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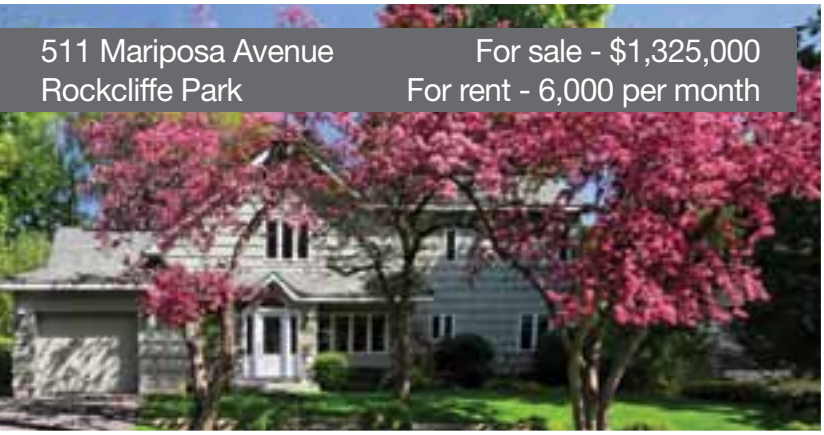

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JENNIFER CAMPBELL

Pack your bags

Travel can mean different things to different people, but for diplomats, it's a way of life. And most of those I've spoken with in the past decade have told me they love to travel. To match their enthusiasm, we present our annual travel edition, this year with 10 destinations, some of them off the beaten path. They're reasonably priced locales and among them are places that offer something a little different from what most people think of as a conventional holiday.

In drawing up his list, writer Wolfgang Depner paid attention to the fact that travel requires what he calls "two very precious resources — time and money." But he says it's also about making memories, shifting perspectives, broadening horizons and learning about ourselves and the world we live in. His list may not have something for every taste, but it aims to inform and, more important, to offer a unique and enriching experience to the traveller.

We also delve deeper into the travel world with a story on Ottawa's surroundings and some easy day trips from home base: Think Montreal, Kingston and Wakefield. We round out that article with a list of festivals staged in Ottawa from July through October.

In the regular travel feature called Destinations, Indian High Commissioner Nirmal Verma takes us on an informative tour of his amazingly diverse country.

In the Dispatches section, publisher Donna Jacobs brings complex Azerbaijan into focus as a moderate, modern petro power. David Kilgour and Peter Lin, meanwhile, examine the democracies of Eastern Europe and the role Ukraine's recent troubles play in the geopolitics of the region. We also have a story on the scourge of malaria and the simple solutions that could curb it substantially. Finally, we invited Ottawa-based WaterCan, which has recently merged with the Britain's WaterAid, to explain its renewed efforts to provide clean water and sanitation to the world's poorest.

Up front in Diplomatica, columnist Fen Hampson gives us his view on a new brand of economic thinking, while Robert Rotberg weighs in on elephant and rhinoceros poaching-to-extinction in Africa. He explores poachers' Chinese business connections in Africa, spurred by China's growing appetite for potions and powders its people believe tusks and horns contain. And if you are travelling abroad, you may be interested in a charitable organisation that collects medical supplies for the world's needy and sends them in tourists' suitcases.

In the books section, columnist George Fetherling gives us some summer reading, first on the Parthenon and then on to subjects from Faisal I, king of Iraq from 1922–33, to intrigue in the South China Sea.

In our entertaining column, Margaret Dickenson takes us on a culinary tour of Portugal, while Margo Roston visits the residence of the ambassador of the United Arab Emirates. Dyanne Wilson's photographs highlight its classic appeal. We also have two history columns — Anthony Wilson-Smith's on Canada Day and Laura Neilson Bonikosky's on the Charlottetown Conference that led to the country's creation.

Our photo finish is an image of spawning salmon by photographer Mike Beedell. These photos of wildlife on the back page are a tribute to our late associate publisher, Neil Reynolds, who loved the natural world.

Jennifer Campbell is *Diplomat*'s editor.

UP FRONT

Our July issue is all about travel and this photo of an original oil painting on canvas summed up summer travel for us as the two boys in wetsuits take their boogie boards to the water. Our travel package, which features 10 interesting destinations, starts on page 36.

CONTRIBUTORS

Wolfgang Depner

Wolfgang Depner is a regular contributor to *Diplomat & International Canada* and is a doctoral candidate at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus. With H. B. McCullough, he was co-editor of *Readings in Political Ideologies Since the Rise of Modern Science*. He tweets through @Wolfgang_Depner about Canadian politics and foreign affairs. He hopes Canada's men's soccer team will one day play at the FIFA World Cup again.

Mary Metcalfe and Jacques Chenail

Jacques Chenail has led an active career and life. He has worked in technical translation, sales and service of computers and peripherals. He has been a volunteer firefighter, municipal councillor, food-bank volunteer and website developer.

Mary Metcalfe is currently on her third career as a freelance book editor after many years in public relations and management consulting. She is the author of three published women's fiction novels and has had numerous articles published in a variety of magazines and other publications.

Ms Metcalfe and Mr. Chenail live on a lakefront property in the foothills of the Laurentians with their dog, three cats and assorted wildlife.

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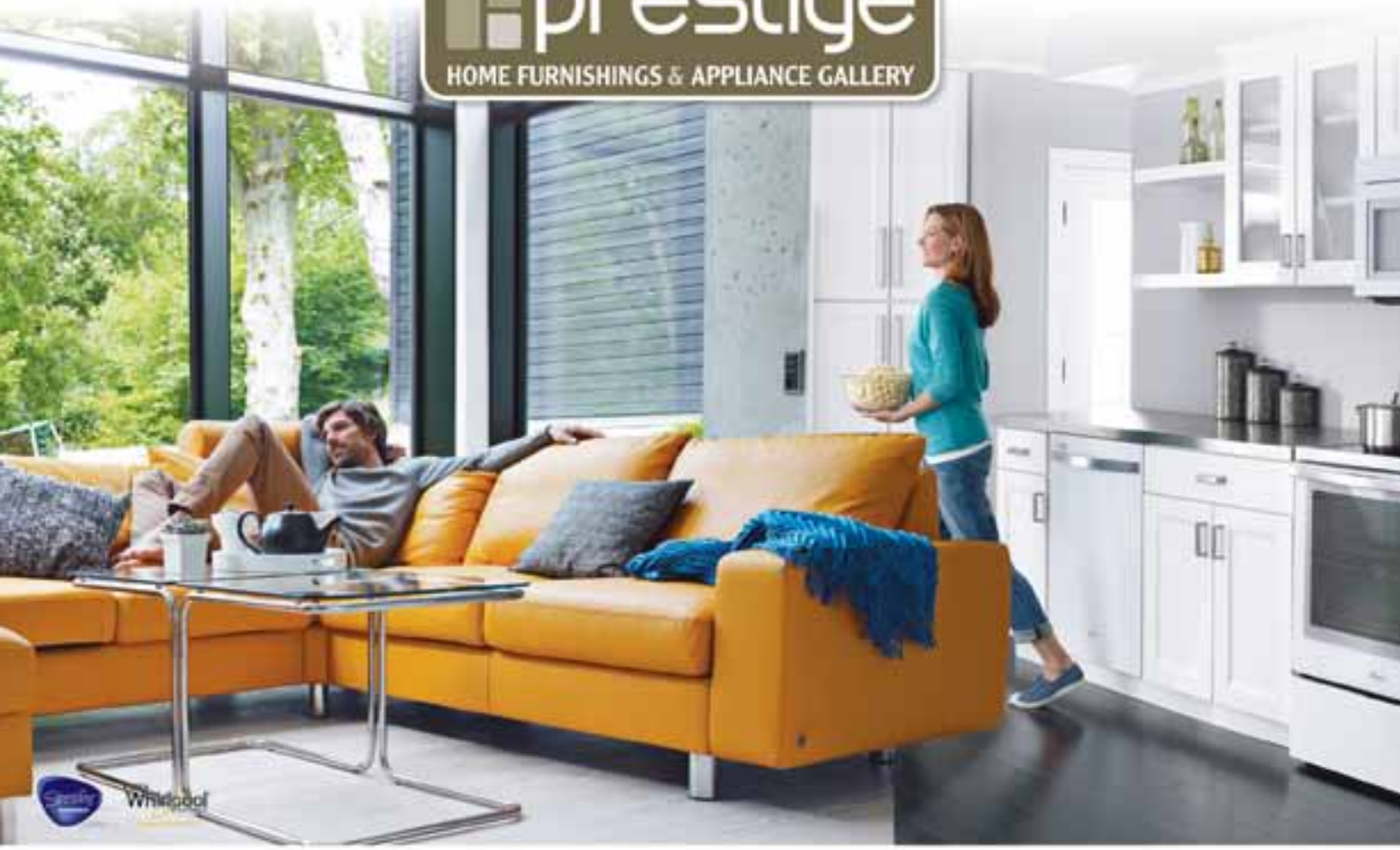

