay its transferability to larger jurisdictions. Promises of Scandinavian social policies by progressive politicians in the United States may be idealistic, but ultimately illusory. They would not only meet significant institutional barriers, but also cultural opposition. Conservative voices have also made the point that mimicking the Nordic model in the United States might not only mean higher taxes for the very rich, but also parts of the middle class.

Critics of the Nordic model, meanwhile, overstate its tax burden and detrimental

continued on page 49

The worst offenders

Japan: 234.5 per cent

Decades of economic stagnation and demographic decline have contributed to Japan's status as the country with the largest public debt, which it is unlikely to ever repay. As the OECD notes in a 2018 forecast, Japan's debt-to-GDP ratio "poses serious risks" — maybe not immediately, but in the not-so-distant future.

Japan remains stable for now, because Japanese citizens hold most of their country's debt and successive governments have skilfully managed the debt burden. But trouble awaits. Japanese society is aging rapidly and its workforce has been shrinking for some time. This development will make it difficult, if not impossible, for Japan to grow itself out of debt unless it improves productivity as part of larger reforms that would direct the economy towards high-yield industries and include higher taxes and more foreign investment by selling debt plus interest. But such a move would also commit more of the public purse to interest payments — a vicious circle.

Predictions that Japan won't generate enough tax income to service its debt by 2041 have already made the rounds.

Greece: 188.7 per cent

Current polls suggest Greek voters won't return Alexis Tsipras to the prime minister's office when they head to the polls later this year. While Tsipras might have pulled off the impossible when he convinced Greek legislators to approve a deal that settled Greece's long-running name dispute with its northern neighbour now known as North Macedonia, his domestic popularity has suffered since he and his socialist Syriza party surged to power in early 2015 on the promise to promulgate the crushing austerity measures that the so-called *troika* (the European Central Bank, the European Commission and International Monetary Fund) had imposed on Greece in exchange for financial support.

Notwithstanding some initial resistance, Tsipras has emerged as a reliable partner (or devious traitor, depending on your perspective) in the fulfilment of austerity. Since 2015, he has evolved into a respected international leader who has forged strong, even friendly relations with former political enemies, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, once an object of Hitler



Japan has a staggering debt-to-GDP ratio — it's the highest in the world at 234.5 per cent.

comparisons by Tsipras' most rabid supporters and others opposed to austerity.

By the standards of the international market, Greece has been a successful reform case since it started to sell its debt again in January 2019. Greeks themselves are feeling more optimistic as well. But sluggish economic growth and demographic collapse encourage agreement with *Der Spiegel's* prediction that long-term recovery and financial stability remain elusive.

It could also have something to do with the fact that 30 per cent of Greeks don't pay their taxes. By 2014 estimates, Greeks owed taxes totalling nearly \$86 billion, mostly owed since 2009. In 2016, estimates put the loss at between 11 billion euros and 16 billion euros a year. Government revenue loss is due largely to three causes: 1.9 to 4.7 per cent of GDP lost through personal income tax evasion, 2.3 per cent to value-added tax fraud and 0.5 per cent from alcohol, tobacco and fuel smuggling.

Italy: 152.6 per cent

Less than one year after the far-right Northern League and the far-left Five Star Movement formed a populist governing coalition that promised to put Italians first, the country stands close to the edge of financial ruin. Downward-pointing GDP numbers have dashed hopes of a sustained economic recovery, and investors continue to worry about the state of Italian banks and public finances.

Rising yields on Italian government debt — the premium promised to investors willing to purchase increasingly risky Italian IOUs — represent only the proverbial tip of the iceberg.

Decades of political corruption and delayed reforms have diminished infrastructure and institutions critical for economic productivity. The best and the brightest Italians continue to seek their fortunes elsewhere, leaving behind an increasingly anxious and aging society whose economic productivity has been stagnating for years.

Both the Northern League and the Five Star Movement have promised to reverse these developments during their rise to power, but their proposed solutions — tax cuts for the rich, more social spending for the poor — are not only ideologically incoherent, but also dangerous in combination in a way that threatens to bring down the entire European Union.

Portugal: 145.4 per cent

If Italy is a high-debt country heading in the wrong direction concerning its finances, Portugal is heading in the other direction. Following the sovereign debt crisis, Portugal imposed measures that cut spending, but also reformed the economy. Years of painful cuts and a bailout program later, Portugal is on the path towards financial stability — at least in the short term, if not beyond. As the OECD says, in urging additional reform in a 2018 forecast, Portugal's debt-to-GDP ratio appears on a "firmly declining path." Notably, Portugal has achieved its current path without the social unrest that roiled Greece. It has also resisted — at least for now — the populist temptation witnessed in Italy, and to a lesser degree, in neighbouring Spain.

United States: 135.7 per cent

The United States — which records the third-highest debt-to-GDP ratio among G7 countries with 135.7 per cent (behind Italy and Japan) according to the OECD based on 2017 figures — faces no imminent danger of financial collapse, because the U.S. dollar is the world's reserve currency. Broadly speaking, it can always borrow more money by printing more of it — an option not as easily available to other countries. This said, the latest tax cut added \$1 trillion to the debt, making it less and less likely that President Donald Trump will fulfil his promise of eliminating the debt within eight years.

effects on public finances. Yes, taxes in Scandinavian countries such as Denmark are higher than the OECD average, but they get something in return. By way of comparison, single workers in Denmark faced an average net tax rate of 35.8 per cent, while the OECD average was 25.5 per cent. The rate for married workers with two children was 25.3 per cent in Denmark, 14 per cent for the OECD. Danish workers, in other words, get to keep less of their earnings.

They also pay higher taxes on everything from cars to coffee. But they get more in return — be it through specific social policies or the general peace of mind that they are living in a society where income redistribution creates social cohesion and a more level playing field, not unlike what American political philosopher John Rawls had envisioned.

More important, the presence of Norway and Denmark on this list undermines the theory that Scandinavian countries are spendthrifts. (Sweden's debt-to-GDP ratio also falls below the 60 per cent threshold at 57.9 while Finland exceeds it at 73.2. This said, neither fits the stereotype of an unresponsive, lethargic welfare state.)

What ultimately distinguishes Denmark and the other Scandinavian coun-



Danes pay higher taxes on everything from cars to coffee, but Denmark's commitment to best practices that deliver better services at lower costs is what distinguishes it.

tries is their commitment to best practices that deliver better services at lower costs, regardless of political concerns and institutions that increase transparency and decrease corruption.

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U.S. Marines fire a Howitzer in northern Syria in Operation Inherent Resolve, part of the global coalition to defeat IS (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria.

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What happens in Syria now?

There are global consequences to a U.S. withdrawal and the winners are Iran and Russia.

By J. Paul de B. Taillon

The United States' entry into the coalition fight against the Islamic State began in 2015; the Islamic State had cut out large swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria, claiming a caliphate. In the following three years, the self-declared caliphate has all but been eradicated; however, throughout Syria and Iraq, the Islamic State (IS) has not disbanded, nor has its narrative been defeated. Moreover, it continues to attract adherents to the cause and continues to perpetrate terror attacks worldwide. And a lack of political stability could easily usher in a phoenix-like return of Islamic State supporters and, likely, their territorial aspirations.

On Dec. 9, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted that the Islamic State had been defeated in Syria and that it was his intention to pull back American forces from that war-torn region. Trump's statement directly contradicts a report to the U.S. Senate by Daniel Coates, director of national intelligence, on Jan. 29.

It states, "[IS] still commands thousands of fighters in Iraq and Syria, and it maintains eight branches, more than a dozen networks and thousands of dispersed supporters around the world, despite significant leadership and territorial losses. The group will exploit any reduction in CT (counter-terrorism) pressure to strengthen its clandestine presence and accelerate rebuilding key capabilities, such as media production and external operations. [IS] very likely will continue to pursue external attacks from Iraq and Syria against regional and Western adversaries, including the United States.

"[IS] is perpetrating attacks in Iraq and Syria to undermine stabilization efforts and retaliate against its enemies, exploiting sectarian tensions in both countries. [IS] probably realizes that controlling new territory is not sustainable in the near term. We assess that [IS] will seek to exploit Sunni grievances, societal instability, and stretched security forces to regain territory in Iraq and Syria in the long term."

Still, after this announcement, American government officials, U.S. allies and enemies were left pondering when and how this announced withdrawal was to begin. This is easier said than done for a

number of reasons. The battle space itself is complex. There are a substantial number of belligerent forces of various political and religious stripes in the area. The withdrawal of American ground forces will have to be measured and well-timed so as not to provide Islamic State jihadists an opportunity to recruit, regroup and garner the logistical capability to resurface as a threat to the region. Another issue of great concern focuses on the 1,300,000 civilians residing in northeast Syria, of which more than a million are displaced people distributed across dozens of camps and communities. An American withdrawal could easily precipitate an exodus, internally and externally, of refugees seeking safety or a modicum of security.

For the Kurds, who now control a third of Syria, providing the United States with a dozen bases and airfields as well as observation points, an American withdrawal poses a direct threat to their existence. To date, the Kurds have developed a state apparatus and face a number of forces that are prepared to launch into what they see as their territory. Moreover, Turkey considers the YPG [People's Protection Units] as a proxy for Kurdish separatists and has massed its military along with its own Syrian rebels along the Turkish-Syrian border. Meanwhile, President Bashar al-Assad's Syrian government, with the support of Iran and Russia, is intent on reoccupying what it considers to be its Syrian territory. In discussions with the Syrian government in late December 2018, the Kurds invited the Syrian Army to occupy positions in the Kurdish-held cities, including Manbij. This initiative would release Kurdish forces to focus on destroying Islamic State extremists occupying positions east of the Euphrates River.

Trump's announcement of withdrawal has further energized Turkey's ambitions to be an activist regional power, according to Richard Spencer, writing in *The Times*. Russia, on the other hand, doesn't like the idea of giving Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan regional free rein. Russia hopes to persuade the Assad regime to come to some sort of agreement to protect the Kurds in return for autonomy. This puts the Trump administration in a

rather uncomfortable spot as it positions Russia and Iran to have substantial input in the political fate of Syria, on behalf of the discredited Assad regime. For many observers, this perceived abandonment is reminiscent of when the U.S., under then-president Barack Obama, withdrew from Iraq in December 2011. During the American withdrawal, a full-blown insurgency quickly took root, forcing the redeployment of American ground forces into the Iraqi battle space.

The U.S. and Iran: It's complicated

Reflecting upon the enmity that has existed between the U.S. and Iran since its 1979 revolution, it is hard to ignore that there appears to be a consistent tendency to assist the U.S.'s nemesis. Administration after administration poured in money, personnel and effort to curtail the Iranian influence. American forces removed the Taliban threat that was poised on the Iranian-Afghan border in 2001-2002, and then invaded and occupied Iraq, facing off with Iran's mortal enemy, Saddam Hussein, who had invaded Iran in 1980. This latter war, reminiscent of the First World War, was dominated by trench warfare, chemical weapons and large-scale frontal attacks. The vicious fighting finally ended in 1988, having taken more than 500,000 Iranian and Iraqi lives. Today, Iran has a land route that connects Tehran to Beirut — one the American taxpayer helped build — which enables Iran's support to its Hezbollah proxies in Lebanon.

More recently, in 2014, the United States cobbled together more than 80 countries into a coalition to fight the Islamic State after it swept, essentially unopposed, into northern Iraq. In this case, again, Iran benefited as the U.S.-led coalition allies, using all source intelligence, massed firepower and manoeuvred to methodically wear down Islamic State forces. Throughout this campaign against IS, Iran had the opportunity to further entrench its influence and strategic position by training and equipping the popular mobilization units made up of Shia militias.

This legacy of support continued when Trump ripped up the nuclear deal that had essentially checked Iranian nuclear



A U.S. Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon supporting Operation Inherent Resolve receives fuel from a KC-135 Stratotanker. The U.S. has announced it will pull out of Syria this year.

ambitions through the threat of economic sanctions, combined with substantive “hard-nosed multilateral diplomatic negotiations.” These negotiations shut down Iran’s plans for nuclear weapons, staying their acquisition for at least a decade. In tandem, two thirds of its centrifuges were put in storage and Iran had to surrender 95 per cent of its uranium stockpile. To ensure compliance, negotiations included intrusive inspections to verify compliance with all aspects of the Iranian nuclear deal.

Like the McDonald’s scenario (the appreciation that dining at McDonald’s addresses short-term hunger, while as a nutritional strategy, it would likely have long-term health consequences), American strategy continues to pursue short-term objectives, garnering local allies, eradicating immediate threats, expeditiously killing opposition forces, but generally ignoring the broader long-term political context and its cascading consequences. The March 2011 Libyan intervention by NATO, as well as the withdrawal from Iraq in December 2011 are notable as both decisions appear to have created more problems than solutions in the short- and long-term.

The impending departure of the American presence will likely weaken any political influence over negotiations that could

be perceived as a way forward in settling the conflict. Joost Hiltermann, the Middle East director of the International Crisis Group, stated, “The leverage that might have been there for the United States in Syria is no longer there because now everyone knows that the United States will leave Syria unconditionally.”

Regional actors of notable concern

A number of regional and non-regional actors are positioned to fill the vacuum once occupied by American military presence. Iran and Russia, as key allies of Syria’s al-Assad, see this as an opportunity to expand their respective interests in the region. For Iran, an American withdrawal enables them to embed their influence in Syria and Iraq, essentially redrawing the strategic influence map of the Middle East. Iran has invested thousands of its Shiite forces in the fighting and deployed weapons and drones to ensure Assad’s survivability as the leader of Syria. By keeping Assad in power, Iran secured the vital lines of communication through Syria, enabling Iran to supply weapons and materials to Iran’s Shiite ally and enemy of Israel — the Hezbollah, in Lebanon. Iran also focused on reaching out and strengthening ties with its allies within Iraq and Lebanon, while concomitantly training

and equipping Shiite fighters. The long-term intent was to assemble a united front against Israel, should a conflict erupt.

As for Assad, this provides an opportunity to tighten his grip on his war-weary nation. Additionally, the threats posed by a number of rebel groups that attempted to overthrow the Syrian government and IS have been substantially neutralized, thanks to the American led coalition. Moreover, an American withdrawal means that Syria’s immediate future will be shaped, in large part, by forces that are supportive to Assad and his immediate and future interests.

Russian President Vladimir Putin also has much to gain. During the conflict, Russia contributed a substantial force of approximately 5,000 troops and a few dozen aircraft to buttress Assad’s military forces. Assad rewarded this support with the provision of the strategically important naval facility located in Tartus on the Mediterranean. For limited military investment, Russia now has a port on the Mediterranean Sea, enabling it to project its military capability throughout the region. As one observer pointed out in a *New York Times* article, [Russia has] re-established [itself] as a global player when the conclusion had been that the glory days of the Soviet Union were dead and gone.”

The U.S. and its NATO ally, Turkey, have, on a number of occasions, found themselves at odds. This conflict was grounded on the American support for the Kurdish forces in Syria that had proven to be the most effective fighters in the field against the Islamic State. In contrast, Turkey saw the Kurdish elements as a rising power along its shared border in northern Syria. Turkey’s Erdogan has threatened a Syrian incursion targeted against the same Kurdish forces that the U.S. government has supported since 2015. An American withdrawal provides Turkey an opportunity to employ its substantial military power to mitigate Kurdish forces and their influence in Syria.

As for the Islamic State, it now retains only one per cent of the territory it held at the height of its caliphate. U.S. Vice-President Mike Pence, following Trump’s lead, recently reinforced this notion to a number of U.S. ambassadors at the State Department, saying that “The caliphate has crumbled, and [IS] has been defeated.” Unfortunately, hours later, four Americans were killed and three wounded in a suicide bombing in Manbij, a Syrian city that was being patrolled by American troops. IS claimed responsibility.