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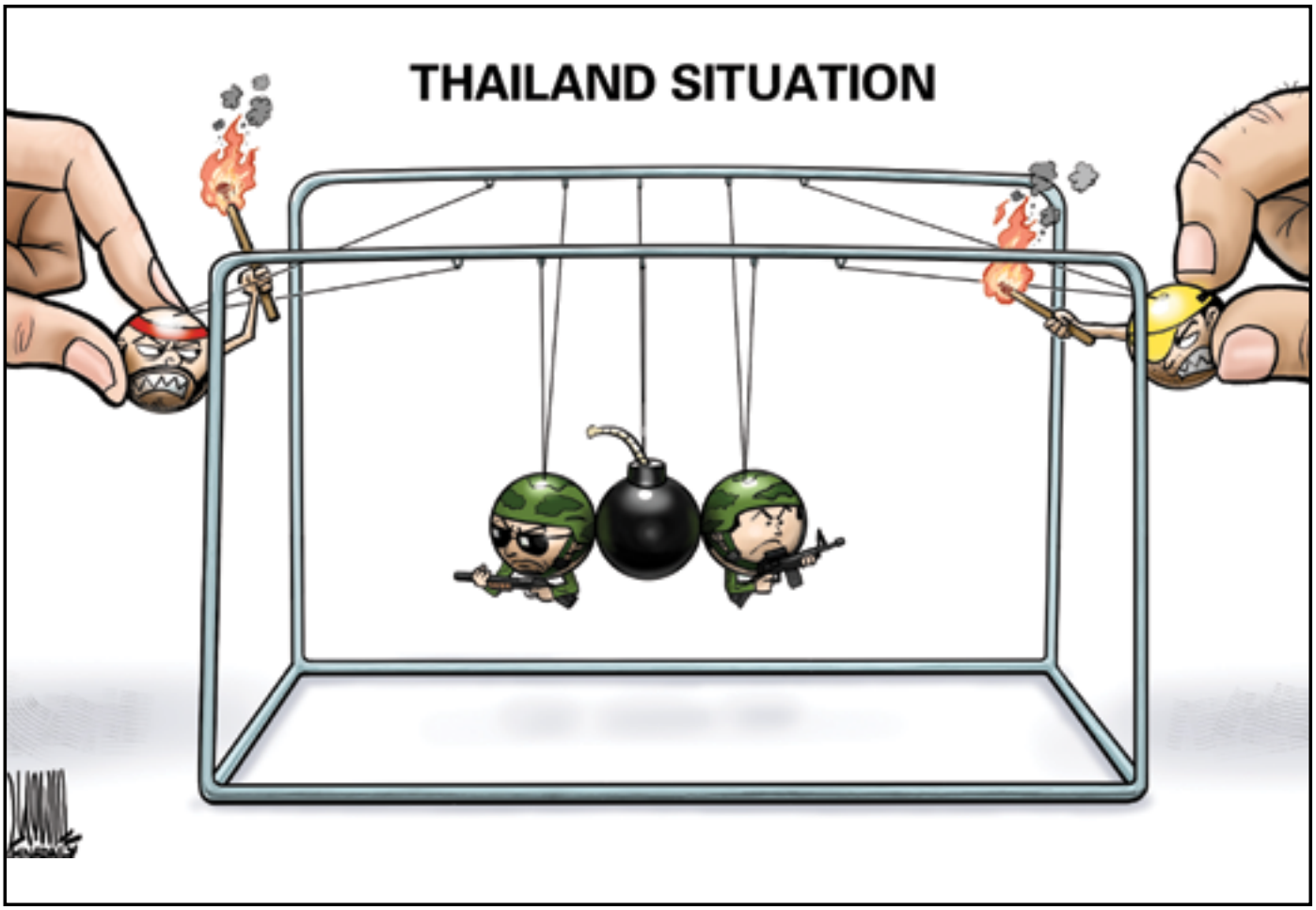

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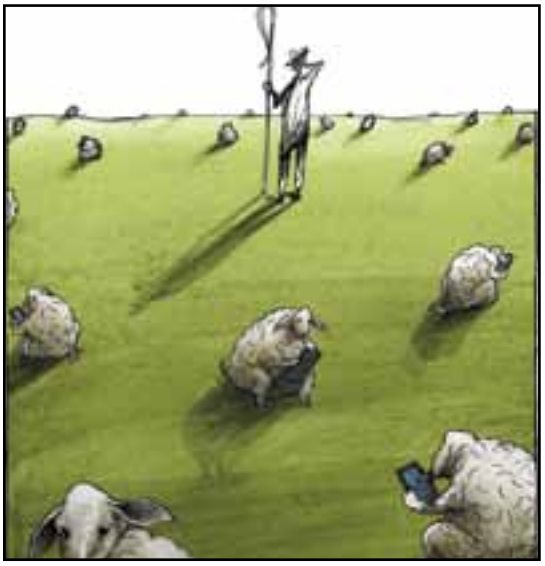


"Social Network" by Angel Boligan, *El Universal*, Mexico City

"Putin and China" by Patrick Chappatte, *The International New York Times*, U.S.

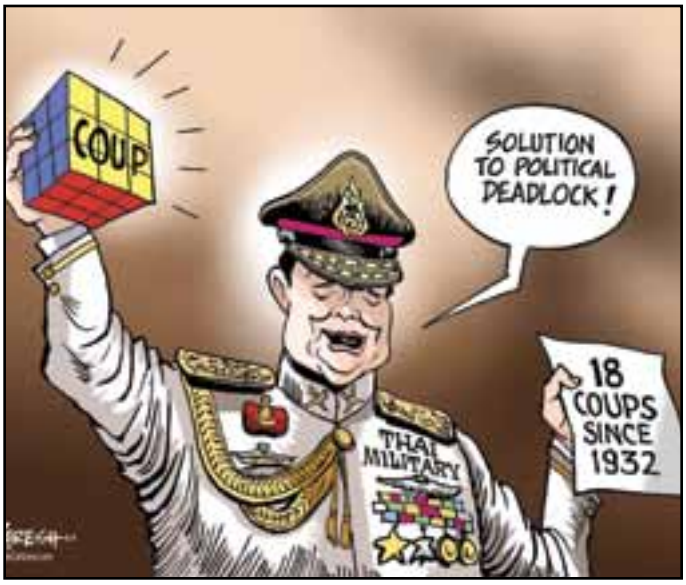
"Pope Francis Mideast Peace Process" by Bob Englehart, *The Hartford Courant*, U.S.

"Consumer Signals" by Angel Boligan, *El Universal*, Mexico City

"Putin's Weapon" by Olle Johansson, Sweden

"Choice of Path" by Olle Johansson, Sweden

"Cutting Claws" by Olle Johansson, Sweden



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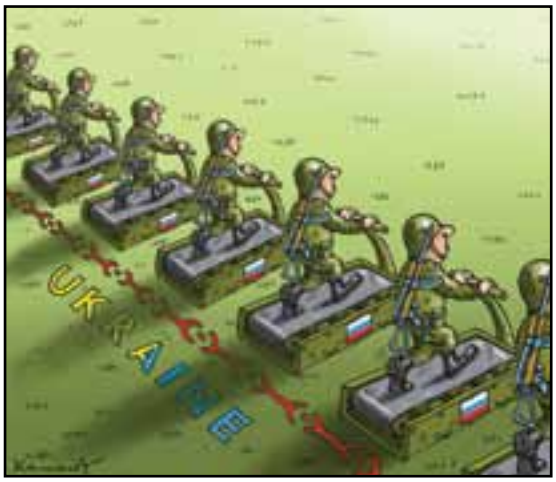

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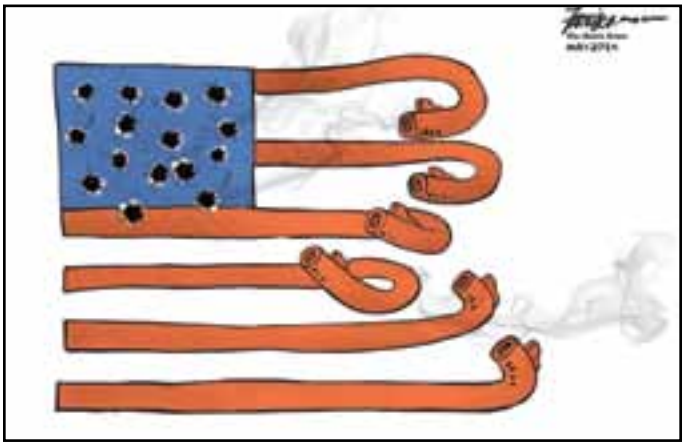

"Senseless Shootings" by Manny Francisco, Philippines

"New EPA Rules" by David Fitzsimmons, *The Arizona Star,* U.S.

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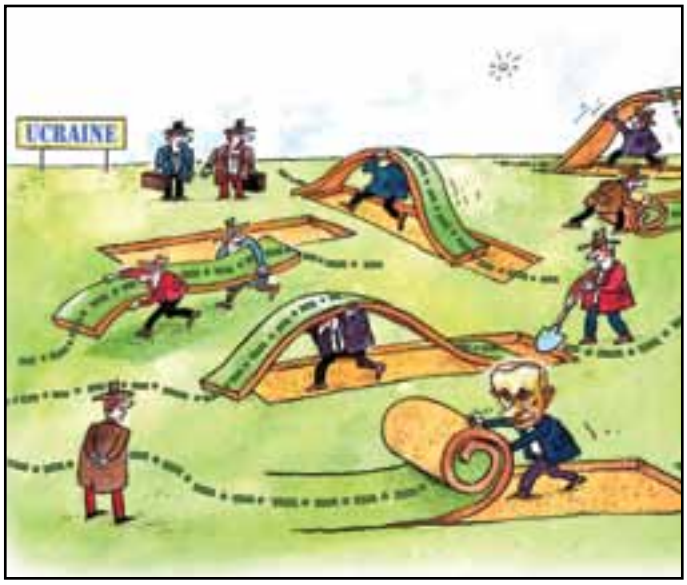

"New Boundaries" by Pavel Constantin, Romania

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Big Ideas for tackling world problems

By Fen Hampson

FEN OSLER HAMPSON

It's been called the dismal science. But it's not really. There is a renaissance in economic thinking that is taking place outside the restrictive boundaries of the economics discipline that will revolutionise the way we think about macroeconomics, microeconomics and monetary policy.

This revolution is being led by the Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET), which was founded by George Soros and based in Manhattan, N.Y. One of its major partners in this enterprise is the Centre for International Governance Innovation, founded by Jim Balsillie and based in Waterloo, Ont. Together, these institutions are funding a shift in the study and practice of economics, encouraging economists — many of them young — to take real intellectual risks in the way we approach the world's problems.

Many of these ideas were on full display at the annual INET-CIGI conference that was held in Toronto earlier this year.

This was no arid, theoretical discussion of economics characterised by unfathomable-sounding papers filled with indecipherable terminology, ponderous mathematical equations and legions of mind-numbing statistics. Instead, one of the striking qualities of this highly animated, three-day conversation among economists and business leaders was its relatively jargon-free, open and highly accessible nature.

It was also a discussion that would have made John Maynard Keynes, the father of modern economics, proud, because it connected economics to real-life problems and vital questions of public policy.

Many of these thinkers stand conventional economic wisdom on its head. Take Bill Janeway, a brilliant economist-turned-venture-capitalist, who has just published an important new book, *Doing Capitalism in the Global Economy*. In it, he argues that financial speculation can be a real boon to innovation, especially in the high-tech sector, where risk and uncertainty abound. Access to financial markets, he argues, can actually stimulate growth and innovation in critical sectors of the economy when there are financial bubbles.

However, the reason this works is because of structural problems in the economy when it comes to demand and access to capital. And as Mr. Janeway himself concedes, bubbles may not be the most efficient way to stimulate growth and innovation.

Other INET economists are studying the impact of the digital economy on economic growth and development. Their work shows that even relatively low cost innovations such as the introduction of automated online trading are changing the operation of commodity markets in the developing world in ways that are beneficial to producers.

The introduction of mobile payment systems in a country such as Kenya, for example, is also helping to leverage that country's resource and human capital endowments on a global scale.

New thinking in economics also points to the critical role governments can play in fostering innovation and growth. When governments invest in infrastructure, underwrite the availability and speed of broadband access in rural areas and develop enabling, as opposed to restrictive, regulatory frameworks, they can be important drivers of economic growth.

As University of Sussex economist Mariana Mazzucato carefully documents in her outstanding book, *The Entrepreneurial State*, government intervention is justified not only to address market failures, but also to underwrite risky research and commercialisation processes that the private sector will not touch.

Such trailblazing investments by government were critical to providing a much-needed platform to launch the internet, develop the touchscreen technologies behind Apple's iPhone and iPad and other key innovations in biotechnology, nanotechnology and even agriculture. Ms Mazzucato says venture capital alone cannot sustain the kind of slow, painstaking research required for innovation success.

However, when governments embark on a wholesale deregulation of financial markets and services as the U.S. did during the 1990s, they create thin financial hulls that can be easily punctured.

Perhaps one of the most important insights of this new economic thinking is the light it sheds on the complex relationship between monetary policy, investment patterns and economic growth and productivity.

There continues to be lively debate about the origins of the 2008-09 global economic crisis and who was culpable in the greatest financial disaster we have seen since the Great Depression. Fingers have been pointed at the greedy bankers and stock traders of Wall Street, who played a deadly game of financial roulette with hedge funds, derivatives and various other mysterious financial products that were concocted to conceal the real value of the assets and liabilities being traded.

Hollywood has given its own spin to this story in *The Wolf of Wall Street*, in which Leonardo DiCaprio portrays the cocaine-snorting stock trader who plays fast and loose with the hard-won earnings of his clients. Everyone loves a moral tale of self-indulgence, unrequited greed and anti-heroes who lead lives of reckless debauchery that eventually come to an ignominious end with prison sentences and a life spent delivering mea culpas and motivational seminars when they finally get out of jail.

If only the truth were so simple. As some of INET economists' work shows, what played a key role in the last financial crisis was policies of central banks that helped to create distortions in capital markets through the creation of "asset bubbles" in tech stocks in the 1990s or the housing market in the last decade. In the case of the latter, a perfectly well-intentioned attempt to open up home ownership to the disadvantaged classes led to the now well-known abuses of overlending to clients who were in no position to assess what kind of mortgage agreement they had entered into.

Easy money, fuelled by low interest rates, also encouraged risky behaviour as investors looked for ways to gain higher yields. Traders and purveyors of financial services, in turn, created highly novel financial products that seduced private

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investors and corporations alike in an endless betting game that drove up asset prices well beyond their real value.

Government regulators in most countries — Canada was a notable exception — looked the other way as investors ran like sheep into this dazzling new casino. Some left grinning with giant wads of cash in their hands. Others lost their shirts.

After the world headed into deep recession bordering on depression at the end of the last decade, like the drunk who takes a chaser to cure a hangover, central bankers resorted to priming the monetary pump again with low interest rates and a novel policy of "quantitative easing," through which they sucked up assets from banks and other financial institutions at bargain-basement prices instead of the more traditional policy of buying up government bonds and treasury bills to pump additional liquidity into the economy in an effort to free up credit.

The problem now is that, as before, easy money is flooding back into global equity markets instead of being used to promote investment in new business ventures that promote economic growth and stimulate productivity, innovation and employment.

The reason is simple. Investors see higher returns in the stock market and the act of buying and trading equities and other financial products.

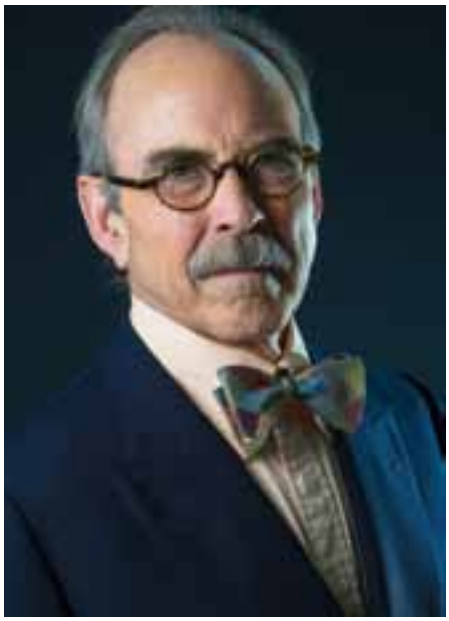
Think of it this way: You have $10 and your neighbour next door is running a poker game in his basement. The total pot if you win the game is $100. On the other side of the street, your other neighbour is building a lemonade stand and has asked you to contribute to its construction with the promise that once it's up and running, he will pay you a modest, guaranteed monthly dividend of 50 cents — and possibly more if his business succeeds.

Where would you put your money? Most people would opt for the poker game because the anticipated returns are much higher. The downside is that if you lose, you get nothing.