At its zenith, the Islamic State controlled, between Iraq and Syria, an area slightly larger than New Brunswick and had seized major cities such as Mosul and threatened Baghdad. At one point, the group's strength was estimated to be close to 100,000 fighters. By 2015, flushed with their successes, IS became a beacon for Islamists around the world. Many Westerners and foreign adherents to the Islamist cause migrated to Syria and Iraq to fight. Meanwhile, a number of high-profile terrorism attacks in Western Europe and North America underlined IS's philosophical and operational reach. Under Obama and followed up by Trump, IS territory has been greatly diminished. In 2018, IS declared it had lost the capital of Raqqa to coalition forces.

Although IS's harsh caliphate was short-lived, there are estimates that tens of thousands of fighters still live in Syria and Iraq. The threat posed by IS will likely continue in the form of an insurgency supported by sleeper cells, or it will remake itself as a terrorist organization. Either way, neither IS, nor the extremist narrative, has been completely eradicated. To prematurely write off IS suggests its defeat is irreversible. In tandem, it suggests that IS no longer poses a serious threat to the U.S. or the West. Unfortunately, neither of these is verifiable. As long as IS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi is alive and has adherents to the Islamic cause, the threat posed by IS has not been defeated.

Drawing from the foregoing, Trump's announcement and perception of a victory over IS is a subject for serious debate. Brett McGurk, Trump's former special envoy against IS, made it clear the battle is not yet over. "The end of [IS] will be a much more long-term initiative. [...] Nobody is declaring a mission accomplished."

Iran's open access to Lebanon's Hezbollah

Identifying and understanding the possible spectrum of short and long-term cascading consequences of interventions and subsequent withdrawals is an integral part of a political and military assessment. As with the intervention of American forces to support and conduct operations in Iraq and Syria against IS, there will be inevitable regional repercussions should American forces withdraw.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have been the most effective ground force, relying on American support. A precipitous withdrawal could be compromising not only for security on the ground, but could provide the Islamic State breathing room to recruit, reorganize



Brett McGurk, Trump's former special envoy against IS, has made it clear that the battle is not yet over. "Nobody is declaring a mission accomplished."

and re-establish itself. Moreover, the loss of American intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, logistical assistance and supportive fire, amongst others, could see Kurdish forces losing control of territory that has been paid for in their blood and effort. One analyst professed, "Kurds and their allies have paid a very heavy price." He further told *The New York Times* that, "They have fought on the front line, and thousands of Kurdish men and women lost their lives fighting on behalf of the entire world." Accordingly, they feel betrayed. "They feel like all their efforts are about to go in vain."

With an American withdrawal, Iran will have unrestricted ground access to its Hezbollah allies in Lebanon. This poses an existential threat to the existence of Israel. Both Hezbollah and Iran have unswerving dedication to their mutual aim of eradicating Israel as a state. The departure of Israel's most important and powerful ally from the region plays into the hands of Iran and its terrorist proxy, Hezbollah, further threatening the stability of the region.

The war has resulted in serious civilian costs. It has produced millions of refugees who have been displaced from their towns and cities, as well as countless others who

sought refuge abroad. A withdrawal could further destabilize the northern areas of Syria, sparking another wave of refugees. Should the Turkish military be ordered to conduct a ground offensive, there will inevitably be a resurgence of refugees fleeing the violence. Should the Kurdish militias lose control of their areas in northern Syria, Kurdish refugees and others would be forced to seek refuge elsewhere.

As David Miliband, president of the International Rescue Committee, stated, "Throughout this conflict, these political and military decisions have been made without any apparent consideration of the humanitarian consequences. As a result, every decision has heightened the danger and distress for civilians."

Trump has stated that American troops will continue to be deployed in Iraq and could project the fight against the Islamic State from there. It is notable that the American military is quietly reinforcing its military presence in Qatar and Jordan.

As with many political decisions, there are winners and losers. The withdrawal of American forces from Syria before the Islamic State has been completely eradicated as a regional threat remains problematic. It will mainly benefit Iran and Russia, resulting in serious regional consequences.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the U.S.'s regional coalitional partners will require military and intelligence assistance after a withdrawal, in order to pre-empt an IS resurgence in the region. Moreover, Iran and Saudi Arabia, already locked in a proxy war in Yemen, could very well embrace a new battlespace in Iraq and Syria as they vie for regional hegemony and leadership of the Islamic world. Meanwhile, the IS leadership will have to reorganize and save itself to re-emerge when the time is right. In the interim, IS will likely transition to an insurgency or terrorist group until the political climate fosters its re-emergence.

In a Jan. 10, 2019, address, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo advised that the Trump administration "learned that when [the U.S.] retreats, chaos often follows. When we neglect our friends, resentment builds. And when we partner with enemies, they advance." It may be a moment of synchronicity to think of such consequences.

Col. J. Paul de B. Taillon (ret'd) is honorary Lieutenant Colonel of the Canadian Grenadier Guards and an adjunct professor at the Royal Military College of Canada.

Who fills the vacuum?

The Trump administration is withdrawing from Afghanistan, but what comes next?

By J. Paul de B. Taillon



An anti-Taliban forces fighter wraps a bandolier of ammunition for his machine-gun around his body as he and others help secure a compound in the Helmand province of Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2002.

In December 2018, the Trump White House ordered the Pentagon to plan for a troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. According to officials, plans for this complete withdrawal must be prepared sometime this year. Interestingly, this order follows the Trump administration's announcement that it is also pulling all American forces out of Syria after claiming victory over the Islamic State (IS) in Syria. This decision was subsequently reversed as the administration allowed approximately 400 American troops to remain in Syria, thereby ensuring their British and French allies remain alongside.

The U.S. has approximately 14,000 troops in Afghanistan, mainly logistical and training personnel. According to reports in July 2018, U.S. diplomatic representatives, along with military officials, hoped the move would kickstart Afghan peace negotiations, which included direct talks with the Taliban.

The former American ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, had reached out to senior Taliban leadership in the hopes of launching peace negotiations with the objective of ending the war before the Trump administration decided to order American troops out of the country. In a carrot-and-stick strategy, the U.S. intended to force the Taliban to negotiate by using a targeted aerial bombing campaign that has dropped more than 5,200 bombs since Sept. 30, 2018.

The surprise announcement by Trump's people appears to have caught the Afghan government of President Ashraf Ghani off guard and officials tried to portray the reversal of American military policy as not problematic.

Notwithstanding, many observers, inside and outside Afghanistan, noted serious concern over this withdrawal. One Afghan spokesman tried to mitigate the initiative by noting that the American forces "are engaged in a training and advising mission for Afghan forces, and Afghan forces are capable of defending the country."

It was the contention of many, including political and foreign officials in Pakistan and Afghanistan, that any unilateral pullback of American troops could usher in a period of political instability, giving the Taliban substantial leverage during their ongoing negotiation. Or, in the worst-case scenario, the troop withdrawal would sink the peace talks, which would inevitably open the way for further political violence.

Moreover, a number of regional powers — China, Iran, Russia, India, Pakistan

— as well as others, would attempt to fill the political vacuum. Any political turmoil in Afghanistan is concerning to Pakistani officials who noted that an American drawdown of forces would likely induce political turmoil with the commensurate insecurity that could result in a new wave of Afghan refugees fleeing to Pakistan. One Pakistani official noted, "Any troop withdrawal or major reduction in their number before peace is restored would be a very unwise move." He further posited, "it would bring chaos and disorder, more fighting and perhaps a civil war."

The chairman of Pakistan's Senate foreign relations committee, Mushahid Hussain, proffered the view that any

Emirates-based talks.

Trump's announcement came in the middle of U.S. talks aimed at politically negotiating the end of the war. The timing reportedly contributed to the resignation of defence secretary James Mattis, who was the principal architect of Trump's policy on Afghanistan.

Reaction to the announcement

For the Taliban, the announcement was a confidence-building measure, as it made it very clear that an American withdrawal from Afghanistan was critical to any ceasefire agreement. American forces deployed to Afghanistan are assigned training, assisting and advising roles in



The announcement that the U.S. would withdraw from Afghanistan appears to have taken Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his people off guard.

drawdown of American forces would be construed as "an admission of defeat in America's longest war." It would also be "the biggest military setback for the U.S." since the fall of the American-supported South Vietnamese government in 1975. In tandem, Washington would have to increase its dependence on Pakistan as a "force for peace in Afghanistan" and the withdrawal "could lead to a postponement of Afghan elections." This, in turn, would force the formation of a broad unity government that would have to include the Taliban.

A number of analysts in Afghanistan and Pakistan were pondering why Trump would suddenly announce plans for withdrawal options at a critical time when negotiations with the Taliban, which has long demanded a total departure of American forces from Afghanistan, seemed to be gaining traction. Moreover, the Taliban signalled how seriously it was taking these negotiations by sending a senior delegation to participate in the United Arab

direct support of Afghan forces under the auspices of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission (RSM). The United States also has a separate counter-terrorism mission largely targeting Islamic extremists such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. The reduction by half of the 14,000 American troops deployed at present will not likely change the situation on the ground in Afghanistan, particularly when the Taliban leadership is engaged in peace negotiations with the U.S. It should be noted, however, that in addition to the U.S. military personnel, there are more than 25,000 private security contractors deployed in Afghanistan and they will likely continue to assist Afghan forces in their training and operations.

The contrarian view is also concerning in that, along with the withdrawal from Syria, such an initiative could be viewed as political capitulation. The U.S., as the leader of the Western world, has long been seen as a stabilizing force in the global geopolitical context. Such moves by the

Trump administration signal to competing regional players, such as China, Russia, India, Iran and Pakistan, that there will be a political vacuum created should an American withdrawal from Afghanistan become a reality. This situation would likely exacerbate regional tensions, particularly between Pakistan and India, possibly within Afghan borders. Similarly, as witnessed following the U.S.'s rapid withdrawal of forces and subsequent dramatic political departure from Vietnam in 1975, the U.S.'s leadership, credibility and reliability amongst its friends and allies would invariably be called into question.

The questions that do arise are numerous. Is the Taliban genuinely interested in pursuing substantial negotiations with the aim of achieving a viable peace agree-

litical legitimacy. However, considering its history as a government until 2001, it would be difficult to believe that it would be interested in participating in a power-sharing arrangement with other political parties. In both structure and operational terms, the Taliban remains unequivocally a fundamentalist jihadist terrorist group.

To date, Afghanistan has a reputation of being the country most affected by terrorist activity, having more than 20 insurgent and terrorist groups operating within its borders. Should the Trump administration commence a drawdown of forces, this would also create the conditions for a propaganda windfall for the jihadist narrative and cause in the region, proclaiming that a second superpower, the U.S., has been defeated by the mujahideen.

army continues to suffer heavy casualties each month. Should a partial American withdrawal be enacted, this would likely reduce the incentive of the Taliban leadership to negotiate a deal. Any withdrawal will definitely impact the willingness and determination of Afghan ground forces to aggressively defeat the enemy, particularly as they continue to suffer low morale, remain poorly equipped and paid, and persistently suffer from a dearth of professional military leadership.

The Afghan conflict has remained a marginal issue in the minds of the American public, in both the Obama and Trump administrations. There has been a subtle, but consistent, push towards an inevitable withdrawal of U.S. troops from a perceptually thankless theatre of operations since 2014, when Barack Obama ordered a major troop reduction. The reality seems to be that an open-ended deployment of American troops, albeit limited in numbers, will not alter, in any way, the battlefield reality that the Taliban now holds more ground than it did in 2001. Moreover, as Trump tweeted on Feb. 27, 2012, "It is time to get out of Afghanistan."

In November 2018, a year after Trump agreed to deploy 4,000 troops, bringing the total number in Afghanistan to 14,000, the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., admitted that in spite of all the efforts conducted to date, the Taliban was "not losing."

Implications for regional players

A drawdown would have implications for a number of the regional players. India has invested billions of dollars to build infrastructure and institutions. This financial initiative was predicated on the continuing American presence in Afghanistan and the inherent safety and security provided by the U.S. military deployed in the country.

Russia's interest also extends to its Afghan neighbours. Extremist militants threaten not only Russia's southern border, but also its neighbours in Central Asia. Moreover, a substantial portion of the heroin that drives Russia's addiction epidemic is produced from poppy fields under Taliban control. Meanwhile, Russia is enabling the Taliban under the false flag of brokering peace talks between the Taliban leadership and the Afghan government. And, according to Gregory Feifer, executive director of the Institute of Current World Affairs in Washington, it is recognized that one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's strategic objectives "is to stymie NATO and the United States by



U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Austin Randolph hugs his daughter, Elliana, before taking off for a deployment in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel in Afghanistan.

ment? Is it negotiating to achieve what it could not on the battlefield? Recent territorial gains and appearing to want to engage in negotiations provide the Taliban the opportunity to garner a degree of po-

The reality on the ground forces the recognition that successful negotiations will be difficult, as large areas of Afghanistan are currently controlled by the Taliban. Moreover, the chronically weak Afghan

fuelling instability rather than to enable a political settlement.”

Should an American drawdown commence, it would embolden Trump’s No. 1 geopolitical foe — the Islamic Republic of Iran — as it seeks to fill any perceived

19th-Century Anglo Russian rivalry — the Great Game — that sought to politically dominate central Asia. Meanwhile, China is consciously courting the Taliban, offering to mediate talks, while, the Taliban leadership has promised not to attack China’s

Afghanistan are to ensure the departure of American and NATO troops, and that any Afghan government would not pose a threat to its reigning interests. In that light, Iran hopes to keep Afghanistan, for the most part, destabilized — ideally with



President Donald Trump shook hands and took photos with military personnel during a stopover at Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany, following his unannounced visit to U.S. troops at the Al-Asad Airbase in Iraq, just days after he announced he wanted an eventual withdrawal from Afghanistan.

power vacuum left by the U.S. Iran, because it shares a border with Afghanistan, continues to flex its military and diplomatic influence by covertly aiding the Taliban leadership when it is in its political interest.

The Taliban leadership has been emboldened by the new support from Russia, Iran and China. With American sanctions cutting into the Iranian and Russian economies and the seeming all-out trade war being waged by Trump against China, we could see the possible foundation of a new Cold War. These regional powers are opportunistically seeking to employ the Taliban forces as a strategic tool to ratchet up pressure on Trump. In the case of Russian meddling in Afghanistan, this is reminiscent of the

\$3-billion project aimed at mining the huge copper deposits near Kabul.

As for Iran, the American government has most generously and graciously eradicated Iran’s two border threats. First, the Taliban government in Afghanistan in 2002 was felled. Second, Iran’s arch-enemy, Iraq’s Saddam Hussein, was quickly eradicated by the U.S. invasion and occupation in 2003. This situational windfall has enabled Iran to relentlessly and most opportunistically spread its influence for its own strategic advantage. Following the Iraqi invasion, Iran exploited the chaotic civil war that ensued, enabling it, for all intents and purposes, to create Iraq as a satellite state.

It would appear that Iranian aims in

a government that would not threaten its agenda or interests. Iran continues to covertly assist the Taliban with weapons, money and training and has offered it sanctuary and fuel for its trucks. Iran assisted in recruiting Afghan Sunni refugees in Iran to fill the ranks of the Taliban.

Politics inevitably makes strange bedfellows and Iran and the Taliban, albeit historic rivals, one being Shiite, the other Sunni, have shared interests. Iran supported the anti-Taliban opposition and initially assisted with the American intervention that drove out the Taliban government in 2001. Iran soon became concerned with the expanding NATO mission in Afghanistan and saw the deployment as a threat to its regional influence

and an opportunity to inflict a high cost in blood and treasure from the American and NATO mission. The Iranian goal was focused upon forcing an American-NATO departure from the region. It soon became apparent that the Taliban was indeed the lesser enemy and, therefore, with the right persuasion, could become a useful Iranian proxy. With the introduction of the Islamic State into the Afghan mix, the Taliban has become even more attractive to Iran.