Some economists argue that current monetary policies have spurred the growing distortion in equity and credit markets, just as the flow of easy money into equity markets and sloppy regulation led to the crisis in the first place.

They also argue that central bankers have been too wedded to old ways of thinking that are focused on targeting inflation instead of carefully monitoring the consequences of monetary policy on specific asset market inflation — such as

The Wolf of Wall Street star Leonardo DiCaprio's role typifies brokerage excess.



American venture capitalist and economist William H. Janeway.

housing — where distortions occur when money is "cheap" and investors trade assets that have no productive value.

But as the new economic thinking also reveals, efforts to regulate financial markets by imposing capital ratio and liquidity requirements on financial institutions fail to take into account the interactive effects between credit, equity and capital markets and the devastating negative consequences when there are asset-based fire sales. Prices can drop like a stone and financial institutions will take the hit as shockwaves reverberate throughout the entire financial system.

We also now have bigger banks and more concentrated financial markets than ever before. The regulatory process has become so complicated that even the regulators don't fully understand it. The legislation to implement the "Volcker Rule" to restrict the investment activities of banks runs a staggering 2,400 pages. In contrast, the Federal Reserve Act of 1913 ran about 31 pages and the Glass-Stegall Act of 1933 was a mere 37 pages.

Simply put, the banking system is too fragile and dangerous. There is still too much debt in the system. Insolvency risks run deep. And there remains a built-in bias in the financial system against business loans in favour of trading in equity markets.

Banks are major traders in this unproductive game of equity roulette. They are perversely addicted to borrowing in order to finance their own "gambling" habits. And they aren't being constrained by newly imposed capital requirements in Basel III (a voluntary global regulatory standard for banks.) The proverbial *Wolf of Wall Street* is the entire system and its interlocking set of institutions.

As these new economic thinkers argue, when financial institutions fail, taxpayers become the equity investors of last resort — a situation akin to paupers bailing out the princes.

Taxpayers are generally a poorly informed and disenfranchised lot when it comes to understanding how financial markets really work, but they are the ones who have to provide the safety net when the system fails. And fail it will unless we go back to an era in which banks do what they are supposed to — lend to business and stop playing the stock market — and central banks change their own outdated benchmarks for measuring inflation and the health of economies.

As Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz, one of the founders of new economic thinking, said to his Toronto audience, "the financial sector is no longer the servant of the rest of the economy. It has become its master. The financial system used to manage risk. Now it creates it."

Fen Osler Hampson is a Distinguished Fellow and Director of Global Security & Politics at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and concurrently Chancellor's Professor at Carleton University.

The Vatican's man in Ottawa

'Peace is a fundamental duty and task of civil society'

Photos by Dyanne Wilson

Most Reverend Luigi Bonazzi hails from Bergamo, Italy, not far from where the world-renowned sparkling water, San Pellegrino, also hails, he proudly reports. But today, he is the diplomatic representative, known as the Papal Nuncio, for the Holy See. He has held the same position in Haiti, Cuba, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. He's also had postings in Cameroon, Trinidad and Tobago, Malta, Mozambique, Spain, the U.S. and Italy. He sat down with *Diplomat* editor Jennifer Campbell to talk about his diplomatic life and why he won't call it a "career."

***Diplomat* magazine:** What is the main job of the Vatican's man in Ottawa? What are your priorities for your posting?

Luigi Bonazzi: As you know, I am the Papal Nuncio, representing the Holy See and, more personally, the Pope, who is, at this moment, Pope Francis, to the authorities of the country and also to the local Catholic church. I have a general sense of my tasks here, but the road I hope to travel is an open one. I don't really have a road map because 90 percent of the Papal Nuncio's time is spent in close contact with the Catholic church. Because it is a job that involves people and relationships with people, you cannot pre-define it. What you do is really the result of the quality of the relationships you establish. I will try to establish good relationships. One important priority is to enter into a profound personal dialogue with the bishops and all the different iterations of the Catholic church here in Canada. I am an ambassador and, at the same time, I am a bishop. In that job, I need to share the love and the joy of the gospel, really helping people who are looking for happiness. And everyone nowadays is looking for happiness.

DM: It sounds as though you'll be doing some ministry here as well, then?
LB: Yes, I will be visiting dioceses and priests in their parishes. I will take part in the lives of religious communities. The church gives a central place where you can share the light of the gospel. I intend to be available as much as I can to this kind of ministry and this aspect of my job.

DM: What is the role of Catholicism in global affairs?
LB: Your use of the term global affairs reminds me of the words of Jesus: "What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit himself?" It is Luke 9:25. It stresses that global affairs are always also personal affairs and personal responsibility, personal engagement. The world will progress if I progress. The world will enter into darkness if I am, myself, in darkness. Because global affairs are strictly related to individual affairs, we come to meet the usual question: Who am I? Where am I coming from? Where am I going? These questions also relate to global affairs.

This is a profound memory from my studies: The great philosopher, Heidegger, 80 years ago, said the night is coming, the world is entering into the night and what is tragic is that it doesn't even realise [it is] doing so. The night to which he was referring is the eclipse of God in the conscience and in the life of the Western world. For Catholics and all Christian people, the primary contribution we can make is to help people keep the light of God. The problem is that God is disappearing and with the dimming of the light that comes from God, humanity is also losing some important references. It is increasingly entering into some destructive effects. In this sense, the principal task of a Catholic or Christian today is to help people to hear the voice of God.

DM: Can you talk a little bit about the beliefs of Pope Francis?
LB: I can speak about two specific characteristics of his personality that might explain his beliefs. First, there is something he wrote in a credo when he was 23 or 24. In it, he wrote: "I believe the rest are good and that I must fearlessly love them without ever betraying them for my own safety." It shows a fundamental trust

and respect of everybody. He has made a rule never to betray anyone. This is a characteristic that will show also in his everyday life. This accounts for the attention he gives to everybody and especially to those most in need.

The second one is coming from his experience as a disciple of Jesus. He says, "I have a dogmatic certainty that God is in every person's life." Even if the life of a person has been a disaster, even if he's destroyed by vices — drugs or anything else — God is in this person's life. You must try to see God in every life. Even if the life of a person is full of weeds, there is always space in which a good seed can grow. You have to trust in this. Fundamentally, this good seed is the presence of God in everyone.

'I don't like the word career.'

Only someone who has a fundamental trust could have the simple courage to invite, without thinking in advance, the presidents of Israel and Palestine [Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas] to come together for a moment of prayer. It's because he trusts them and believes something good can surface.

DM: When the Pope brought those two leaders together, he was trying to foster peace. Is that part of your mission?

LB: The first message we hear on the day of the nativity is that the son of God enters our world as a source of peace. The promotion of peace is the promotion of dignity of the human being and peace is a fundamental task of the Catholic church. We try to cultivate attitudes in every person that create peace. When you are invited to be a person who loves everyone and therefore is also forgiving, even of your enemies, the church is promoting peace. Peace is also a fundamental duty and task of civil society. In inviting the two presidents to pray, the Pope has exercised his mission, which is to remember that in this goal of peace, God is the source of it.

'God is in every person's life.'

DM: Pope Francis has come out against abortion and contraception, but he's been a little more lenient on homosexuality than other popes, saying one should be tolerant of homosexuals. Would you say that's accurate?

LB: Precisely because I was stressing respect and trust in every person, this, of course, can be applied to a homosexual person as well. His statement that "Who am I to judge a person who is a homosex-

'The main actors in the renewal of the church are women.'

ual who does what he can to be an honest and engaged person" is well known. At the same time, I think that Pope Francis feels that there are two different things: One is the person, who might have these inclinations, and also homosexuality itself. I think for Pope Francis, it's evident that sexuality has a direction and a meaning that is not [possible] with homosexuality. Sexuality is about the communion of a man and a woman, in order to have children and assure the future of the human being. There is a fundamental discrepancy with that when it comes to homosexuality.

DM: You've had an interesting career. Can you share some highlights?
LB: First, I must tell you I don't like the word "career." I prefer to think of it as projects of life, or designs of life. I really, more and more, discover that my life, and the life of everyone, has a project at its origin. The best thing for you is to fulfil this project. This project is deep inside you. My project comes from God, from the love of God. The fundamental anthropological vision of the gospel is that the person develops all his capacity if he makes his life a gift to others. It is not just a career, to fight for personal success. The success comes as a consequence, but it is not what was intended. Often I remind myself what Mother Teresa used to say: "God has not called me to be successful, he has called me to be faithful to this love of service he has put within me." This is the general attitude with which I see and try to interpret my life. I didn't myself decide to become a priest; I was called to be a priest. I didn't decide to have a career as a diplomat; I was called to it.

DM: How old were you when you heard this calling to become a priest?
LB: I was 20 when I started to understand more clearly what it meant to become a priest and what I was being asked to do.

DM: You also have a PhD in education, correct?
LB: I have a licence in theology and philosophy. I did a PhD as well, maybe to become an instructor in the seminary, but then I was called by the bishop to the diplomatic service. I entered into this adventure and I must say it's been very interesting.

DM: There are places all over the world where Christians are being persecuted. Can you talk about that, where it's happening and what the Vatican can do about it?
LB: There are very well known countries where, to be Christian and Catholic is pretty difficult: Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Central African Republic. Also, there are countries where it's not possible to have a Bible and you cannot even wear a cross. Those are well known countries, but there are also places where it's not so well known that it's difficult for Christians to live. Of course, we don't oblige anyone to be a Christian or a Catholic, but we would like to expect we can live freely as Christians and as Catholics. But this is a challenge. We wish to continue to show the vision we have of the world, to share what we consider useful and important. Martyrdom and persecution are part of Christian life. The respect for religious freedom is a battle, as is promoting the respect of human dignity.

DM: Pope Francis has spoken strongly about sexual abuse, saying he has a zero-tolerance policy. What does that mean for future offenders?
LB: It means that if a priest has such an aberration, he will lose his status as a

priest and civil law will apply. He has said a priest who receives trust from the faithful and from young people must not abuse this trust. It is a kind of sacrilege.

DM: He has been respectful of women in his comments, but has ruled out the possibility of them becoming priests. Will that happen in our lifetime?
LB: There is a tradition in the Catholic church that it doesn't feel allowed to promote women to priestly ordination and the reason is also well explained. I don't think for that there will be a change in these things. Of course, there will be more value placed on the role of women in the church under Pope Francis. He often says the main actors in the renewal of the church are women. In this sense, the role of women is more and more important and valued.

DM: Was Pope Benedict's resignation a surprise to you?
LB: When it happened, it was a very big surprise, but listening to the reasons that he gave made me appreciate even more the esteem and gratitude I had for him. This resignation took place during the year he'd proclaimed "the year of faith." Many were a little bit shocked because they said this was a lack of faith, that he didn't believe God was providing him with what he needed to fulfil his mission. But I said this is the greatest example of faith we'd seen because if faith means trust in God, to obey God, Pope Benedict had acquired an inner conviction that God was, for different reasons, asking him to step down. I would say that faith produces good fruit and we have seen the good fruit, which has been Pope Francis.

DM: Are there any countries with which the Holy See doesn't or cannot have diplomatic relations?
LB: Very few. China is the big one. There is full readiness from our side to enter into a dialogue, but China doesn't feel this is the moment. We don't have diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, but once again, we are available. We don't have relations with North Korea, nor with Vietnam, but I think for Vietnam, it is a question of one or two years — we've done a lot of "journeying" together.

We are friends and respectful of everyone. We are open to everybody. Our only request is that the country respect religious freedom and the possibility of the church to develop its mission in that country.

Raising a racket for charity

Photo by Lois Siegel

When Ottawa Diplomatic Association members and their friends get together for an event, it very often has a side benefit for the community in which they are posted.

The ODA tennis tournament, for example, which took place at the end of May, was expected to end up with a surplus of about $1,000. Each time an event raises extra money, it goes into a charitable donation fund and at the end of the year, at the annual ODA ball, the organisation announces the amount it raised and to which charity the money will go. This year, that money will go to the Michaëlle Jean Foundation.

The foundation's mission is to support arts initiatives that change young people's lives and the underserved communities in which they live.

The tennis tournament, held at the Rockcliffe Lawn Tennis Club, is intended to be a fun event. It's open to "pretty well everyone," in the words of Haitian Ambassador Frantz Liautaud, the ODA's outgoing vice-president, who organised it this year, for the second year in a row, and has volunteered to do it again in 2015, though he won't be sitting on the ODA board the next year.

"This year, we had 39 players registered, which is a lot more than last year," he said, and added that each player received a medal for their participation.

Each player pays $5 to participate in the doubles tournament that runs three hours on a Saturday afternoon and ends with an awards presentation ceremony and a barbecue. In addition, the organisers charged $25 a plate for the barbecue, $5 more than their costs so the extra $5 could go to the charity fund.

Haitian Ambassador Franz Liautaud has organised the Ottawa Diplomatic Association's tennis tournament for the past two years. The event was expected to raise $1,000 for the Michaëlle Jean Foundation.

"We also have a sponsorship with Ogilvie Motors Ltd., which is a distributor of Mercedes in Ottawa," Mr. Liautaud said. "Last year, they were sponsors, as well."

Canada and Belgium: Way beyond beer and chocolate

By Bruno van der Pluijm
Ambassador of Belgium

If two Belgian products stand out in the minds of many of our Canadian partners, it is, no doubt, beer and chocolate. Indeed, important quantities of both are consumed in Canada, as more and more specialty beers follow the existing flow of kegged and bottled beer from Belgium to Canada, and increasing numbers of chocolatiers open shop across the country.

But as important as these exports may be, economic relations between Belgium and Canada, two advanced economies, go way beyond beer and chocolate. It is not widely known, for example, that today Belgium is globally the first market for the Northwest Territories. With a share of 65 percent (2013 figures; measured by value) of territorial exports, Belgium has, for several years, been the prime market for one of the most valuable resources this territory produces — diamonds. This connection between Belgium and Canada will only increase as the production of the historic mines elsewhere in the world decreases, and the full potential of the Canadian diamond industry (there are also diamond mines in some provinces) is better understood. It's no surprise, therefore, that the Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC) has identified Canada as a privileged partner, and that Canadian mining companies see Antwerp as a unique environment to maximise return on investment.

With a strategic location in the heart of Europe and several ports and airports connecting the wider Atlantic region to a "hinterland" of 500 million consumers, the importance of Belgium to Canadian exporters is obviously not limited to precious stones. Over the years, specialisation between the big European ports has encouraged specific patterns of traffic in goods and merchandise. Several of those have become important as a share of total production, whether it is bulk traffic (wooden pellets, mineral products) that moves east from Vancouver, agricultural commodities (grain and seeds) that are shipped from the Great Plains via Belgium to Europe or the seafood (mainly lobster) that requires specialised handling and distribution on its voyage from the Maritimes to the European consumer.

The port of Antwerp in Belgium

Canadian exports to Belgium amounted to $2.3 billion in 2012. The port of Antwerp is a major point of entry for Canadian goods in Europe. In 2012, Canada's imports from Belgium were valued at $1.7 billion.

Beyond the logistics involved with trading these commodities, the port of Antwerp is also one of the major petrochemical clusters on this planet. The operators in and around this cluster follow the developments in Western Canada's oil and gas projects with a lot of interest, and several participate actively in some of the ongoing projects for LNG terminals along the B.C. coastline and the shipment of Canadian gas to Asian markets, either directly through head offices in Belgium or indirectly through Houston-based affiliates.

Natural resources are important in this story, but Belgian investment in Canada is certainly not limited to this sector. Sectors of interest are the pharmaceutical industry (with one major investment in Quebec) and aerospace (with important investments in Vancouver and Montreal). Likewise, Canadian companies appreciate the advantages of a presence in Belgium, and virtually all large companies with an international presence have established a foothold in Belgium, either through acquisitions or greenfield investments.

The history of economic relations between Belgium and Canada, itself only part of a wider and richer narrative, goes back a long time, and Belgian capital, together with U.S. and British investments, played a crucial role in the economic development of various provinces from the late 19th and early 20th Century onwards. Examples include the early development of agriculture in the Okanagan Valley in B.C., through, among other things, the Belgo-Canadian Fruit Lands Company, headquartered in Antwerp, or the expansion of the mining sector in Quebec through various subsidiaries of the Générale holding company (headquartered in Brussels), and various other companies such as Belgo-Canadian Mining Securities Holding. It is interesting to note that one of those early Belgian entrepreneurs, Baron Louis-Empain, was also one of the first to discover the potential of the Laurentians as a tourist destination. He founded the first resort in Belgian art déco style at Sainte-Marguerite-du-Lac-Masson (devastated by fire in 1945).

Today, a century later, our economies have adapted to a new, globalised environment in which exclusive exchanges between companies that are 100 percent Canadian and 100 percent Belgian have become an exception rather than the rule. But the entrepreneurs who brought our two economies together for the first time have left a solid base on which to build. With the conclusion of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between the European Union and Canada, an era of new opportunities lies around the corner. Together with their partners in the various provinces and territories, Belgium's three regions (Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia) are ready for that moment. As we said at the outset, the relationship goes "way beyond beer and chocolate," but that surely is an appetizing way to start the conversation.