Iran has invested more than \$400 million to aid Afghanistan in accessing Persian Gulf ports. The financial assistance is complemented by Iranian intelligence and military assets covertly operating in Afghanistan's western provinces, infiltrating police and government departments, as well as conducting targeted assassinations and other intelligence activities, as required. Iran has reportedly facilitated meetings between Taliban leadership and Russian officials to secure funds and weapons from Moscow to arm forces in the field.

The high cost of war

Recently, Zalmay Khalilzad, the chief American negotiator conducting U.S.-Taliban talks, appears to have made headway on the core elements of the deal. What's

so far been disclosed is that the Taliban promises Afghan territory will not be used by international terrorist groups and that the U.S. agrees to withdraw its forces in Afghanistan.

This revelation, however, leads to many complex and difficult-to-answer questions about how fast the withdrawal would be, what residual forces would be left in Afghanistan to protect the U.S. Embassy, and what capacity they'll have to conduct limited counter-terrorism strikes. Moreover, the Taliban leadership finally agreed to enter negotiations with the Afghan government, particularly as President Ghani remains circumspect about the ongoing negotiations between American and Taliban representatives. Should they hammer out an agreement that succeeds, it would be regarded as worthwhile, given the respective contributions and sacrifices of those nations — both NATO and non-NATO — who joined the American-led coalition and sacrificed blood and treasure.

According to a U.S. Department of Defense report, 2,216 American soldiers have been killed in action in Afghanistan and more than 20,000 wounded since 2001. This does not account for the nearly 29,000 Afghan security personnel killed in Taliban attacks, collateral damage and civilian

losses since 2015.

Meanwhile, during Canada's deployment, 158 military personnel lost their lives. The country carried the additional burden of an estimated \$22 billion in war costs. Canada's 12-year participation in the Afghan theatre saw the Canadian Armed Forces assume a variety of roles, from operating a reconstruction team, to undertaking a spectrum of operations that ranged from combat, security and internal development to advisory and support training operations in varying capacities and regions in Afghanistan. Canada deployed a total of 40,000 Canadian military personnel — many carrying out multiple missions.

Like the Roman Empire, the United States appears to have exhausted itself. Some analysts have argued that it is experiencing imperial overreach — the phenomenon that a great power declines when it extends itself beyond its ability to sustain its global economic and military commitments. Ending the U.S.'s longest war in history, which marked its 17th anniversary on Oct. 7, 2018, appears to be on Trump's agenda. After spending a staggering \$1.6 trillion during the Bush, Obama and Trump administrations, and likely much more, on the Afghan conflict and the country's reconstruction, Trump appears to have come to the end of the road vis-à-vis Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, a drawdown or complete withdrawal would likely mean more bloodshed for this plagued nation. In tandem, a withdrawal provides a sterling opportunity for a number of regional powers to further their own respective interests. As to the prospects of peace, this remains highly debatable due to the competing interests of a number of wily regional neighbours who play the great game.

The rise of the Taliban phoenix, along with other extremist groups, as well as warlords, ensures that the Afghan government will continue to struggle to provide a modicum of security for its citizens, as it faces an inability to provide basic services. Recently-resigned defense secretary Mattis reportedly commented, "America doesn't lose wars, it loses interest."

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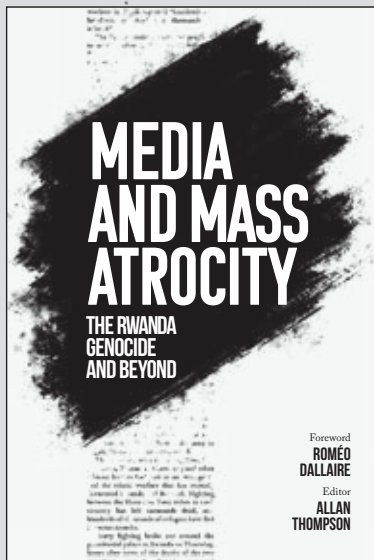
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“AT TIMES IT FELT TO ME AS
IF ONE GOOD JOURNALIST ON
THE GROUND WAS WORTH A
BATTALION OF TROOPS.”

—Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire,
former Force Commander of the
United Nations Assistance
Mission for Rwanda



To be released **April 6, 2019**, to coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the **Rwanda genocide**, this book demonstrates there is still much to learn about the **role the media played** in Rwanda as similar tragedies continue to unfold today.

When human beings are at their worst — as they most certainly were in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide — the world needs the institutions of journalism and the media to be at their best. Sadly, in Rwanda, the media fell short. *Media and Mass Atrocity: The Rwanda Genocide and Beyond* revisits the case of Rwanda, but also questions what the lessons of Rwanda mean now, in an age of communications so dramatically influenced by social media and the relative decline of traditional news media.

Media and Mass Atrocity: The Rwanda Genocide and Beyond
Editor, Allan Thompson, Foreword, Roméo Dallaire

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Africa's economic prospects



Reducing poverty in Africa depends on China, especially when Africa's population is increasing so rapidly. Shown here are poverty-stricken Ethiopians at a local market.



Robert I. Rotberg

Population numbers throughout most of Africa will continue to increase severely over the next 30 years. Unless women in sub-Saharan Africa suddenly stop having more than two and sometimes as many as seven children, the gross labour force, unskilled and skilled, in almost every country will continue to grow despite existing, and alarming, unemployment rates of 40 per cent or more.

To meet the minimum income needs of its citizens, to create a more robust consumer society, to grow the tax base on

which governments fund their services and welfare and to attract more and more external investment, sub-Saharan nation-states need to create jobs — the smarter, the more enduring and the more capable of contributing a beneficial multiplying boost, the better. New jobs are the key to sub-Saharan Africa's future — to its increased prosperity, to its fuller integration into world trading systems and to winning its several internal battles against fundamentalist insurgents and other supposed revolutionaries.

Africa's ability to create more jobs also depends on the growth of the Chinese economy. China purchases much of Africa's petroleum, iron ore, coal, copper, cobalt, coltan, cadmium, ferrochrome, timber, tobacco and more. Without continued exports to China, most African economies would grind to a halt. The United States no longer buys much oil from Africa; its purchases of Africa's metals are still significant for some countries, as are Eu-

rope's imports from the sub-continent. But Chinese demand is the mainstay.

Reducing poverty in Africa depends on China, especially when Africa's population is increasing so rapidly. Africa is the globe's poorest continent, with a sub-Saharan African average GDP per capita in 2017 of \$1,553. A full 65 per cent of sub-Saharan Africans earn less than \$2 per day. Without new formal jobs, even the steady drift into the informal sector — vending from regulated stalls, roadside selling, urban hawking, auto-parking hustles, crime — cannot hope to provide most individuals aged 18 to 34 with the kinds of incomes that would enable them to feel wanted and productive, much less able to clothe and feed themselves adequately. Farming is a declining pursuit in many large countries; agricultural production cannot absorb all of Africa's "surplus" workers. Nor are there any non-resource bonanzas on the horizon to provide succor for individuals and countries.

Using contemporary per capita GDP data, it is evident that sub-Saharan Africans subsist on incomes as low as US\$244 a year (all subsequent dollar amounts in U.S. currency.) Ten countries show earnings below \$1,000 per year. The people of another 13 manage somehow on less than \$2,000 per year. The people of just five earn between \$2,000 and \$3,000 a year, bringing them to the brink of middle-income status. And nine nations may be considered middle income, with GDPs per capita between \$3,000 and \$5,000 annually. All the countries in sub-Saharan Africa with incomes above \$5,000 — ranging upward to \$28,000 — are the truly wealthy countries of the continent, a total of 12 that include the major petroleum exporters, diamond and other precious metal producers, several countries with remunerative tourist industries, and two manufacturers. Several of this wealthiest group are among Africa's most sparsely populated; three are islands; one has an advanced infrastructure; another is the continent's most populous. One harbours three ongoing civil conflicts. Not all, but a number of these wealthy nations are, by continental standards, among the best governed and best managed. Most are among the continent's least corrupt entities; two, however, are rampantly corrupt.

Annual incomes between \$244 and \$29,000

Thus, given these snappy sketches, there are no easy generalizations to make either about Africa's wealthiest or its poorest countries. Indeed, even some of the countries with the most abundant natural resources (such as the Democratic Republic of Congo) are still comparatively poor, while tiny places such as the Seychelles, with no mineral resources, are immensely rich by local standards. And wealth per capita also hides unequal distributions of resource profits, as in Angola and Equatorial Guinea. In both of those last countries, ruling elites are rich, but most inhabitants are poor and deprived of basic services. Ethiopia, although poor, can claim the distinction of being sub-Saharan Africa's most equal economy. But all of these economies depend on China to continue growing.

According to World Bank figures, the average yearly earnings in the poorest African jurisdictions are war-torn South Sudan (\$244), Somalia (\$499) and the Central African Republic (\$725). Slightly wealthier and also conflict-ridden and dictatorial is Burundi (\$770), along with Liberia (\$826), Eritrea (\$844) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (\$887) — all under \$1,000.

Those are the poorest of the poor. (The Western Hemisphere's poorest nation is Haiti, with a 2017 GDP per capita of \$729.)

The struggling poor in Africa, from \$1,000 to \$2,000 average annual GDPs per capita, include Niger (\$1,016), Zimbabwe (\$1,080), Malawi (\$1,202), Mozambique (\$1,247), Sierra Leone (\$1,526), Madagascar (\$1,555), the Comoros (\$1,552), Togo (\$1,570), Guinea-Bissau (\$1,740), the Gambia (\$1,714), Burkina Faso (\$1,870), Uganda (\$1,864), Ethiopia (\$1,891) and Chad (\$1,941).

Five countries comprise a group of next-to-middle-income nations, up to \$3,000: Rwanda (\$2,036), mineral-rich Guinea (\$2,194), Benin (\$2,266), Senegal (\$2,712) and Tanzania (\$2,946).

Those African nations with average annual per capita GDPs between \$3,000 and \$5,000 may be considered middle income: labour-providing Lesotho (\$3,130), Kenya (\$3,285), the islands of São Tomé



Without continued exports to China, most African economies would grind to a halt. Pictured here is the African Union headquarters, which was built and financed by China.

and Principe (\$3,351) Cameroon (\$3,694), Mauritania (\$3,949), cocoa-producing Cote d'Ivoire (\$3,953) copper-rich Zambia (\$4,050), Ghana (\$4,641) and the Sudan (\$4,903).

Comparative incomes in North Africa are: Egypt (\$2,495), Morocco (\$3,007), Tunisia (\$3,491); Algeria (\$4,123) and Libya (\$7,798). The last two are petroleum producers; the first three depend mostly on agriculture.

The wealthiest countries (more than \$5,000) of sub-Saharan Africa, on a per capita basis, are topped by the tiny,

sparsely populated, tourist-dependent Seychelles (\$28,963); small, very corrupt, and petroleum-pumping Equatorial Guinea (\$24,816), fabric and electronics assembler Mauritius (\$22,278), oil- and iron-rich Gabon (\$18,183), Botswana with diamonds, meat and tourism (\$17,354); South Africa with gold, diamonds, coal, platinum, palladium and other precious metals (\$13,497); Namibia (\$10,475) with uranium, copper and diamonds; Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) with sugar, cotton and wood pulp (\$8,496); Cape Verde with fish products (\$6,831), Angola as Africa's second-largest oil exporter (\$6,388), giant Nigeria, Africa's largest oil producer (\$5,860) and the Republic of Congo (\$5,359), which also has petroleum resources.

Another way of looking at wealth creation is to examine which countries are growing rapidly. Ethiopia, off a low base, has been growing at 10 per cent a year as a result of new, Chinese-sponsored, export-processing zones and shoe and textile manufacturing activity. Thanks to new oil discoveries, Ghana has been growing at 6 per cent. Lesotho, with labour exports to South Africa and some textile shipments to the U.S., has been growing at more than 4 per cent per annum. Growth in Burkina Faso, Senegal and Tanzania has been just under 4 per cent for several years. South Africa, however, is hardly growing at all, and in recent years has been in recession for several quarters. As a whole, sub-Saharan Africa's economic growth rise mostly ended in 2016 and 2017, and the region as a whole grew less than one per cent in 2017. At that low overall rate, sub-Saharan Africa will not be able to keep pace with the enormous surge in its population numbers. Creating sufficient new jobs thus becomes difficult, if not impossible, at such low rates of economic increase.

Sub-Saharan Africa's economic future depends, therefore, on continued demand from China (and Europe and North America), on improved governance and public management, on reductions in corruption and civil conflict, on winning the battle against terrorism; and — long term — on improved schooling so Africa can rely on the knowledge and skills that are now in short supply.

Robert I. Rotberg is the founding director of Harvard Kennedy School's program in intrastate conflict, president emeritus of the World Peace Foundation and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts And Sciences. His latest book is *The Corruption Cure*. (Princeton, 2017)



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The real business of Beijing



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In 2017, Australia's top defence official declared publicly that China was engaged in widespread espionage in his country. Soon after, Australia's national security agency warned Parliament that the Chinese Communist Party's actions directly threatened the nation's sovereignty. The agency's head said foreign interference had "the potential to cause serious harm to the nation's sovereignty, the integrity of our political system, our national security capabilities, our economy and other interests."

Could Beijing be acting so aggressively toward other democratic nations? Could it be threatening Canada? Jonathan Manthorpe, citing the Australian example, argues convincingly that it is in his new book, *Claws of the Panda: Beijing's Campaign of Influence and Intimidation in Canada* (Cormorant Books, 2019).

This unsettling work could not have been better timed. As 2019 began, Canada was wrestling with the requested extradition of Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou to the United States, and struggling to free Canadians held in China in retaliation for Meng's arrest. Today, the need to see China clearly has become imperative.

Manthorpe, a former foreign correspondent for Southam News, holds up a very uncomfortable lens. *Claws of the Panda*, he writes, is about "how the Communist Party of China is riding roughshod over Canadian values" and how "Canada has become a battleground on which the Chinese Communist Party seeks to terrorize, humiliate and neuter its opponents." Our much-vaunted Canadian values will not change China; rather, it is changing us.

It does this in many ways, hard and soft. For instance, all Chinese "friendship associations" in other countries are under the wing of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Manthorpe writes. The CCP



In his new book, Jonathan Manthorpe discusses whether China could pose the same threat to Canada as it did to Australia, whose top defence official claimed China had "the potential to cause serious harm" to its sovereignty, political system, and national security and economy. Pictured here is Chinese President Xi Jinping.

regards even Chinese who are citizens of other countries "as potential fifth columnists." China seeks to attain influence here through political party contributions; chummy relationships with Canadian politicians and policymakers; and countless freebie trips to Beijing and beyond for those it wishes to woo (one example is the \$73,000 worth of free trips Beijing supplied to now ex-ambassador John McCallum earlier in his career).

There is also considerable detail about the links China has established with Canada's business class, which, eyeing potential profits, isn't terribly concerned about such trifles as industrial espionage.

Manthorpe has particularly harsh words for Canadian immigration policy, specifically the investor class program that was set into overdrive at the time of the Hong Kong handover from Britain to

China in order to attract money as well as immigrants. Bribery and forged documents abounded, introducing a level of corruption that undermines Canada's own rule of law. "The program was conceived with either such insouciance or else such crass disregard for its likely ramifications that it is a lasting stain on Canada's reputation," the author says. Two decades later, he continues, Canada is the money-laundering location of choice for CCP officials trying to hide their assets from their own government.

Then there is the direct intimidation of perceived enemies, in this country and others. One individual example: Ottawa resident Lucy Zhou, a Falun Gong practitioner. Falun Gong is considered a grave threat by the Chinese regime, no matter where it is practised. Accordingly, Zhou received recorded phone calls in the

middle of the night denouncing the religious movement. Some calls “blasted her with propaganda songs lauding the CCP and its leaders.” An anonymous Chinese-language caller seemed to know details of her travels. And there were sexual harassment calls.