Bruno van der Pluijm is the ambassador of Belgium. Reach the embassy at ottawa@diplobel.fed.be or 613-236-7267.

PORT OF ANTWERP

Philippines and Canada: Future trading partners with similar values

By Eric Tamayo
Minister and Consul General for the Philippines

The Philippines is on a definitive reform path. The social contract of President Benigno S. Aquino III with the Filipino people compels the government to embark upon a transformative economic and political mission.

That contract revolves around five action areas: Good governance, poverty alleviation, sustained economic growth, justice and human rights and environmental protection, climate-change mitigation and adaptation. The Philippines continues to make progress in all areas.

Seasoned analysts see a new dawn breaking for the Philippines, marvelling at "the Philippine phenomenon," which positions the economy as a dark horse for investment. Indicators back this up.

Economic fundamentals are strong and sound. In 2013, despite being in the pathway of the most powerful typhoon recorded in modern history late that year, our economy grew by 7.2 percent, far greater than expectations even before the typhoon struck. The Philippine economy ranks 45th in the world and is on track to boast the 16th largest GDP by 2050.

In 2013, the Philippines attained investment grade status from Standard and Poor's, Moody's and Fitch. It also saw its highest movement on global competitive rankings and introduced policies to make it easier to do business.

The Philippine ability to build up $92 billion in foreign reserves in 2013, buffered by more than $22 billion in remittances from nationals overseas covers short-term external debt, helps weather global disturbances and even contributes to rebuilding and recovery efforts after global financial shocks elsewhere.

In 2013, the Philippines became self-sufficient in rice production and started exporting three varieties.

Among stakeholders and international partners from the public and private sectors, bullishness surrounds growth in agribusiness, business process outsourcing, creative industries, infrastructure, manufacturing and logistics, mining, tourism, medical travel and retirement.

Shared service centres set up by Fortune 500 companies make the Philippines the call-centre capital of the world, as the overall global business process outsourcing (BPO) industry grows among the Philippines, India and Canada.

Challenges persist. The 20 typhoons that hit yearly make up the bulk of the economic costs the government faces. But the Philippines demonstrates an uncanny resilience. My country had, for example, been importing rice, but, in 2013, for the first time in 40 years, began exporting three varieties.

Beyond *force majeure*, the government continues to make headway. Foremost on this agenda are its emphasis on promoting transparency by stamping out corruption, its goal of making the investment environment more attractive, its work in helping industries become more competitive and its efforts to exercise prudent fiscal management by increasing revenue and calibrating public expenditure.

Canadian exports to the Philippines were $527.9 million, while imports from the Philippines hit $991.2 million.

As Canadians look to Asia, securing partnerships with the Philippines would be strategic as the era of ASEAN Economic Community dawns in 2015.

Recently, the Philippines and Canada marked milestones in two-way relations. A 2012 agreement forming the Joint Commission on Bilateral Co-operation (JCBC) builds on previous key agreements in investment protection and avoidance of double taxation. High-level visits and exchanges have taken place as well.

Canada, through various development aid initiatives, has helped build partnerships with local government units, eased remittance flows, facilitated disaster-mitigation measures and provided timely calamity response and relief. It also took an active role in the recent success of the peace process in the southern Philippines.

Two-way trade and commerce has been modest, but steady. At the same time, the inaugural tourism program for Canadian snowbirds early this year holds promise for further tourism flows.

One aspect of our relationship stands out, namely the increasing people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. This point is obvious to many in Canada. Being cheerful, caring, well-educated, English-speaking and friendly people, the consensus is consistent in Canada that Filipinos are hardworking, industrious and reliable workers and managers.

The young, dynamic human resource is a defining piece of the puzzle for Canadian enterprises. We are keen on working on, and strengthening, labour co-operation at the provincial and federal levels.

As the Philippines has become the largest source of new migrants and temporary workers to Canada, and Tagalog has become the fastest-growing language in the country, Canadian observers best summed up the phenomenon: Filipinos typify true traditional Canadian values of hard work, rule of law, personal responsibility, devotion to family and respect for tradition.

With such a solid socio-cultural foundation, the Philippines and Canada are natural partners, and we look forward to accomplishing more together to improve economic productivity and create value.

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DREAMSTIME

Armenia and Canada: A trading work in progress

By Armen Yeganian
Ambassador of Armenia

Yerevan's Zvartnots International Airport is well situated between Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

Further enhancing trade with Canada has been on my radar since the first day I arrived in Canada. In my previous capacity, as director of the Americas at Armenia's foreign ministry, I was aware of our economic realities, mainly that there was established mining co-operation between our countries and that all other aspects of trade were foreshadowed by it. Having signed agreements on trade and commerce, promotion and protection of investments, avoidance of double-taxation and others, we have established a strong legal basis that can be used to intensify our trade relations.

Big Canadian mining companies, such as Dundee Precious Metals, have been operating in Armenia since the mid-1990s in the mining of non-ferrous metals, in particular, gold. In 2012, Canada was one of the biggest investors in the Armenian economy with a $116-million investment in mining, which was followed by another $58 million in 2013. Co-operation with Canadian companies in mining is appreciated by Armenia and the know-how brought by those companies is extremely valuable. Still, growing bilateral trade relations cannot be based on mining alone.

Last year's figures were promising: Armenian exports to Canada exceeded $95 million and imports from Canada stood at $44 million. Minerals and textiles were the main goods we exported, while meat, meat products, processed food, paper, medicine and tools were the main items we imported from Canada.

Armenia has a flourishing jewelry industry that has enjoyed success in the Canadian market in the past. For example, in the mid-2000s, Armenian experts helped establish a jewelry factory in Yellowknife, N.W.T., and educate the locals in this art.

There are real hopes for increasing co-operation in the field of information technology. The pioneer of Canadian-Armenian co-operation in high-tech is Gatineau's Macadamian Technology Inc., a company that specialises in software development. The company's branch in our capital city, Yerevan, started with one employee; now they number almost 70. The Armenian branch was part of the Macadamian team that developed applications for the BlackBerry 10.

For a country such as Armenia, software development can become an important asset to the economy. This fact is undeniably recognised by our government, which has put an emphasis on this industry. IT education is a vital part of all top Armenian universities. Moreover, in 2011, the Tumo Centre for Creative Technologies was established in Yerevan. It provides free IT education to children aged 12 to 18. Building on its initial success, it opened a new branch in the city of Dilijan last year, with plans for further expansion. I should also mention the presence of big companies such as Microsoft, Synopsys, Synergy and others, in the Armenian market.

Recently, the Armenian government announced that IT startup companies with up to 15 employees can operate tax-free for a period of three years. Armenians and our partners worldwide, including several Canadian companies, were delighted by this policy change. This is the field in which I would like to see our trade grow.

The government has also created special tax-exempt "free economic zones" in the hopes that they will contribute to increased exports and job creation while also ensuring sustainable economic development by integrating foreign direct investments and introducing advanced technologies. IT and jewelry businesses are the main targets for these free economic zones.

Armenia is also very eager to develop relations in the field of civil aviation and air communication. In October 2013, we adopted an Open Skies Policy. The modern and competitive Zvartnots International Airport in Yerevan was named the best airport of the post-Soviet area at the Second Annual Emerging Airports Conference and Exhibition held in Dubai in 2013. With our Open Skies Policy, Zvartnots Airport has all the prerequisites to become an important international hub. After all, Armenia's capital city is conveniently located between Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

My country has a growing economy that has free-trade agreements with most members of the Commonwealth of Independent States and low tariffs with Canada, U.S., Japan and members of the EU. Further, Armenia has been a member of the World Trade Organization since 2003. With the support of our international partners, we are building a free, competitive market economy that includes the best Armenian tradition of entrepreneurship alongside modern global economic trends.

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Shipping help inside a tourist's suitcase

Not Just Tourists ships medical supplies and equipment around the world to those in need.

By Mary Metcalfe and Jacques Chenail

When an Ottawa couple lost their 11-year-old daughter to a condition she'd had her whole life, they were understandably devastated. But it gave them some small solace — a bit of hope that her memory would be honoured — when they were able to donate the girl's two wheelchairs to worthy recipients two worlds away.

The first went to Ghailan, a boy who lives in the north of war-ravaged Syria and has cerebral palsy. The other went to a Honduran girl named Nohemi. The donations were made possible by a small grassroots operation called Not Just Tourists – Ottawa, an organization we founded in 2005 that now sends thousands of kilograms of donated medical supplies and equipment each year to more than 70 countries.