There are also attempts to use Canadians as spies. Consider Ottawa journalist Mark Bourrie, who briefly worked for the *Xinhua* news agency — an arm of the CCP — in Ottawa. At one point, he was instructed to discover the identities of anti-China protesters, but not for journalistic reasons. On another occasion, he reports, he was told to cover a press conference of the visiting Dalai Lama to do a report for his bosses, but not a news story. Bourrie didn't stay.

Over decades, the CCP has nurtured friendly relations with influential people — and used them to convince policymakers to approve actions in the interests of the CCP. Manthorpe singles out the story of Paul Lin, a highly influential Chinese-Canadian professor who opened doors in both directions for decades, consistently sympathetic to Communist Party needs, at least until the 1989 Tiananmen massacre.

There are many perfectly legal ways to try to influence policymakers, of course, though China's actions in this realm would put a run-of-the-mill Canadian lobbyist to shame. But other attempts at influence have been less benign. Such as education.

By 2018, China had set up 12 “Confucius Institutes” (allegedly focused on teaching Chinese language and culture) in Canadian colleges and universities, and 35 “Confucius Classrooms” in Canadian high schools. However, Manthorpe tells us, “In most cases they are espionage outstations for Chinese embassies and consulates through which they control Chinese students, gather information on perceived enemies and intimidate dissidents.” He adds that at the time of his research, the overall chairman of these institutes was a high-ranking member of the CCP Politburo and former head of the shadowy United Front Work Department, which runs various foreign-country initiatives, from propaganda to recruiting of agents.

In 2013, the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) warned that “Confucius Institutes are essentially political arms of the Chinese government. They restrict the free discussion of topics Chinese authorities deem controversial and should have no place on our campuses.” Yet many post-secondary institutions in this country ignored the warning: Univer-

sities and colleges need money, and China had bought influence on campus. At lower levels, school boards or districts could qualify for big-ticket items — in one case books worth \$1 million — if they hosted certified Confucius Institutes.

To understand why Beijing could so effectively gain influence in Canada, Manthorpe also offers the context of Canada's early history with China, particularly the “missionary culture” — the hundreds of Canadians from various church groups who went to China starting in the 1880s. Several generations stayed right up to the Communist takeover in 1949. Fluent in Chinese language and culture, these “mish kids” later went on to important diplomatic roles in the Canadian government, bringing with them expertise and instinctive sympathy toward the CCP.

Today, it is not clear exactly what Canada's — or any democratic country's — approach to China should be. What access should CCP-controlled companies such as Huawei have to Western technology? What ethical compromises must Western companies make to do business with Beijing?

Says Manthorpe of democratic governments: “They need to understand that the CCP's China is not going to be a benign superpower. No superpower is. It is already intent on imposing its values on the international order, and those values are very different from those of Canada and other liberal democracies.”

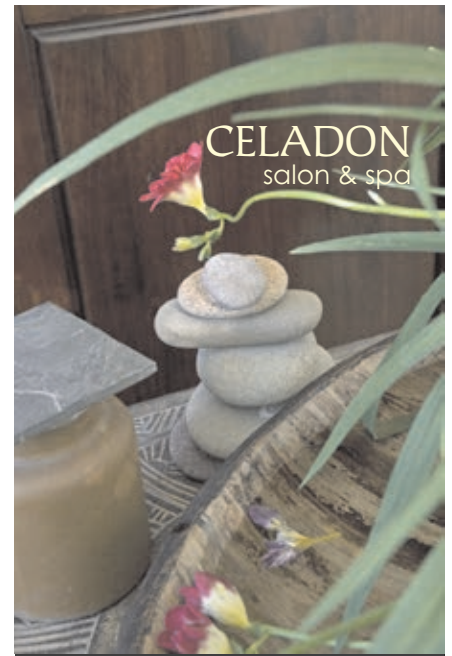
Australia, at least, has said this out loud. Canada's leaders have not. Or not yet, anyway.

How to fix populism

While Jonathan Manthorpe sounds a warning about Asian superpower China, former prime minister Stephen Harper is focused on lessons from the other superpower, the United States, in his new book, *Right Here Right Now: Politics and Leadership in the Age of Disruption* (Signal, McClelland and Stewart).

Harper isn't an obvious candidate to be dissing trade deals or free markets. But he offers up a fair bit of criticism, targeting what he sees as a too-rigid devotion to capitalism, then concluding that this partially explains the rise of Donald Trump and other right-wing populists.

Obviously, the former prime minister hasn't suddenly abandoned his own *laissez-faire* ways; rather, he's trying to work through why, when free trade and free markets have created so much global prosperity, many Western voters rejected politics as usual and embraced rogue leaders.



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Harper’s no fan of Trump, but in his eyes, if we don’t understand the president’s appeal, the rise of right-wing populism will be followed by far worse: populism of the left-wing variety.

With that warning, he urges fellow Tories to identify what Trump understood



In his new book, Stephen Harper warns that China is “not remotely a market economy in the Western sense.”

about voters that the rest of the political class hasn’t. Then conservatives can get it right and save the world.

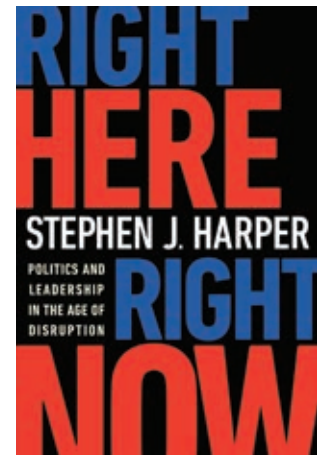
The former PM isn’t the only one tackling the topic these days, and his answers are also not unique. But they’re worth review:

1) Because free-market measures worked for such icons as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the context of their specific economic circumstances, many modern-day conservatives have made free markets the be-all and end-all of policy. But while markets are efficient, “they are not perfect,” Harper writes, and he knows of what he speaks: He was the prime minister who reluctantly dove into deep deficits to help pull Canada out of the 2008 U.S.-led recession. The Western market economy has broadly and over time been successful, but not always and not for all workers. For some, incomes declined. People were “angry. And they were being ignored. This is what Donald Trump heard that others did not.”

2) While free trade between countries is broadly positive, not everyone benefits from the efficiencies of that trade. Here, Harper picks up on Manthorpe’s themes, warning specifically about China, which is “not remotely a market economy in the Western sense.” Trump, he concludes, understands that trade deals sometimes hurt pockets of people even if the economy is growing. Liberals — elitists, in Harper-speak — do not. They are dogmatic globalists (he calls them “anywheres” because their privileged status means they could be at home anywhere) who don’t see the real impacts trade disruption can have on real, individual lives.

3) Immigration policy — including in Canada — needs an overhaul because it is no longer perceived as fair or in the best economic interests of ordinary workers. For Harper, “Immigration cannot be an exception to the principle that there be fair, firm and equitable enforcement of the law. Entering a country illegally is an inherent act of bad faith, no matter what its motivations.” Instinctively, Trump understood that people felt this way too, leading to his broad promise (now in some disarray) to build a wall. Harper doesn’t ridicule it. “A physical barrier to entry can be effective and may have its place. That said, we must understand that it alone will not remotely solve the problem.” Rather, fairness under the law, security, and the economic interests of the country should drive approaches to immigration, the former PM writes:

Agree with Harper or not on his main points, he raises one that has a direct bearing on Canada’s 2019 federal election: that real policy debate is needed on such complicated and contentious issues. The Liberal-left, he argues, has already declared itself in the right and simply denounces



dissenters rather than confronting their arguments. I’d argue that the countering tactics of many of Canada’s conservatives are also just as much about point-scoring; neither group truly encourages thoughtful debate on policy.

But those on the right, at least, have good reason to respect Harper’s insight. Populism is not going away anytime soon.

Writing becomes her

Among the many stories Michelle Obama tells about her childhood in the working-class south side of Chicago, one sums up the theme of *Becoming* (Crown Publishing Group, 2018) — a fully worthwhile autobiography. In it, the mother of then-Grade

2 student Michelle Robinson, realizing that her gifted young daughter is languishing among unruly kids in a grim, basement classroom of the local school, quietly lobbies to redirect the class's high-performing children into a Grade 3 class with a no-nonsense teacher who knows her stuff and nurtures her students. That simple act of parental resolve quite likely set the course of Michelle Obama's life. It probably set the course for the unruly kids who stayed in the basement classroom with an incompetent teacher, too.

She writes, decades later, "It was a small, but life-changing move ... Now that I'm an adult, I realize that kids know at a very young age when they're being devalued, when adults aren't investing enough to help them learn." Her parents, happily, would support her throughout their lives.

Much of the rest of this engaging memoir returns to this theme of early expectations and support.

Sure, Michelle Robinson meets and marries the future president of the United States (who, she reports, shows up late for their first meeting, at a law firm); and sure, her recounting of life as the president's spouse is entertaining to read. But in writing this book, Michelle Obama has something wider in mind than simply sharing colourful stories from eight years at the White House.

Mind you, there is lots and lots of White House colour — from the number of bathrooms at the official residence;



to the Monet painting outside the First Lady's bedroom; to how White House staff constantly vary their shopping habits so no outsider can plot to poison the president's food — but this book is mostly an ode to every mother (black or white) who has tried to instil in their kids a belief in themselves and their future. It is in

particular a message to African Americans that they can break through the constricting social expectations their country has defined for them over centuries.

We learn early that Michelle Obama does not like politics. At almost every turn when husband Barack wants to run for office, she's a reluctant supporter at best.

Her reasons are interesting: Having grown up in a working-class family, she strives for an orderly, professional progression — becoming an academic overachiever early, making it into Princeton University, graduating to be a lawyer at a prestigious firm. Her mother's advice: "Make the money first and worry about your happiness later." She does not take well to disruption.

Enter into her life Barack Obama, whom she initially mentors at her law firm. He is the antithesis of a well-ordered existence: He did community work for several years before going to law school, and unlike Michelle Obama's description of her own approval-seeking self, is completely self-assured and "like a wind that threatened to unsettle everything."

Still, his formidable intellect, huge social conscience and ability to take life's blows in stride attract her, and eventually she quits law to join him in taking on professional roles helping those less privileged. Given that the Obamas are both trained lawyers, it is interesting to read that Michelle often fretted about how they would pay the bills.

Life with him could also be exasperating. She frankly admits that the couple fought: She would yell, Barack would remain "cool and rational, his words coming in an eloquent (and therefore irritating) cascade."

She is also open about tragedies, such as the death of a close friend at a young age, her own miscarriage and the couple's frustrating, but ultimately successful, use of In Vitro Fertilization to conceive.

Politics was stressful for the Obama family, and Michelle worried about what would happen if her husband ran for the presidency. "What I hoped was that at some point Barack himself would put an end to the speculation, declaring himself out of contention ... But he didn't do this. He wouldn't do this. He wanted to run. He wanted it and I didn't." Ultimately, she supported him — hiding her misgivings behind the belief that he wouldn't win.

By the time he did, however, Michelle Obama had already begun to think about her role as First Lady. Michelle Obama had seen plenty of poor and disadvantaged kids, and decided to start modestly: with



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Photo by Bill Blackstone



Sam Garcia
Freelance Photographer



a vegetable garden at the White House to help her publicly advocate for fresh and nutritious food for kids. Over the years, she expanded this, inviting school kids in to do the planting and working on ways to widen public awareness around nutrition and public health.

"I hula-hooped on the south lawn to show that exercise could be fun and made a guest appearance on *Sesame Street*, talking about vegetables with Elmo and Big Bird," she writes, realizing she had found a worthy niche for her interests. She worked the themes of nutrition and battling obesity into sessions with reporters. She enlisted medical, education and sports figures into a campaign called "Let's Move" aimed at ending childhood obesity. She helped push a child nutrition bill through Congress. "As with the garden, I was trying to grow something — a network of advocates, a chorus of voices speaking up for children and their health."

She also began a mentoring program at the White House with kids from area high schools. "I knew from my own life experience that when someone shows genuine interest in your learning and development, even if only for 10 minutes in a busy day, it matters."

The Obamas regularly invited local school kids to watch ceremonies involving foreign dignitaries, and to attend musical performances at the White House, asking the musicians — some quite famous — to do workshops in advance with the students. She visited high schools primarily peopled by poor, black kids and tried to give them hope. "I was there to push back against the old and damning narrative about being a black urban kid in America, the one that foretold failure and then hastened its arrival."

Michelle Obama recounts many instances, some inspiring, some heartbreaking, of her attempts to bolster the young and change cultural expectations, and in this way paints a more complete picture of the true accomplishments of Team Obama. Whatever the president may or may not have succeeded in doing politically, his wife worked just as hard to accomplish culturally and educationally.

That's really the essence of the book. One hopes, and expects, that Michelle Obama will continue this essential work.

More reading

The Future is Asian: Global Order in the 21st Century

By Parag Khanna (Simon and Schuster, 449 pages)

With so much talk of Beijing's actions these days, it's easy to forget that China does not equal Asia; it is only a small part of a geographic and cultural civilization that stretches from Japan to Saudi Arabia, from eastern Russia to Indonesia, from India to The Philippines. A population of five billion people — many young, tech-savvy and entrepreneurial — is defining the world's future growth and governance in ways that will differ from (and sometimes complement) Western principles of world order. Forget Donald Trump's "America First." We have now, writes Parag Khanna, entered the century of "Asia First."

Empty Planet: The Shock of Global Population Decline

By Darrell Bricker and John Ibbitson (Penguin Random House, 304 pages)

The journalist and the pollster team up (again) to challenge a core assumption of our times: that the world's population will continue to grow, fouling its planetary nest more and more. Revisiting statistics and trends, they conclude, however, that the number of humans will actually shrink, starting around 2050. Much of this has to do with urbanization, the education of women and a drop in the need for larger families. And while our dwindling numbers will have disruptive effects — worker shortages, fewer people supporting social programs and so on — they can also bring benefits, including a recovering environment.

Destroying the Caroline: The Frontier Raid that Reshaped the Right to War

By Craig Forcese (Irwin Law Inc., 2018, 392 pages)

A bit of under-appreciated Canadian history with a worldwide impact is vividly captured in this retelling of the sinking of the steamboat *Caroline* (used by insurgents during the Rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada) as she lay moored in American territory. In addition to its compelling narrative, it's an examination of the principle of "anticipatory self-defence" as a potential reason — or rationalization — for launching a pre-emptive attack.

Christina Spencer is the editorial pages editor of the *Ottawa Citizen*. She holds a master's from the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University, and is a past winner of National Newspaper Awards for international reporting and for editorial writing.

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Spring recipes that will dazzle

Photos by Larry Dickenson



Macadamia, Shrimp and Avocado Timbales make a nice first course and can be adapted into a canapé for cocktail parties as well.



Margaret
Dickenson

In this issue, as we face a well-deserved spring, I feature recipes that always delight guests with the simple complexity of ingredients that strategically play off one another in terms of flavours, textures and even colours. The appetizer and dessert recipes can also be modified to become cocktail party favourites.

Macadamia, Shrimp and Avocado Timbales

Makes 4 servings

Everyone appreciates a simple, but tantalizing, combination that can be served as a first course at the table. The crunchy macadamia shrimp topping becomes even more scrumptious when set on creamy cubes of avocado drizzled with Tarragon Hollandaise Mayonnaise. (For cocktail events with guests holding drink glasses, the recipe can be modified to be served on Oriental porcelain spoons. This recipe makes approximately 18 small bites.)

1 cup (250 mL) avocado, cut into ¼-inch (0.6 cm) cubes
2½ tbsp (30 mL) Tarragon Hollandaise Mayonnaise*

Macadamia Aioli Shrimp Topping:

½ cup (125 mL) coarsely diced shrimps (peeled and cooked)
¼ cup (60 mL) coarsely chopped macadamia nuts
2 tsp (10 mL) chopped fresh chives
½ to 1 tsp (3 to 5 mL) finely chopped fresh garlic
½ tsp (3 mL) lemon juice
A drop of sriracha hot chili sauce
1 tbsp (15 mL) mayonnaise
To taste, salt (optional)

Garnish (optional)

Fresh herbs (dill, chives, tarragon) or deep-fried sprigs of fresh tarragon
1. To make the Macadamia Aioli Shrimp Topping, toss together shrimp, nuts, chives, garlic, lemon juice and sriracha sauce. Add mayonnaise and toss. Season

with salt if necessary. (Makes about 3/4 cup or 180 mL.)