For the past two years, a key focus has been on getting ocean containers of desperately needed supplies and equipment to refugees such as Ghailan, in and around Syria. Other countries receiving medical supplies and equipment through containers include Burundi, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Honduras. Not Just Tourists (NJT) also helps supply medical missions and tourists travelling to Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia.

It all started when we were planning a vacation to Cuba. We had been there years earlier and knew there was a great need for things such as Band-Aids and vitamins. We packed those supplies in our suitcase. In our research, we found a tiny *Reader's Digest* article about a similar group and eventually got a phone number. When we learned they were in St. Catharines and we were in rural Quebec, we knew a group was needed in the Ottawa area. We then reached out to potential volunteers among friends and clients. Our first meeting was held in a small restaurant and included some nurses from the Ottawa Hospital Civic Campus.

We now have more than a dozen nurses and doctors who are active volunteers and advisers. We have specialists in palliative care, orthopedics, emergency medicine and family medicine, as well as one nursing instructor and a nurse practitioner.

Nohemi, a Honduran girl, received her wheelchair from an Ottawa couple whose 11-year-old daughter died after a life-long illness.

They tell us what supplies go together by use and purpose so we can put together effective collections of supplies.

The group's "suitcase co-ordinator" is one of the original volunteers. Over the years, she has developed expertise in identifying the hundreds of types of medical supplies that come in, including wound supplies, burn treatment materials, specialty bandaging material, ostomy supplies, needles and syringes, creams and salves and IV management. She has made it her personal mission to ensure every suitcase has some analgesics and vitamins.

Initially, Not Just Tourists outfitted tourists with spare suitcases filled with donated medical supplies and over-the-counter medicines. Most countries will permit up to 20 kilograms of medical humanitarian aid within a visitor's baggage limit. Cuba was the destination for most of these suitcases for the first few years. Then, as the group's visibility increased, requests from other countries started to come in. Now, the medical community has become increasingly involved and donated supplies and equipment find their way to NJT volunteers' basements, garages and spare bedrooms on a daily basis.

We receive supplies and equipment worth tens of thousands of dollars each year, including walkers, wheelchairs, hospital beds, instruments, manual and electric aspirators and respirators, nebulizers and batteries for medical equipment. You name it, it's probably been given to us.

One valuable piece came from our dentist: a Panorex dental X-ray machine in perfect working condition. Worth thousands of dollars, the machine went to Syria by container in 2013. Meanwhile, a retiring doctor donated everything in his office, including a stainless-steel exam table. Another doctor offered the contents of her office, right down to the chairs. Everything went to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Today, our wide network (see sidebar) also includes a growing number of retail stores that sell uniforms. Some invite their clients to donate their used scrubs in exchange for a discount on new purchases. To date, hundreds of gently used

NOT JUST TOURISTS

Thanks to a strong network of contacts and volunteers throughout Ontario, NJT - Ottawa is able to facilitate pickup and delivery from a long list of institutional and individual donors in many Ontario communities and even some in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, P.E.I. and Quebec. Institutions and organisations donating to NJT include:

ALS Society
Appletree Medical Group
At-Home Hospice
Bayshore Health Group
Brant District Health Care System
Brockville General Hospital
Bruyère Continuing Care
Canadian Diabetes Association
Canadian Red Cross
Carefor
Centre de formation professionnelle Vision-Avenir (QC)
Champlain CCAC (Community Care Access Centre)
Deep River and District Hospital
Digby General Hospital (NS)
FREEcycle Ottawa
Glengarry Memorial Hospital
Hospice Care Ottawa
Kemptville and District Hospital
Kingston General Hospital
MS Society of Canada
National Health & Safety
Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre
Queen Elizabeth Hospital (P.E.I.)
Queensway Carleton Hospital
Radford's Outfitters
Scrubs for Them
Spotlite Inc.
Saint Elizabeth Health Care
Saint Mary's University (N.S.)
St. Patrick's Home
STRIDE Wheelchairs Plus
The Ottawa Hospital (University of Ottawa Eye Institute, Rehabilitation Centre)
VON

PLUS individual physicians and nurses involved in palliative care as well as patients and their families. A growing number of long-term healthcare and retirement residences, both public and private, are joining in rescuing and repurposing valuable medical equipment and supplies as they are rotated out of inventory.

scrubs have found their way to medical personnel in several countries and some to nursing students here at home. Our P.E.I. volunteer has worked a number of miracles with equipment and supplies as well as free excess baggage allowances. It's taken on a life of its own over the past couple of years as we reached a critical mass of people talking about us.

A key to the group's ability to make a difference lies in the satellite groups and missions that actually rent and fill containers or arrange for group shipments.

NJT has partnered with a number of organisations to get supplies out in larger-scale quantities, including the Dave Smith Foundation, the Can Go-Afar Foundation (Ethiopia), Les Soeurs de Sainte-Marie de Namur (Dominican Republic), Pastors for Peace (Cuba), the Canada Africa Community Health Alliance (CACHA) (many African nations) and the Canadian Network for International Surgery (CNIS) (Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Guyana and Haiti); the Foundation for the Development of Orthopedics in Burundi. We've also helped the Honduran Embassy fill a container with hospital equipment and we respond to emergencies. Following the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010, NJT quickly amassed hundreds of kilograms of supplies and medicine that were donated to the Dave Smith Foundation and shipped to Haiti.

Obviously, beyond the large-scale output, NJT relies on travellers of all kinds to deliver much-needed supplies and equipment to specific destinations: Cuba still gets the majority of tourist suitcases, but we were able to have a special wheelchair delivered to a severely disabled boy in rural Iraq; another one to an Iranian lady with multiple sclerosis; a special suitcase of medicines and supplies to Mother Teresa's hospice in Kolkata, India; a pair of CPR training aids to a clinic in Chile; many suitcases of medicines and supplies to a Haitian orphanage through the Dominican Republic; several suitcases of medicines and supplies to a safehouse for abused girls in Southeast Asia; more to an orphanage in Nepal; and the list goes on.

People's sometimes very deep personal losses are converted into major donations for NJT. We hear from people who've lost a husband, wife, father, mother, friend and sometimes, but rarely, a child. They want to honour their loved one and want, even need, to pass along useful medicines and supplies to spread good in their memory. We've had people tell us it brings them closure to know their donated supplies will help someone else.

We accept:

- Unused wound care and other medical supplies;
- Regular and prescription medicines, unopened and in original packaging;
- Vitamins and mainstream health supplements;
- Dental supplies;
- Personal hygiene items (e.g. soap, Purel);
- Braces, crutches, canes, walkers and wheelchairs;
- Hospital beds, gurneys and stretchers;
- Incontinence and ostomy supplies;
- Medical equipment and instruments.

We don't accept:

- Used sharps (syringes, needles, and IV pricks);
- Waste of any kind (biomedical such as soiled bandages etc.);
- Narcotics or restricted medicines;
- Expired medicines beyond three months;
- Household furnishings (beds, chairs);
- Any non-medical item (e.g. books, shoes, clothes).

Over the years, many people have wondered why NJT hasn't grown into a registered charitable organisation so it can provide tax receipts for donations. The answer is simple: If NJT were to register, it would not be allowed to take in-kind donations from individuals or organisations. Groups such as Doctors Without Borders and the Red Cross routinely refer people and groups to NJT with donations that, as registered charities, they cannot accept.

In short, we fulfil a role that a registered charity cannot undertake. The Red Cross, for example, cannot accept most used equipment from an individual. We can. No money changes hands and no receipt can be issued. For most people, it isn't an issue. They just want to help make a difference.

Jacques Chenail is the volunteer co-ordinator of Not Just Tourists. His wife, Mary Metcalfe is a freelance book editor, novelist and founder of Not Just Tourists. Visit www.njt-pqt.org for more information.

The Pacific Alliance should be a win for Canada

FIRST NAME: Nicolas
LAST NAME: Lloreda
CITIZENSHIP: Colombian
PRESENTED CREDENTIALS AS AMBASSADOR: Feb. 14, 2013
PREVIOUS POSTINGS: Washington, D.C.

It has been called the most ambitious trade initiative since NAFTA. When the Pacific Alliance was launched, two years ago, the four member countries already enjoyed free-trade agreements among themselves. So, naturally, some questioned the objective of the Alliance.

The Pacific Alliance is the agreement between Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Peru to modernise and further integrate their economies. Its goal is to create a deeply integrated area that will foster growth, development and competitiveness for the member countries by achieving the free movement of goods, services, capital and people.

Although the countries' leaders have emphasised that the Pacific Alliance is not a political bloc, they have also stated that they all share a commitment to strong democracies with independent branches of government, the rule of law, open trade and full protection for foreign investment.