2. To present as free-standing timbales, use a cylinder (2 inches or 6 cm in diameter) to assist in the construction. For individual servings, place a cylinder in the centre of a luncheon plate or a wide-rimmed soup dish, add 1/3 tsp (2 mL) of Tarragon Hollandaise Mayonnaise, then 2 tbsp (30 mL) of avocado cubes, pressing avocado down gently into the bottom of the cylinder. Drizzle avocado with about 3/4 tsp (4 mL) of Tarragon Hollandaise Mayonnaise. Repeat the procedure adding the same amounts of diced avocado and Tarragon Hollandaise Mayonnaise drizzle.

3. Top each serving with one quarter of the Macadamia Aioli Shrimp Topping (about 3 tbsp or 45 mL).

4. Garnish the timbales artistically with fresh herbs (or deep-fried sprigs of fresh tarragon) and if desired, plates/soup dishes with drizzles of Tarragon Hollandaise Mayonnaise.

* To make 1/3 cup (80 mL) of Tarragon Hollandaise Mayonnaise, combine 1/3 cup (80 mL) of mayonnaise, 3/4 tsp (4 mL) of prepared mustard (French's for example) and a pinch of crushed dried tarragon leaves.

Cinnamon-crusted Haddock

Makes 4 servings

My husband used to say that this recipe was awesome. It is quick and easy to prepare while offering unusually exciting flavours. Think of ground cinnamon and grated fresh gingerroot rapidly seared with delicate haddock fillets. An accompanying White Wine Cream Sauce punctuated with drizzles of blackberry jam makes this dish a culinary experience not to be missed. To contribute to the wow factor, try serving the fillets on a cushion of mushroom wild rice and crown the fillets with frenched green beans bathed lightly with sesame oil. Note: Previously frozen fillets, which are less expensive, work well.

- 1 1/3 lb (600 g) haddock fillets, skin removed
- 1 1/3 tbsp (20 mL) peeled and grated fresh gingerroot
- 1 tsp (15 mL) ground cinnamon
- To taste, salt
- 3 tbsp (45 mL) canola oil
- 1 1/3 cups (325 mL) White Wine Cream Sauce (recipe follows)
- 1 1/2 tbsp (23 mL) blackberry jam, put through a sieve
- Garnish: sprigs of fresh herbs



Cinnamon-crusted haddock is quick and easy to prepare.

1. Rub all surfaces of fillets with gingerroot, sprinkle with cinnamon and season with salt.
2. Heat oil in 2 large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add fish. Keep moving fillets and cook until first side is crisp (about 1-2 minutes). Carefully turn fillets over and reduce heat to low. Continue cooking second side and moving fillets until flesh flakes and just turns opaque — another 1 to 2 minutes or so. Transfer immediately to platter or individual plates.
3. Serve promptly with White Wine Cream Sauce and drizzles of sieved blackberry jam.

White Wine Cream Sauce

- Makes 1 1/3 cups or about 325 mL
- 2 1/2 tsp (13 mL) instant chicken bouillon powder
 - 1 1/3 tsp (7 mL) sandwich mustard
 - 1 cup (250 mL) hot water
 - 1 1/2 tsp (8 mL) finely chopped fresh garlic
 - 1/3 tsp (2 mL) peeled and grated fresh gingerroot
 - 1 1/3 tbsp (20 mL) butter
 - 2 tbsp (30 mL) all-purpose flour

- 2 2/3 tbsp (40 mL) white wine
 - 1/3 cup (80 mL) heavy cream (35 per cent fat)
 - 2 tsp (10 mL) cognac (optional)
1. Dissolve chicken bouillon powder and mustard in hot water.
 2. In a small saucepan, sauté garlic and ginger in melted butter over medium heat for about a minute; blend in flour and cook for another minute. Whisking constantly, add bouillon mixture and wine; whisk until smooth.
 3. Reduce heat to medium-low; continuing to whisk constantly, add cream and bring sauce to a simmer. Allow sauce to simmer gently for a couple of minutes; remove from heat and, if desired, stir in cognac. The sauce may be stored refrigerated for up to 3 days or frozen for months.

Mushroom Wild Rice

Makes 3 1/2 cups or almost 1 litre (4 to 6 regular servings or about 10 cocktail buffet servings)

With its additions of garlic, ginger and crunchy almonds, this recipe gives a

broader dimension of flavours and textures to the typical stellar combination of wild rice and mushrooms and it's a perfect accompaniment for virtually everything — seafood, fish, game, beef, poultry and pork.

- 1 tsp (5 mL) finely chopped fresh garlic
- 1 tsp (5 mL) peeled and grated fresh ginger root
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) butter
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) peeled and diced shallot
- 2 1/2 cups or 8 oz (625 mL or 225 g) sliced mushroom caps
- To taste salt and crushed black peppercorns
- 2 cups (500 mL) cooked tasty wild rice (recipe follows)
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) toasted slivered almonds

1. In a large skillet over medium-low heat, sauté garlic and ginger in hot butter for about 1 minute. Add shallots and sauté carefully until transparent.
2. Add mushrooms, seasoning with salt and crushed black peppercorns; sauté over medium-high heat until just tender and slightly browned. Remove from heat.
3. Shortly before serving, heat mushroom mixture over medium-low heat. Stir in cooked wild rice; combine thoroughly and heat through, adding a few drops of water

- to keep mixture slightly moist. If necessary, adjust flavours by adding a touch of butter or garlic butter, salt and crushed black peppercorns. Cover and remove from heat immediately.
4. Stir in toasted almonds and serve.

Tasty Wild Rice

Makes 2 1/3 cups or 580 ml (4 to 5 servings)

- 1 cup (250 mL) wild rice
- 1 cup (250 mL) cold water*
- 1/2 tsp (3 mL) finely chopped fresh garlic
- 2 tsp (10 mL) instant beef bouillon powder
- 1 1/2 tsp (8 mL) herb garlic butter (or butter)
- To taste salt, optional

1. Rinse wild rice thoroughly. Place rice, water and garlic in a small saucepan over high heat; bring to a boil. Cover saucepan tightly and reduce heat to low.
2. Cook until grains are tender (about 40 to 45 minutes for very long-grain, top-quality wild rice). Grains will burst partially open, showing only some of the white interior. Avoid overcooking. During the last couple of minutes of cooking, stir in instant beef bouillon powder and combine well. It may be necessary to add touches of water during the final stages of cooking. Rice can be

cooked up to three days before and stored in an airtight plastic container.

3. Remove from heat and drain off any excess liquid. Return wild rice to saucepan, stir in garlic butter.

Individual Blackberry Butterscotch Fondue
Makes 4 servings

Will chocolate fondue ever lose its popularity? Personally, I am particularly fond of butterscotch. In my determination to offer simple but innovative alternatives to traditional favourites, I have come up with my own Butterscotch Fondue. Guests claim it to be a sensuous experience, while they continue to dip fresh blackberries into a creamy butterscotch sauce with uncontrollable enthusiasm. The stunning balance of tart and sweet mesmerizes absolutely everyone, including children and those who are not dessert fans.

- 2 cups (500 mL) fresh large blackberries, whole and clean
- 3/4 cup (180 mL) Creamy Butterscotch Dessert Sauce, chilled
- Garnish (Optional or as desired)
- 4 sprigs of fresh lavender or mint

1. For each of 4 individual servings,



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creatively arrange 1/4 of the blackberries and butterscotch sauce in 2 separate small bowls or dishes. Place them on a plate with a cocktail pick (or corn pick).

2. If desired, garnish the plates with a sprig of fresh lavender or mint.

3. Using the cocktail picks, securely pierce berries one at a time and dip into butterscotch sauce.

Creamy Butterscotch Dessert Sauce

Makes about 2 1/4 cups or 550 mL

My Dickenson Blackberry Butterscotch Fondue owes its stellar reputation to this sauce. I keep the creamy butterscotch sauce on hand in the refrigerator and freezer ready to play its paramount role in my signature fondue or to be used in tempting dessert, pancake or waffle presentations.

1/3 cup (80 mL) unsalted butter

1 1/2 cups (375 mL) heavy cream (35 per cent fat), divided

1 1/2 cups (375 mL) (packed) light brown sugar

1. In a medium-sized saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Stir in 3/4 cup (180 mL) of heavy cream and bring to a boil.

2. Add remaining cream and brown sugar; stir constantly until sugar dissolves and mixture comes to a boil.

3. Reduce heat and allow sauce to boil fairly vigorously over low heat (uncovered) for about 8 minutes without stirring. To test for consistency, drop a touch of sauce into a little cold water. It should not disperse. Remove from heat. Whisk well.

4. With a clean damp cloth, thoroughly wipe exposed surfaces of saucepan above sauce to remove any lingering sugar crystals. This assists in preventing crystallization during storage.

5. Set aside until cool.

6. Stir sauce extremely well and transfer to airtight plastic containers. Avoid scraping "clean" inside surfaces of saucepan as sugar crystals may be present.

7. Refrigerate to thicken and until ready to use.

8. Serve this Creamy Butterscotch Dessert Sauce chilled from the refrigerator, at room temperature or warm. Stir well before serving. The sauce may be stored refrigerated for up to several weeks or frozen for months.

Margaret Dickenson is a cookbook author, TV host, menu/recipe developer and a protocol, business and etiquette instructor.



Blackberry Butterscotch Fondue is a hit, even with people who aren't fond of dessert.



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Artist Howie Tsui is silhouetted in front of *Retainers of Anarchy*, a multimedia installation anchored by a digital, animated scroll that is more than 20 metres in length. It will be at the Ottawa Art Gallery until Sept. 15.

Art in Ottawa: Tsui, de Broin, Thorne and more

By Peter Simpson

Howie Tsui's *Retainers of Anarchy* took seven years to make, and it could not have been made at all not so many years before.

"The software and hardware limitations from 10 to 20 years ago would not allow the work to exist," Tsui says. Go further back and the "mou hap" that is at the work's core was banned in China until 1970. Mou hap is permitted these days,

and Tsui notes that his scroll "just finished exhibiting at OCAT Museum Xi'an, a historical Chinese capital where the Terra Cotta Warriors are located."

Retainers of Anarchy, which opens April 12 at the Ottawa Art Gallery, is a multimedia installation anchored by a digital, animated scroll that is more than 20 metres in length. The scroll is a narrative of the fantasy literature mou hap, which the

catalogue from Tsui's exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery defines as, "the adventures of martial artists, often from lower social classes, as they uphold chivalric ideals against oppressive forces during unstable times."

Practitioners of mou hap were exiled to Hong Kong, where Tsui's narrative is set in the officially lawless and densely populated enclave that was Kowloon



Walled City. Tsui says he was attracted by the “deeply immersive world” of mou hap, and how the walled city demonstrated our “innate ability and desire to self-organize collectively, and [how] based on certain circumstances, these structures can produce more harmonious results.

“This paradox intrigues me, as it runs counter to presumptions that rule and governance are the tools that create order,” says Tsui, whose own roots are in Hong Kong. He was born there, then raised in Lagos, Nigeria, and in Thunder Bay, Ont. He spent 10 years in Ottawa and is now based in Vancouver.

Retainers of Anarchy continues at the Ottawa Art Gallery to Sept. 15. oaggao.ca/howie-tsui-retainers-anarchy

Thresholds — Canada Council for the Arts
Michel de Broin’s work is seen in many

countries, including Germany, France, the United States and New Zealand. It is often very big and sometimes quizzically provocative: He once built a bicycle path that was simply a short circle, and another that was a crazily chaotic loop.

But the true hallmark of the Montreal artist’s work is that it’s made of salvaged materials that were originally made for more prosaic uses. His 2005 sculpture, *Black Whole Conference*, consists of 74 plastic-and-metal office chairs arranged in a globe with their legs facing out, described as, “a utopian architecture in which each element ensures and shares in solidarity with others, thereby securing the stability of the whole.”

He’s known in Ottawa for *Majestic*, the outdoor sculpture behind the National Gallery of Canada that is built of full-size light posts that were torn asunder by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Now

there’s another de Broin in Ottawa, inside the Canada Council for the Arts’ lobby gallery at 150 Elgin St.

Thresholds consists of a series of subway car doors, real doors that have opened and closed countless times on cars in the Montreal Metro since 1963, which was not so long before Expo brought the nations of the world to the city. Now they are arranged in a line with each facing the other, so visitors can walk through them in a tight sequence.

The experience — the doors open and close in quick succession as you pass through — is to be suddenly aware of the sort of technology we pass many times daily with barely a notice. The feeling may lead to other thoughts about our place in the world, and how we take it for granted.

Thresholds continues at 150 Elgin St. to June 9. canadacouncil.ca/about/ajagemo/thresholds



Michel de Broin has created an installation made of real doors from the Montreal Metro. Visitors can walk through and experience the doors closing behind them in quick succession.



Photographer Steven Thorne's *The Wounded* features photos of Canadian soldiers who have been seriously wounded in action. It remains at the Canadian War Museum until June 2.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND THE CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS / PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



Stefan Thompson and Jordan Deal have worked together on an exhibition that marks Earth Day, with new work. The show takes place at Wall Space Gallery from April 22 to May 4.

The Wounded — Canadian War Museum

Stephen Thorne has, for more than 30 years, travelled as a Canadian news correspondent to some of the places that most people would fear to go — race riots in South Africa, the NATO invasion of Kosovo, and Afghanistan three times.

Once in Afghanistan, he was embedded with a recon squad that found a bunker-cave complex on a mountainside, and assault troops were called in to fire rockets and drop satchel bombs into the caves. At one point, he scuttled across a swale to get closer to where troops were “shooting into every hole,” but he got out of there when the explosive charges got bigger.

“I could deal with a lot of things over there, but I wasn’t very fond of explosives,” says Thorne, who now works for *Legion* magazine in Ottawa.

When he returned to Canada, he was diagnosed with PTSD, and during those struggles he decided to create *The Wounded*, an exhibition of portrait photographs of Canadian soldiers who had been seriously wounded in action, and which is now at the Canadian War Museum. The wounded, Thorne believes, were largely forgotten by the public, despite their sacrifices.

Thorne uses black-and-white film,

which creates a sense of the men and women in the photographs emerging from the darkness. The wall panels beside each portrait relay stories about the wounds, the struggles to heal and the remarkable accomplishments that sometimes follow.

The Wounded continues at the Canadian War Museum to June 2.

More shows

Stefan Thompson and Jordan Deal, April



England-born, Ottawa-based artist Colin B. has a show titled *The Ladies and More* at Orange Gallery June 12 to 30.

22 to May 4 at **Wall Space Gallery**, 358 Richmond Rd.: Ottawa artists Stefan Thompson and Jordan Deal mark Earth Day with an exhibition of new works made of eco-friendly materials. “Our techniques are influenced by the findings of modern chemistry and ancient practices,” the artists explain. wallspacegallery.ca

Pat Durr, May 9 to 21 at **Galerie St-Laurent Hill**, 293 Dalhousie St.: American-born Pat Durr is an Ottawa art institution — a painter, print-maker and builder of installation art — and she returns with new works. galeriestlaurentplushill.com

Leslie Hossack, June 6 to 16 at **Studio Sixty-Six**, 858 Bank St.: Ottawa photographer Leslie Hossack turns her lens on lands that saw the invasion that changed history, in the special exhibition *D-Day: Normandy, 1944*. studiosixtysix.ca

Colin B, June 12 to 30 at **Orange Gallery**, 290 City Centre Ave.: England-born, Ottawa-based Colin B’s latest exhibition, *The Ladies and More*, includes “colourful portraits of ladies.” orangeartgallery.ca

Peter Simpson is an Ottawa writer and regular contributor to *ArtsFile*.

Beaujolais: Bold, beautiful and budget-friendly



Alex
McMahon

Beaujolais gets a bad rap. For years, consumers have come to associate the region with the cheap, one-dimensional Beaujolais Nouveau that hits the shelves at the LCBO on the third Thursday of each November. These wines can be fun, but they're largely responsible for type-casting Beaujolais as a region that makes playful, but not serious, wine.

To many wine professionals, however, Beaujolais has a very different reputation — a reputation for being home to some of the greatest wines and vigneronns on Earth, and a place where even the top wines are a fraction of the cost of those from top producers elsewhere. Unlike their neighbours in Burgundy, these wines also tend to be ready to enjoy at a younger age, making them ideal for restaurants. It's also a region where organic viticulture and natural wine-making have very deep roots.

The wines responsible for this reputation tend to come from one of the 10 "crus" of the northern part of the region, just below Macon in Burgundy. These 10 crus (Morgon, Fleurie, Moulin-à-Vent, Chénas, Juliéna, Saint Amour, Chir-

oubles, Régnié, Brouilly and Côtes du Brouilly) are the top sites in the region for producing quality Gamay-based wines. For many reasons, including soil type and exposure, wines produced in each cru will vary, each bringing something unique to the table. Here, I will discuss three of the larger and more commonly found crus, but I encourage interested readers to explore wines from all 10, as they each have a lot to offer.

Morgon is perhaps the most popular of the crus. The wines can have complexity and power rival those of Burgundy. Home to legendary producers such as Jean Foillard and the late Marcel Lapierre, this appellation is respected amongst wine professionals as a place capable of producing serious high-quality wines.

In Fleurie, wines tend to be lighter on their feet and boast pretty floral aromas with a bright, fruity palate. Perhaps the best example of Fleurie is produced by Jean-Louis Dutraive at Domaine de la Grand'Cour. Dutraive produces wines from 40- to 80-plus-year-old vines. They've been certified organic since 2009, but treated organically for decades. His wines, although light in body, have immense depth and complexity. Flavours of bright red fruits, flowers and earth explode from these wines, making them revered and very hard to get one's hands on.

Moulin-à-vent is responsible for the most powerful wines in the region. One of my favourite examples is from dealer Christophe Pacalet (a winemaker who

makes wine from fruit he purchases.) His 2017 Moulin-à-Vent bursts with notes of plums, cherry, violets and damp earth and has a slightly funky edge to it, making it an amazing pairing with vegetable or game-based dishes and phenomenal with dishes with fermented components.

To explore Beaujolais try:

Beaujolais, Château Cambon, 2017

This is a beautiful Gamay coming from a vineyard located in between Morgon and Brouilly. Bright and easy drinking, this is a great introduction to the region and will act as a nice bridge between the juice many are used to drinking, Beaujolais and its more complex cru wines. This wine is available in cases of 12 for \$28 through Toronto-based importer Le Caviste. Contact filippo.lecaviste@gmail.com to order.

Moulin-à-vent, Christophe Pacalet, 2017

Tasting of plum, cherry, violet and damp earth, this wine has a slightly funky edge to it. Available in cases of 12 for \$33 through Toronto-based importer Le Caviste. Contact filippo.lecaviste@gmail.com to order.

Morgon, Jean Foillard, 2017

Incredibly pure expression of Gamay from Morgon from the iconic Jean Foillard. Single bottles are available through the SAQ (code: 11964788) for \$30.50.

Alex McMahon is wine director at Riviera restaurant in Ottawa.

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A stately hilltop mansion for Italy's envoys

By Patrick Langston



The mansion, occupied by Italian Ambassador Claudio Taffuri and his wife, Maria Enrica Francesca Stajano, is just across the Champlain Bridge in Gatineau. The residence is majestically perched on a hill overlooking the Ottawa River.

When deciding to bring his love affair with wood into his home, lumber baron Robert L. Blackburn clearly realized that some discretion was in order. Blackburn built the stately hilltop mansion on chemin d'Aylmer in Gatineau next to the tony Royal Ottawa Golf Club in 1924. It has been the official residence of the Italian ambassador to Canada since 1956.

Cut-stone outside, the home features ample wood inside: a gleaming oak staircase in the foyer, mahogany in the capacious dining room, deep walnut panelling in the masculine library, richly polished floors throughout. But despite its abun-

dance, strong classical elements, including elaborate plaster work, counterbalance the wood and make it clear that this home is eminently civilized and not a wild woodland.

It's also a home that, in spite of its size and the way it commands the 2.5 hectares on which it's set, envelops you when you enter. "It's warm," says Ambassador Claudio Taffuri, whose Ottawa posting began in 2017. That warmth works well with their goal when he and his wife, Maria Enrica Francesca Stajano, host functions at the residence. "In Italy, we like to put others at their ease," he says. "So, if you can create something 'normal' (in your home),

you can put people at their ease. Formal informality is the best way to have real contact with people."

The ambassador's favourite space is a former conservatory that he and his wife have converted into a sitting room, part of the gentle modernizing they've undertaken. The room overlooks the garden, deep in January snow when we visit. "Every morning I read the newspaper here because it has the best light," he says. The ambassador and his wife call it their "elephant room" because of the large carvings and other items they've displayed from their posting to Mozambique in the mid-1990s.



The ambassador and his wife both find the residence warm and inviting, as well as a good place to entertain — something they do often.



The drawing room features columns as well as this small nook to the side.



The dining room is full of dark wood and seats at least a dozen.

It might also be called the squirrel room. One of the rodents snuck in last year, and the ensuing contest between it and Stajano turned epic. Snatching up a chair, the exuberant lady demonstrates how, like a lion-tamer minus the top hat, she fended off the animal. Jab left, jab right. Realizing who it was up against, the squirrel turned tail and ran. Unfortunately, Stajano broke her foot in the standoff.

Like her husband, Stajano loves the home, which Blackburn himself designed with the aid of John Pearson, the architect behind the rebuilding of the Parliament buildings following their destruction by fire in 1916 (there's evidence the stone for the home's exterior and the Parliament buildings even came from the same quarry).

Stajano is especially partial to the home's bright interior. "The light is beautiful. You feel very good alone in this house. It is nice to have friends, too, because everyone feels comfortable when they come."


Her preferred spot is the drawing room. It runs almost the length of the home and features a Carrara marble fireplace she likes to sit beside. Overhead, two large crystal chandeliers punctuate the ceiling with its elaborate plaster work.



As its central element, the drawing room features a Carrara marble fireplace, ornate cornices and pops of colour in the furniture.

 A photograph of a modern kitchen with stainless steel appliances, wooden cabinets, and a dining table. The kitchen features a large island with a white countertop and a sink. The walls are made of brick, and the ceiling has exposed wooden beams. A dining table with four chairs is set up in the foreground.

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The library features floor-to-ceiling walnut panelling and is one of the most masculine rooms in the house, also boasting a wood-burning fireplace.



The ambassador's favourite space is a former conservatory that he and his wife have converted into a sitting room.

Cornices top the doorways, and there's a cosy bay window area at one end, set off by Corinthian columns.

If Blackburn kept his ardour for wood in check throughout most of the home, he let loose in the library. Floor-to-ceiling walnut panelling, built-in bookshelves, windows deep set in dark wood: the room, even if it is of its time, is like an open book about its builder.

Above the wood-burning fireplace (you expected gas?) hangs a large da Vinci-inspired work. It's by the contemporary Italian artist Dicò, who works with photography, Plexiglas and fire. This piece features the image of da Vinci's Mona Lisa, though it's much larger than the tiny



This is a reproduction of the Fonseca bust, a famous piece that resides in the Hall of the Emperors of the Capitoline Museum in Rome. The original dates back to the late 1st or early 2nd Century.

original that hangs at the Louvre in Paris. Stajano says it reminds her of the couple's 23-year-old daughter, who is studying in Italy (their son, 17, is studying in Ottawa).

The dining room, set at an angle to the rest of the home, is also all about wood — dark, burnished, powerful without being too overwhelming. The table seats a dozen or more, while an oval ceiling medallion above incorporates designs of Canadian flora.

Stajano says she and the residence cook often work together to prepare dishes such as Babà Napoletano, a brioche-style dessert, when guests are coming.

In Italy, says the ambassador, "every town and region has its way of doing something. There are 245 ways to prepare pasta. You can imagine, we have a huge menu to offer."

Patrick Langston is an Ottawa writer who dreams of living in a manor.

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New arrivals

Federico-Eduardo Hoyos-Salazar
Ambassador of Colombia



Prior to being posted to Canada, Ambassador Hoyos-Salazar was a house representative for Antioquia in Colombia's Congress. He was elected for a four-year term in 2014 and was a member of the Second Constitutional Commission in charge of security and defence, foreign affairs and foreign trade. Between 2010 and 2013, he was a lecturer at the Pontificia Bolivariana University and EAFIT University, where he taught courses on public opinion and development. Between 2011 and 2014, he was an opinion columnist for *El Colombiano* newspaper.

The ambassador has a master's degree in government and policy and a bachelor's degree in political science from EAFIT University.

Roger Julien Menga
Ambassador of Congo



Ambassador Menga began his diplomatic career in 1978 as head of the Eastern European section at the foreign ministry. He became head of the legal affairs division in 1979. He remained at headquarters in various roles until 1985 when he was sent to Senegal as first counsellor. In 1990, he became first counsellor to the Benelux countries, based in Belgium. In 1997, he was posted to France as chargé d'affaires, with concurrent accreditation to Spain, Portugal, Britain and the Holy See.

In 1999, he became permanent representative to the World Trade Organization in Geneva and between 2001 and 2008, he was ambassador to Switzerland. From 2009 to 2017, he returned to Belgium as ambassador to all three Benelux countries.

The ambassador has two degrees in international studies and speaks four languages: Lingala, French, Russian and English.

Gnagno Philibert Fagnidi
Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire



Ambassador Fagnidi joined the foreign service in 1977 and took on his first posting two years later as counsellor at the embassy of France, where he spent the following 12 years.

In 1991, he returned to headquarters as head of the European division after which he became deputy-director of personnel. In 1997, he became deputy-director of the UN and international meetings division.

For eight months in 1998, he was posted as first secretary to the embassy in Tunisia and was soon after made chargé d'affaires, a posting he held until January 2001. He returned to headquarters as director of African integration and international co-operation from 2001 to 2003 and then served as director of the African department. In 2004, he returned to Tunisia as ambassador for two years before being sent to Russia as ambassador between 2006 and 2011. He returned to headquarters as interim director of human resources before he was sent to Canada as ambassador.

Raza Bashir Tarar
High Commissioner for Pakistan



High Commissioner Tarar joined the foreign service in 1987, beginning his career with professional training, followed by Japanese language studies.

His foreign postings began with the Philippines between 1991 and 1994, then Belgium from 1999 to 2002, Japan in 2003 and the U.S. (New York) from 2008 to 2013. While in New York, he served as deputy permanent representative to the United Nations and the Security Council.

Between 2015 and 2019, he served as high commissioner for Kenya with concurrent accreditation to Burundi, Eritrea, Rwanda and Uganda. He also served as permanent representative to the United Nations, including its Environment Program (UNEP) and United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat).

At headquarters, he served as director-general for disarmament from 2013 to 2015. The high commissioner is married and has two children.

Kerim Uras
Ambassador of Turkey



Ambassador Uras joined the foreign service in 1985, beginning his career in the Greece-Cyprus department. For a year starting in 1987, he did his military service and on

return, he became an attaché in Turkey's NATO department.

In 1989, he was posted as vice-consul to the consulate-general in Germany and three years later, he went to the embassy in Cyprus. He returned to headquarters in 1995 as first secretary in the Middle East department and then as head of the bilateral relations department. He was counsellor in London from 1997 to 2001.

In 2003, he became head of the Iraq department and was later sent to New York as first counsellor to the permanent mission at the UN. In 2010, he was appointed ambassador to Israel and became ambassador to Greece in 2011. He was chief foreign policy adviser to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan before his appointment to Canada.

Urban Christian Ahlin
Ambassador of Sweden



Ambassador Ahlin comes to diplomacy from politics. In 1994, he was elected as a Member of Parliament at the Riksdagen, the Swedish Parliament.

He served on the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly and as chairman of its socialist group for several years. He was also on the parliamentary foreign affairs committee from 1995 to 2014 and served as its chairman from 2002 to 2006. He then served as deputy chairman from 2006 to 2014. From 2014 to 2018, he was speaker and chairman of the Riksdag Board.

The ambassador is also a founding member of the European Council of Foreign Relations and a member of the board of directors of the EastWest Institute.

From 1990 to 1994, he was a teacher, a position he took after completing a master's of science education program at the University of Karlstad. He is married to Jenni Ahlin and has two daughters.

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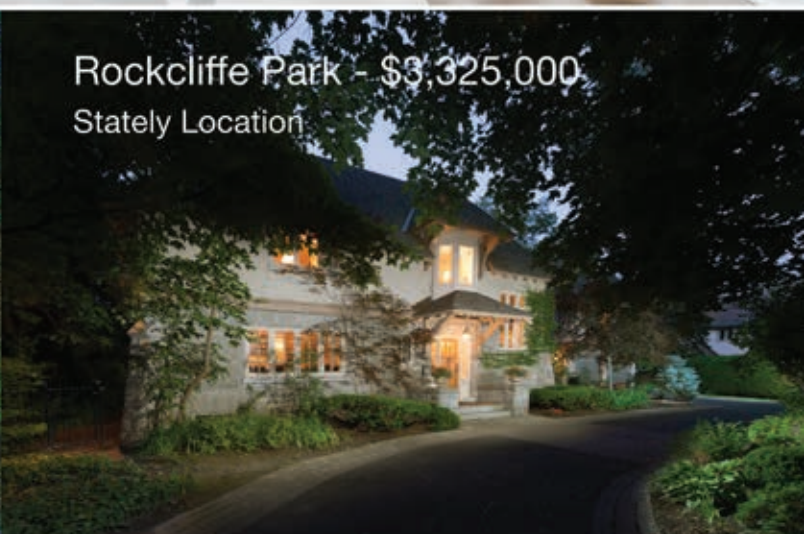
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Rockcliffe Park - \$2,200,000
McKay Lake Views



Rockcliffe Park - \$3,325,000
Stately Location



Salome Meyer
Ambassador of Switzerland



Ambassador Meyer joined the foreign service in 2001. Before that, she worked in web application and development and then for the Swisspeace Foundation as a re-

searcher into early warning in armed conflicts. Her first posting took place between 2001 and 2003 as a diplomatic trainee posted to Korea.

She returned to headquarters in 2003 as desk officer for bilateral affairs with Germany and Central Europe. She became head of political and legal affairs in 2007 and stayed in that position for four years, before being appointed deputy head of mission in China. From 2015 to 2018, she was diplomatic adviser to the president of Switzerland.

The ambassador has a master's in modern history from the University of Bern. She is married to Marije Johanna Rebecca Bijl.

Non-heads of mission

Afghanistan

Ahmad Fahim Ebrat
First secretary

Argentina

Fernando Patricio Valentich
Air attaché

Australia

Adam Peter Turner
Second secretary

William Stephen Ewing
First secretary

Brazil

Elisiane Rubin Rossato
Second secretary

Luciana Pimenta
Ambrozevicius
Attaché

Brunei Darussalam

Muhd Ali-Azri Mohd Alipah
Second secretary

China

Haitao Zhang
Counsellor

Baoming Xie
Second secretary

Zhiqiang Xu
Second secretary

Chengshu Xiong
Attaché

Colombia

William Hernando Cabrera
Castro
Military, naval and air
attaché

Côte d'Ivoire

Gouegone Florentin Vole Bi
First secretary

Croatia

Diana Strkalj
Minister-counsellor

Denmark

Louise De Brass
Second secretary

Ethiopia

Bethelhem Ayalew Melaku
First secretary

Abdulaziz Muhammed
Yibrie
First secretary

Gambia

Pa Sako Darboe
First secretary

Mustapha Sosseh
Deputy head of mission

Lamin B. Jaiteh
Counsellor

Ousman Fisco Njie
Counsellor

Haiti

Nesly Numa
Counsellor

India

Vijay Bhatia
Minister

Indonesia

Agus Budima
Attaché

Iraq

Mohsin Ali Mohsin Mohsin
Attaché

Italy

Giuseppe Benedetto Reitano
Second secretary

Japan

Akira Imamura
Minister and deputy head of
mission

Kazakhstan

Dinazat Kassymova
First secretary

Kenya

John Lepi Lanyasunya
Deputy naval attaché

Mexico

Erick Marco Zendejas
Hinestrosa
Naval attaché

Ruben Dario Bautista
Alatorre
Attaché

Myanmar

Kyaw Zin Oo
Attaché

New Zealand

Mark Paul Leddy
First secretary

Norway

Petter Meier
Counsellor

Philippines

Alan Deniega
Minister and consul

Saudi Arabia

Malak Saud F. Alqahtani
Attaché

Thailand

Alshalit Boonjit
First secretary

Turkey

Utku Kundakci
Counsellor

United Kingdom

Stuart Alan Bruce
Second secretary

United States of America

Michael Thomas Clark
First secretary

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Attaché

Vietnam

The Huy Pham
Second secretary

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1. To mark Kazakhstan's independence day, Ambassador Akylbek Kamaldinov and his wife, Olga Kamaldinova, hosted a reception at the Fairmont Château Laurier. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 2. Mongolian Ambassador Yadmaa Ariunbold and his wife, Ayurzana Enkhtuya, left, hosted a reception at the Fairmont Château Laurier to celebrate Mongolia's 94th anniversary and the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Mongolia and Canada. They are shown with their daughter, Burte Setsen Ariunbold. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 3. To mark the 45th anniversary of the China-Canada Scholars' Exchange Program (CCSEP), the Embassy of China and Global Affairs Canada hosted a reception and concert. This woman in traditional dress performed. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 4. EU Ambassador Peteris Ustubs, left, hosted the launch of the jointly financed project by the Delegation of the European Union, Embassy of Sweden, the Embassy of Switzerland, the Embassy of Burkina Faso and the Parliamentary Centre to celebrate international co-operation in strengthening the Burkina Faso National Assembly. Ustubs is shown with Burkina Faso Ambassador Athanase Boudo. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 5. A traditional Korean cultural performance known as Jeong Ga Ak Hoe took place at Museum of History. Maengho Shin, main vocalist for the Jeong Ga Ak Hoe, sang at the event, hosted by the Korean Cultural Centre. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 6. The Estonian documentary "Rodeo" was shown at the 33rd EU Film Festival that took place at the Ottawa Art Gallery's Alma Duncan Salon. From left: Georgian Ambassador Konstantine Kavtaradze and Estonian Ambassador Toomas Lukk. (Photo: Ülle Baum)



1. To mark King's Day, Belgian Ambassador Johan Verkammen and his wife, Katleen Billen, hosted the official launch of *First World War — Far From Home*, a photo exhibit. The event was organized in collaboration with the Canadian War Museum. From left: Argentine Ambassador Eugenio Maria Curia, Billen and Verkammen. (Photo: Ülke Baum) 2. Nigerian High Commissioner Adeyinka Olatokunbo Asekun and his wife, Olawunmi Ibilola Asekun, hosted a national day reception at the Westin Hotel. (Photo: Ülke Baum) 3. To mark the 175th independence day of Dominican Republic, Ambassador Pedro Luciano Verges Ciman hosted a reception at the Rideau Club. From left, Michael Grant, assistant deputy minister of the Americas at Global Affairs Canada, and Verges Ciman. Both spoke at this event that also marked the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Dominican Republic and Canada. (Photo: Ülke Baum) 4. To mark the bicentenary of the Austrian Christmas carol *Silent Night*, Austrian Ambassador Stefan Pehringer hosted a screening of *Das ewige Lied* in the Arts Court Theatre. The screening was followed by a reception. (Photo: Ülke Baum) 5. To mark the 106th anniversary of Albanian independence, Ambassador Ermal Muça and his wife, Alma, hosted a reception at the Fairmont Château Laurier. (Photo: Ülke Baum) 6. The Diplomatic Hospitality Group invited the spouses of diplomats in Ottawa to learn to curl at the Royal Canadian Curling Club. Ihssane Boujendar, wife of the Tunisian ambassador, is seen here throwing a rock. (Photo: Sam Garcia)



1.



2.



6.



3.



5.



4.

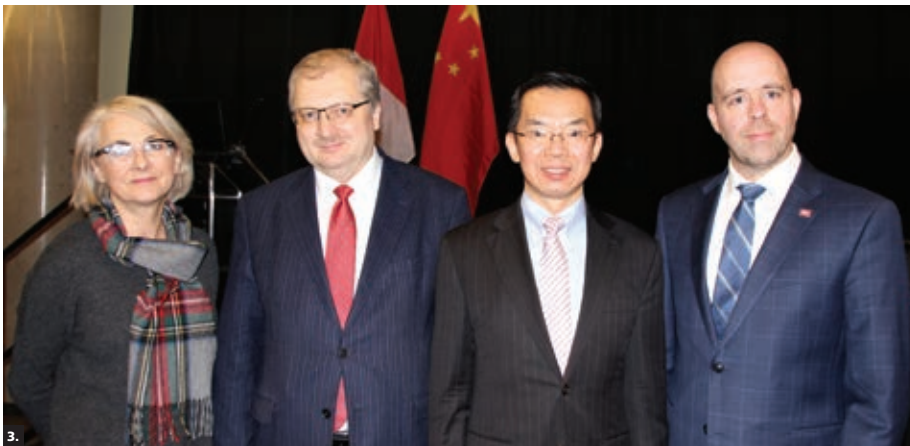
1. The embassies of Norway, Austria, Mongolia, Finland, Czech Republic, Denmark, Iceland, Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Slovenia, Turkey and the Delegation of the EU took part in the winter celebration at Rideau Hall. This woman was at the Norwegian tent. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 2. Japanese Ambassador Kimihiro Ishikane and his wife, Kaoru, hosted a reception on occasion of the National Day of Japan and the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan at the Fairmont Château Laurier. From left, MP Andrew Leslie and the Kimihiro. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 3. To celebrate Estonia's 100th anniversary, Estonian children born around the world received a copy of the book *Pisike puu* from the government. Sisters Marin and Myrah Howe from Gatineau received their book and gifts from Estonian Christmas Father "Jõuluvana" at the Ottawa Estonian Society Christmas party. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 4. To mark the national day of Qatar, Ambassador Saoud Abdulla Z. Al-Mahmoud hosted a reception at the Fairmont Château Laurier. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 5. The delegation of European Union and the diplomatic missions of the EU member states hosted an 11th annual EU Christmas concert at Notre-Dame Cathedral Basilica. From left: EU Ambassador Peteris Ustubs and Finnish Ambassador Vesa Ilmari Lehtonen after the concert. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 6. To celebrate 90 years of diplomatic relations between France and Canada, Ambassador Karen Rispal hosted a dinner at her residence. From left, Rispal and Marie-Claude Bibeau, minister of international development. (Photo: Ülle Baum)



1. To mark the visit of Cuban Foreign Minister Rodrigo Malmierca, Cuban Ambassador Josefina de la Caridad Vidal Ferreiro hosted a cocktail reception at the embassy. From left, Vidal Ferreiro; Clive Witter, a senior vice-president at Export Development Canada (EDC), Malmierca, Sandy Reid, vice-president at EDC and Bruce Dunlop, vice-president of global business at EDC. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 2. Estonian Ambassador Toomas Luuk paid a courtesy call on Mayor Jim Watson. (Photo: City of Ottawa) 3. Gabon Ambassador Sosthène Ngokila, left, hosted the 2018 Women Who Work Gala at Lansdowne Park's Horticulture Building. Ngokila is shown with South African High Commissioner Sibongiseni Yvonne Dlamini-Mntambo, who was one of the award recipients that evening. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 4. Russian Ambassador Alexander Darchiev hosted a reception, concert and photo exhibit on the occasion of the Day of the Diplomatic Service. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 5. Soprano Ming Hui Liu performed at a concert hosted by the Chinese Embassy in support of Friends of the National Arts Centre Orchestra. (Photo: Ülle Baum)



1. To mark UAE's national day, Ambassador Fahad Saeed M. A. Al-Raqbani hosted a reception at the Museum of History. (Photo: Ülke Baum) 2. The Norwegian Embassy, with the National Capital Commission (NCC), hosted the launch of Malcolm Hunter's book, *The Trail Beckons: 100 years of cross-country skiing in Gatineau*. From left, Mark Kristmanson, former NCC CEO, Norwegian Ambassador Anne Ovind, Jennifer Tomlinson, chairwoman of the Cross Country Ski de Fond Canada, and Hunter. (Photo: Ülke Baum) 3. To celebrate Thailand's national day, Ambassador Maris Sangiampongsa and his wife, Kokan, hosted a reception at the Fairmont Château Laurier. These dancers performed. (Photo: Ülke Baum) 4. To mark Sri Lanka's 71st national day, High Commissioner Madukande Asoka Kumara Girihamama and his wife, Sudarma, hosted a reception at Andaz Ottawa. (Photo: Ülke Baum) 5. Tunisian Ambassador Mohamed Imed Torjemane and his wife, Ihsane Boujendar, hosted an event at their residence highlighting Tunisian cuisine. Boujendar is shown here, right, with Elbia Meghar, wife of the Algerian ambassador. (Photo: Sam Garcia) 6. To mark Slovenian Culture Day, Ambassador Melita Gabric hosted a recital. From left: pianist Nejc Lavrencic, Gabric and Slovenian-Canadian soprano Theresa Plut. (Photo: Ülke Baum) 7. Vietnamese Ambassador Nguyen Duc Hoa and his wife, Tran Nguyen Anh Thu, hosted a dinner at Vietnam House. From left: Tran stands with Cecile Latour, former Canadian ambassador of Vietnam (1999 to 2002). (Photo: Ülke Baum)



1. In celebration of Chinese New Year, Ambassador Lu Shaye and his wife, Wang Liwen, hosted a concert at the National Arts Centre. From left: Heng Xiaojun, minister-counsellor at the embassy; Christopher Deacon, president of the NAC; Jayne Watson, CEO of the National Arts Centre Foundation; Shaye; Zhang Gaoxiang, director of the China Broadcasting Performing Arts Troupe; and Zhao Haisheng, minister-counsellor at the embassy. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 2. Portuguese Ambassador João da Camara hosted a concert by Portuguese fado guitarist Custódio Castelo at the University of Ottawa. From left: Camara and his wife, Maria Raquel Barata Belchior Rodrigues P. da Camara, with Castelo after a successful concert. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 3. The Chinese Embassy and Carleton University co-hosted the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Conference at Carleton University. From left: German Ambassador Sabine Sparwasser, Russian Ambassador Alexander Darchiev, Chinese Ambassador Lu Shaye and Carleton University President Benoit-Antoine Bacon. The day-long event brought together experts, diplomats and business people. (Photo: Ülle Baum)



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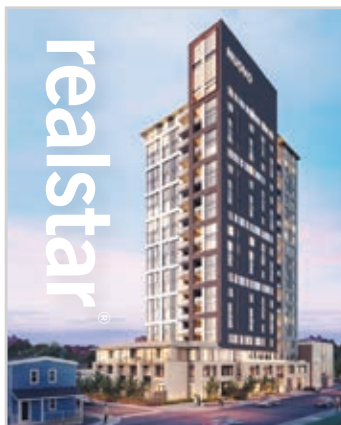
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Spring awakening: Adventures near Ottawa

By Patrick Langston

Blue cheese, steel beds and A.Y. Jackson: An unlikely combination, but they're part of our spring round-up of travel tips for anyone hankering to throw off the shackles of winter and explore places and events within driving distance of Ottawa. We've even come up with some suggestions that are within the city limits.

Going under: Scenic Caves Nature Adventures in Collingwood, about 460 kilometres southwest of Ottawa, features self-guided tours of caves and crevices up to 20 metres deep. The cave trail, including a suspension bridge, takes a couple of hours to hike. There are also spectacular cliff-top views of Georgian Bay, ziplines, and the like. The caves are part of the Niagara Escarpment, declared a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve in 1990. There are extensive hiking trails, museums and swimming in the area. sceniccaves.com, 705-446-0256. Tip: If you go in late July, you can catch the Collingwood Elvis Festival, apparently the largest such event in the world and starring a slew of Elvis impersonators.



Bring out your inner child at the Children's Festival, May 8 to 12 at LeBreton Flats.

Your inner kid: It would be a mistake to think the Ottawa Children's Festival is just for the younger set. With shows this year from Ireland, Spain, Australia



You can travel down the Rideau River between Smiths Falls and Kingston in a boat you rent from Le Boat. They will sleep between 5 and 12 and sport top decks and barbecues.

and elsewhere, the festival is a delight of puppetry, circus arts, music and more, no matter what your age (but do bring a child or two. Their reactions are always a delight). Plus, there's a cavalcade of free events on the festival's LeBreton Flats site. May 8 to 12. ottawachildrensfestival.ca, 613-241-0999.

Cruisin' the Canal: You say you've never travelled down the Rideau Canal by boat? Le Boat rents vessels that will get you from Smiths Falls to Kingston in seven days, with opportunities for stops to explore the sights and small towns that pepper the canal. The boats sleep 5 to 12, feature up to five bathrooms and sport a top deck, a barbecue hotplate and treats. Prices vary during the season, which starts on the May long weekend and runs into the fall, but range from about \$2,200 to

just under \$10,000. Less expensive three-day jaunts are also available as the season evolves. leboat.ca, 1-800-734-5491

Snoozing on steel: The City of Cornwall, abutting the St. Lawrence River 100 kilometres southeast of Ottawa, doesn't get a lot of attention here in the capital. Too bad, because it's rife with history, which you'll discover if you drop by spots such as the Historic Cornwall Jail, where beds were made of steel and up to 14 inmates were locked in a drunk tank smaller than many ensembles. The nearby community museum, loaded with local artifacts, will cheer you up after your jail time. Tip: Some restaurants may be closed on Sundays. cornwalltourism.com, 613-933-0074.

Bird time: Quebec's Parc national de Plaisance is a little gem an hour east of Ottawa. Created after lands were flooded

for a hydroelectric generating station, it is two-thirds water and wetlands. Migrating birds and bird watchers love it, and 250 species (of birds, that is) have been documented. Muskrats, turtles and more abound; there are 30 kilometres of bike trails as well as hiking, boating and fishing; and you can stay overnight in a tent, yurt or chalet. Take the ferry at Cumberland and follow Highway 148 to Plaisance. It's a prettier drive than Autoroute 50E. sepaq.com/pq/pla/index.dot

Party central: No one throws a party like Montreal, and the city's annual International Jazz Festival is a great one. Running June 27 to July 6, this year's 40th anniversary shindig spills over from its base in the downtown Quartier des spectacles into other neighbourhoods. The lineup ranges from genre-jumping guitarist George Benson to neo-classical pianist Alexandra Stréliski, montrealjazzfest.com Tip: For info such as where to eat or unwind in Montreal, check the *spottedbylocals* app. Its contributors are city residents with some good inside scoops.

White water ahead: Tempted by the idea of whitewater rafting, but skittish about the reality? The one-day family rafting option at RiverRun Rafting may be your answer. Geared to adventurers as young as five, the trip on the Ottawa River includes some rapids, calm



Waller St. Brewing is a tiny brewery in the ByWard Market. It seats just 20 beer drinkers.

stretches of water, a bit of education on geography and local heritage and lunch. The launch is located in Foresters Falls, about 90 minutes northwest of Ottawa. riverrunrafting.com, 1-800-267-8504.

Brewski time: Good beer, many would agree, is one of humanity's greatest achievements and a glass or two is as rewarding as a lottery win. In Ottawa, you need venture no further than downtown to savour spots such as the tiny, perfect Waller St. Brewing and the convivial Flora Hall Brewing. Looking to travel a bit further? Combine a Saturday trip to the Carp Farmer's Market with a stop at the village's newly opened Ridge Rock Brewing Co. Many of the craft breweries feature food as well. Visit ontariobev.net for a frothy list.

Ruined but not wrecked: It's not the Acropolis, but St. Raphael's is among Ontario's many cool ruins. Built two centuries ago in the shape of a cruciform, the Roman Catholic church in South Glengarry burned in 1970, but the massive stone walls survived. Conservation efforts mean the National Historic Site is now a splendid destination and home to weddings, concerts and more. Fiddlers and pipers sometimes play there for their personal pleasure. 75 minutes east of Ottawa. saintraphaelsruins.com

The joy of cheese: You could just pick up a package of Kraft slices at the grocery store, but doesn't cheese — an ancient, nutritious and almost infinitely varied food — merit more effort? Eastern Ontario and western Quebec boast several enticing cheese factories, including the award-winning Fromagerie Montebello, about 75 minutes northeast of Ottawa at the foot of the Laurentian Mountains. Its offerings include Manchebello, made from ewe's milk, and Rebellion 1837, a blue cheese. While you're in the area, take the kids to nearby wildlife Parc Omega or stop by the elegant Château Montebello for a gander at the fine, rustic interior and a bite to eat. fromagerie-montebello.ca, 819-309-0541.

Close, splendid and free: Rideau Hall is ridiculously accessible, so why don't we ever get around to touring it? The stately official residence of the governor general of Canada, built in 1838, and its surrounding 32 hectares of rolling lawns, woods and gardens are open year-round. Admission is free. In the residence, you can opt for a 45-minute guided tour of the regal public rooms or, at selected times, do a self-guided tour. Art by the likes of Emily Carr and a one-tonne crystal chandelier number among the indoor delights. The grounds are modelled on an English country estate and include trees older than Canada itself. You can even bike or roller-

blade through the grounds and Gov. Gen. Julie Payette won't object at all. gg.ca/en/visit-us/rideau-hall/plan-your-visit, 613-991-4422

Food and feet: The Good Food Tour introduces the food, history, architecture and art of two lovely small Ottawa Valley towns — Almonte and Carleton Place. The walking tours through the two historic mill towns include stops at chocolatiers, craft breweries, pastry shops and full-on restaurants. Also on the menu: private tours for groups of eight or more. The three-hour tours, which are anywhere from a kilometre to a kilometre-and-a-half long, include architectural commentary and insights on food and local culture. thegoodfoodtour.com



Painter A.Y. Jackson, of Group of Seven fame, lived in Manotick for the last couple of decades of his life. The A.Y. Jackson Trail documents his painting sites.

Trailing A.Y.: We've all relished them. A.Y. Jackson's paintings evoke the geography of Canada and the spirit of the Group of Seven, of which he was a member. For the last 20-odd years of his long life, Jackson (1882-1974) lived in Manotick, just south of Ottawa proper, and painted avidly up and down the Ottawa Valley. The A.Y. Jackson Trail documents those travels and painting sites west of Ottawa, including back roads leading to spots like Calabogie, Barry's Bay and beyond. Travelling the trail is a memorable way to view this gorgeous little corner of the world through a fresh lens. ayjacksontrail.ca

Patrick Langston is an Ottawa writer who thinks there's adventure around every corner.

Israel: The land of creation



The Western Wall in Jerusalem is the holiest site in Judaism. A remnant of the Second Temple, it serves as a pilgrimage destination for Jews from around the world and it is a custom to place a note in the wall.



By *Nimrod Barkan*

When Canadians ask me what to do when they visit Israel, I tell them that the possibilities are endless, as there is so much to do and see and something for everyone to enjoy. Here are some of my favourite spots.

Family Fun: From north to south

The North: Tiberias, located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, across from the Golan Heights, is a tremendous outdoor destination for the whole family. The city, and the Galilee region, are home to religious sites for Jews, Christians and Muslims, notably the Mount of Beatitudes

and Capernaum in the Galilee, as well as the Church of the Annunciation and the White Mosque in Nazareth.

The Dead Sea: 138 kilometres south of Tiberias on the Jordan River, you will find the lowest place on Earth — the Dead Sea. The sea is a popular tourist destination, where you can float while bathing with salt and minerals that are believed to provide excellent health and healing properties. Before you go in, rub the famous mineral-rich mud all over, and don't forget to snap a photo.

Masada: While at the Dead Sea, you don't want to miss another popular tourist spot — Masada, the ancient fortress. A

UNESCO World Heritage Site, this is one of the great archeological excavations in the world. Jewish King Herod built Masada in 30 BC, as the last stronghold of Jewish rebels during the time of Roman conquest. The summit of Masada is reachable by two hiking trails or by cable car. Don't miss it.

The Negev Desert: Further south, you'll reach the Negev Desert. On top of the sprawling landscape and archeological sites in this desert, you may be surprised to encounter fields and greenhouses. Here Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, who built his home in the area, accomplished his goal of "making the desert bloom." In the Negev, you can visit Be'er Sheva, a modern city that dates back to biblical times. Beyond Be'er Sheva, you'll reach the town of Mitzpe Ramon, the home of Makhtesh Ramon, the largest erosion crater on Earth. The crater measures 40 kilometres and is Israel's largest national park.

Eilat: All of these Negev sites are en route to Eilat, a resort town at the very southern tip of the country. There is plenty of fun and adventure in Eilat, from scuba diving in the Red Sea, to an underwater aquarium, to beaches, mountains and watersports.

Sea to See: The Mediterranean coastline

Israel's Mediterranean coastline features hundreds of kilometres of natural beauty, historical wonders and world-renowned beaches. Starting from its most northern point in Rosh Hanikra, the coast is easily accessible by train or bus. Let's begin, working our way from north to south.

Acre: No tour of Acre is complete without a visit to its Old City, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. From the Byzantines to the Crusaders and the Ottomans, Acre is a city built by conquest. Nowhere in the old city is this more evident than through a tour of its main attraction, the citadel. An Ottoman fortification, the Citadel was built on the foundations of the Knight's Hospitaller Fortress. Visitors can walk through the halls, courtyards and streets dating back to the Crusader period. Beneath the fortress, visitors can walk through the Templar tunnels that once connected the fortress to the port. In the city's market by the port, enjoy a fresh cup of coffee by the sea, alongside locals and other tourists.

Haifa: After a 20-minute commute south of Acre, you'll find yourself in Haifa, Israel's third-largest city, set on the slopes of biblical Mount Carmel, facing the



Eilat is a resort town at the very southern tip of Israel. Shown here is Dolphin Reef.



Floating in the Dead Sea is a unique experience and one believed to provide health and healing.



Baha'i Gardens, which cascade down a mountain in Haifa, have been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site and are a must-see on a coastal tour of Israel.



Tel Aviv is Israel's cultural hub, known for its beaches and nightlife, but it has much more to offer, including Carmel Market, which sells spices, electronics and clothing, among other things.

Mediterranean Sea.

Cascading down the mountain are the Baha'i Gardens, a must-see on your coastal tour, and dubbed a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008. The gardens are not only one of the most frequented attractions in Israel, but also one of the holiest sites in the Baha'i faith. Atop the Gardens' complex, a stunning symmetry of well-kept hedges, flowerbeds and water fountains catch the eye.

At the foot of the gardens is a popular neighbourhood in Haifa, the German Colony. It's a perfect place to break for lunch, enjoy a beverage or go shopping. Established by German Templars in the late 1860s, a short walk around the neighbourhood's now-refurbished homes is an experience on its own.

Caesarea: Just south of Haifa, you can visit the ancient port town of Caesarea, a breathtaking archeological masterpiece on display at the Caesarea National Park. The ruins tell the story of what was the largest port in the Roman Empire.

Upon entry, an ancient bathhouse, reconstructed frescos and a remarkably preserved Hippodrome are all within metres of the sea. At the southern edge of the park is the Roman Amphitheater, which today plays host to summer concerts and celebrations. The port region, around which the Crusaders built their city, is a lively entertainment area where ancient buildings house modern cafés and restaurants, as well as galleries displaying Israeli art.

Tel Aviv-Jaffa: The rumours are true. Tel Aviv, Israel's cultural hub, never sleeps. Nicknamed the White City after its UNESCO-recognized Bauhaus architecture, Tel Aviv is world-renowned for its beaches and nightlife, but offers so much more than that.

Rent a bike or take a walk down the city's main artery, Rothschild Boulevard, and feel Israel's heartbeat of innovation and entrepreneurship, called home by no fewer than 900 startups. You can also make a stop inside Independence Hall and visit the room where David Ben-Gurion signed Israel's Declaration of Independence.

Rothschild Boulevard is home to countless bars and restaurants, and after business hours is when the party really starts, continuing to the surrounding neighbourhoods, including Florentin and the south.

Tel Aviv is also home to old and new markets. In the Carmel Market, which is the largest, merchants sell everything from spices to fruit, clothing to electronics. Meanwhile, Sarona Market, to the north, is

a high-end culinary centre with a modern food market vibe, similar to St. Lawrence Market in Toronto.

Of course, when in Tel Aviv, one must visit the beautiful beaches. Stretching all the way down the city's Mediterranean coast, enjoy the warm water, sports and beautiful sunsets. Along the beach, the city also offers a promenade, where you will find locals walking, running and biking. The promenade is also home to Tel Aviv's annual Pride parade.

Walk south through the picturesque streets of Neve Tzedek, which connect the new city to the old city of Jaffa. Known for its diversity and cultural dynamism, Jaffa is filled with shops, restaurants and history.

The Jaffa clock tower, near the local flea market, is often used as a starting point for tours. This is where cafés serve hummus with fresh pitas, and is a perfect place to grab breakfast. Located on a hill with a stunning view of the Tel Aviv skyline, the Old City of Jaffa is host to a beautiful green space, St. Peter's Monastery and the Great Mosque.

Winding your way down the cobblestone streets will lead to the Jaffa Port where biblical tales and historic episodes of modern history have unfolded. Take a stroll around the harbour and watch the fishermen on their colourful boats as you decide which of the seaside restaurants you'll pick for dinner.

Jerusalem: Antiquity to modernity

Jerusalem is a city of contrasts. While the Old City is full of ancient history, the modern city is a vibrant metropolis, with all the traits of a major Western capital.

As Israel's capital, Jerusalem is home to the Knesset (Israel's parliament), the Supreme Court and other national landmarks, including Yad VaShem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Centre, and the national cemetery on Mount Herzl.

Jerusalem's crown jewel is its Old City, a UNESCO World Heritage site with four distinct quarters, Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Armenian, each more than 1,000 years old.

Enter through the Jaffa Gate to visit the Tower of David, overlooking an archaeological museum that contains ancient ruins dating back nearly 3,000 years. From there, cross the Jewish quarter to visit the holiest site in Judaism, the Western Wall. A remnant of the Second Temple, it serves as a pilgrimage destination for Jews from around the world and it is a custom to place a note in the wall. While here, don't forget to check out the wall tunnels, a



The ancient fortress of Masada is one of the world's great archeological excavations. Jewish King Herod built it in 30 BC as the stronghold for Jewish rebels during the time of Roman conquest.

breathtaking underground site, dating back to the 1st Century.

Just beyond the Western Wall, you will find the third holiest site in Islam, Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount. Today, the Temple Mount, the ancient site of the Jewish Temple, is also home to the Dome of the Rock.

Neighbouring the Temple Mount is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which contains Christianity's two holiest sites. Built almost 1,700 years ago, the church is the site where Jesus was crucified, and is where he is said to have been buried and resurrected.

The cultural and social hub for Jerusalemites is Machane Yehuda, the Shuk. During the day, the bustling marketplace, with more than 200 vendors, serves as a centre for purchasing spices, sweets, fresh produce, Judaica, street food and more. It is the ideal place to gain an appreciation of the vibes of modern Jerusalem. At night, drinks replace spices, and the market becomes a dynamic scene of nightlife, with restaurants, bars and live music.

One of my favourite sites in Jerusalem is the Biblical Zoo and Aquarium. With

almost a million visitors last year, it is a unique place that conserves local biodiversity, and where visitors of all religions and ethnicities can enjoy the rich zoological variety. Founded 78 years ago by Professor Aharon Shulov, it is renowned for its success rate in breeding endangered species.

Your journey awaits

To me, Israel is a country of epic contrast, where every step you take tells a story of its present and its past. It is a country of great diversity in its people and topography, sounds and cuisines, cultures and traditions. It is a country home to faith itself, where holy sites for Jews, Christians and Muslims are scattered across a sacred land. It is a country of immense beauty visited by a record-breaking four million tourists in 2018. Won't you join them this year?

To start planning your trip, visit www.goisrael.il and follow us on Twitter @IsraelinCanada to learn more.

Nimrod Barkan is Israel's ambassador to Canada. For more information, please contact pr@ottawa.mfa.gov.il or call (613) 750-7500.

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Celebration time

A listing of the national and independence days marked by countries

April		
4	Senegal	Independence Day
16	Denmark	Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II
17	Syria	National Day
18	Israel	National Day
18	Zimbabwe	Independence Day
19	Holy See	Election of the Pope
26	Tanzania	Union Day
27	Sierra Leone	Republic Day
27	South Africa	Freedom Day
27	Togo	National Day
27	Netherlands	King's Day
May		
1	Marshall Islands	National Day
3	Poland	National Day
8	Israel	Independence Day
9	European Union	Schuman Day
17	Norway	Constitution Day
20	Cameroon	National Day
22	Yemen	National Day
24	Eritrea	Independence Day
25	Argentina	May Revolution
25	Jordan	National Day
26	Georgia	Independence Day
28	Azerbaijan	Republic Day
28	Ethiopia	Downfall of the Dergue
June		
1	Samoa	Independence Day
2	Italy	Anniversary of the Foundation of the Republic
4	Tonga	Independence Day
6	Sweden	National Day
10	Portugal	National Day
12	Philippines	National Day
12	Russia	National Day
14	United Kingdom	Her Majesty the Queen's Birthday
17	Iceland	Proclamation of the Republic
18	O/of Eastern Caribbean States	OECS Day
18	Seychelles	Constitution Day
23	Luxembourg	Official Celebration of the Birthday of His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri
25	Croatia	National Day
25	Slovenia	National Day
25	Mozambique	Independence Day
26	Madagascar	Independence Day
27	Djibouti	National Day
29	Holy See	National Day



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Photographer Mike Beedell: "This photo from Fair Isle, Scotland, depicts a puffin colony during the spring mating season. These court jesters of the North Atlantic are bumbling flyers and they can often be observed tumbling onto the ground, crash-landing or bowling over their brethren as they make another embarrassing descent. However, they move efficiently underwater, where they rocket to and fro at tremendous speed, catching small fish — capelin and sand lance — which they cram in their beaks before popping to the surface like a feathered cork. It is hard to tell males from females unless one discreetly sneaks up to them, lifts their tail feathers and examines their cloaca (followed by an apology). Alternatively, follow the rule that males tend to be slightly larger than females. This poster bird of tourist boards and the official bird of Newfoundland is a member of the auk family. There are approximately 24 million Atlantic puffins. They concentrate in Norway, the Faroe Islands, the British Isles and Canada's East Coast, with small numbers on the U.S. Atlantic Coast. The puffin has a body length of 28 to 30 centimetres and a wingspan of 47 to 63 centimetres. It averages 400 grams in weight and 20 years in lifespan.

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