To achieve a deeper economic integration, the countries agreed to speed up the elimination of tariffs for 92 percent of goods traded and committed to eliminating tariffs on the remaining 8 percent of goods in 12 years. To further promote the free movement of people, Mexico eliminated the visa requirement it was imposing on travellers from Colombia and Peru.

To facilitate capital integration, Chile, Colombia and Peru created MILA (Mercado Integrado Latinoamericano), which effectively integrates their stock markets, allowing a national investor to acquire securities from the others. Mexico is expected to join MILA later this year. Alliance members have also agreed to share space for new embassies in several third countries and are co-ordinating their trade-promotion agencies.

The GDP of the four Pacific Alliance countries accounts for 35 percent of the total for Latin America and the Caribbean. That is the equivalent of the eighth largest economy in the world. And all four economies are healthy. With an average growth of more than 5 percent, an unemployment rate of 5.8 percent and an average inflation rate of 3.8 percent, the macroeconomic fundamentals of the bloc are solid.

For Canada, the Pacific Alliance is a priority. Having already signed free-trade agreements with the four member countries and having significant Canadian investment in all of them makes the alliance worthy of special attention. Canadian companies are present in the Alliance in many sectors, including banking, mining, oil and gas, services and green technology. Further, as the four countries share strong commitments to democracy and the protection of human rights, the alliance seems to be a natural fit with Canadian objectives.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has attended several Pacific Alliance summits as an observer and has pledged to foster co-operation with the bloc.

The leaders of the Pacific Alliance are fully aware of the many broken promises of real economic integration in Latin America over the past 30 years. Consequently, its goals are deliberately specific and limited. There are no grand plans to establish a common currency or a large bureaucracy and trade disputes will be settled by the World Trade Organisation.

Fully convinced of the need to have foreign investment to achieve higher economic growth, the Pacific Alliance fosters a legal environment that is favourable and attractive for business and foreign capital. All four countries received record foreign direct investment this year, totalling more than $71 billion U.S.

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos's country has been at the helm of the Pacific Alliance for the past year. This month, Mexico took over the role.

UN PHOTO

Interestingly, the economic conglomerates from the member countries are also expanding within the Alliance and abroad. Between 2009 and 2012, Pacific Alliance members invested a total of $135 billion U.S. around the world.

The Alliance has spurred wide interest globally. In a little more than two years, 30 countries have asked to become observers. Costa Rica and Panama have formally requested membership.

A key characteristic of the Alliance has been the determination to engage the private sector in the integration process. At every summit of the leaders of the Alliance, there is a simultaneous business forum involving hundreds of business leaders from the region. A group of CEOs is responsible for summarising the forum's conclusions and presenting a report and recommendations for trade facilitation directly to the presidents of the member countries.

How can Canada further its integration with the Pacific Alliance? With respect to trade and investment, it is doing what it should, including promoting trade missions and supporting Canadian business participation in large infrastructure projects. Another course of action would be

The Mexican stock exchange

to explore a closer relationship between the Toronto Stock Exchange and the stock exchanges of Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Peru.

On the sensitive issue of facilitating the movement of people, Canada can certainly do more to show the members of the Alliance that it wishes to move forward without endangering its security. The visa questionnaire Canada requires from visitors is not only much more burdensome than that required by the United States or the EU (Schengen), it is also unnecessarily intrusive. Despite claims by Canada of improved times for granting of visas, Pacific Alliance travellers say they experience long delays. The current system discourages many travellers from these countries from visiting Canada for business or pleasure. Today it is much easier for them to visit the U.S. or to travel there on business.

In fact, it is precisely by having its security and migratory agencies working closely together and building shared databases that Alliance members have been able to eliminate visa requirements amongst themselves. Further, the Alliance members' close work with American migration authorities has facilitated the travel of their citizens to the United States. Early this year, the U.S. eliminated the visa requirement for Chile. Were Canada to present a road map for intensifying security co-operation and eliminating visas for Alliance members, much would be achieved.

Nicolas Lloreda is ambassador of Colombia. Colombia has chaired the Pacific Alliance for the past year. Mexico takes over the one-year chairmanship in July.

ALEJANDRO LINARES GARCIA

Slaughtering the innocent

By Robert I. Rotberg

If 30,000 to 35,000 big African elephants continue to be slaughtered for their tusks every year, elephants may be at risk of eventual extinction.

Poachers have killed 300 gentle rhinoceroses since the beginning of 2014 in South Africa alone. So far this year, throughout the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, poachers have gunned down another 15,000 unsuspecting elephants. Lions are dying out, too. Fabled Africa, with its profusion of big game, is now imperiled by Asian greed, rampant corruption in places such as Zimbabwe, and lax African protection.

Woolly mammoths and sabre-tooth tigers once roamed the Arctic and sub-Arctic lands that now include much of Canada. But our ancestors slaughtered them, mostly for food. Now only 350,000 to 500,000 elephants — descendants of the mammoths — remain in Africa. Another 50,000 elephants, half of what once were, live threatened lives in southern China, Laos and Vietnam. If 30,000 to 35,000 big African elephants continue yearly to be assassinated for their tusks, these elephants may be at risk of eventual extinction. Already, a sub-species, the smaller and smoother-skinned African forest elephant, could be extirpated within the next decade. It now inhabits insecure places such as the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as Gabon and Cameroon, where poachers largely operate with impunity.

The rare purse-lipped black rhinoceros and the somewhat more abundant wide-lipped white rhinoceros (so called despite being grey) live largely in southern and eastern Africa, having already been eliminated in West Africa. Today, both sub-species of rhinoceros number only about 25,000, but more than 1,000 are being eliminated every year. In 2013, South Africa lost a rhino to poachers every eight hours throughout the year. Rhinoceroses are largely secretive vegetation eaters, the white variety chewing grass, the black favouring leaves, and bothering no one. But poachers want their pointed horns. (In fact, the horns are not made of bone; they are composed of cuticle-like keratin.)

This wanton modern-day slaughter of the beasts of Africa obeys fundamental laws of supply and demand. By far the world's largest market for the tusks (ivory) of African elephants and horns of rhinoceros is China, followed by Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia. Many Asians ascribe medicinal properties to ground-up ivory and horn. Some have long believed a slurry of elephant tusks prevents cancer. In some parts of China, and in Vietnam, macerated rhinoceros horn is believed to be a potent aphrodisiac. Others in China and neighbouring countries adore carvings or other kinds of art made of ivory, all being regarded as important status symbols. High-ranking officers in the People's Liberation Army have a particular fondness for ivory trinkets as gifts. Chinese online forums offer a thriving and essentially unregulated market for ivory chopsticks, bookmarks, rings, cups and combs. Yemenis and some Asians prefer rhinoceros horn for dagger handles — another status symbol.

On the shady back streets of Beijing or Hanoi, illicit ivory sells for $1,500 per pound ($675 per kilo); rhino horn for up to 30 times that amount ($20,250 per kilo). Given such prices, and ripe demand, it is

YATHIN S. KRISHNAPPA

no wonder that Asian syndicates are able to employ gangs of African poachers to seek out elephants or rhinos at night and kill them for their tusks and horns.

The value of ivory is so high that in April, thieves sawed off the double locks on two steel safes in a supposedly secure South African storage facility in Nelspruit, the capital of Mpumalanga Province. The two safes contained 40 large elephant tusks.

In neighbouring Zimbabwe, where there could be as many as 90,000 elephants at risk, President Robert Mugabe's rapacious soldiers are themselves poaching elephants and shipping tusks overseas. Directed by at least several senior officers, killings are believed to have occurred in key reserves in the Save Valley as well as in the Hwange National Park. In 2013, military personnel allegedly poured cyanide into pools in one of Zimbabwe's famed national parks to take tusks from 300 elephants that came to drink and then died.

This demand for ivory and horn, fuelled in part by rapidly rising incomes in Asia, has, in this decade, led to the unprecedented decimation of elephants and rhinoceroses throughout the continent, but particularly in southern and eastern Africa where both mammals are more abundant and where there have been (until now) improvements in the numbers of both species in such countries as Kenya, Tanzania, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

South Africa and Mozambique, especially the game parks that straddle their mutual border, have in recent years also battled an upsurge in poaching. So have Zambia and Namibia. But the most complete devastation has taken place in in South Sudan and the Central African Republic, where fighting factions (including the Lord's Resistance Army) have routinely slaughtered elephants to pay for weapons and ammunition.

Elephant poaching is at its highest level in Africa since the 1980s, when the destruction of elephants in countries such as Kenya and Uganda more than halved what was then a thriving population of the world's largest land mammals. In 1989, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) banned global trade in ivory, but since about 2009, with Asian demand ramping high, attacks on elephants and more valuable rhinoceroses have resumed at a ferocious pace.

In the 1980s, Chinese purchasers ultimately fuelled the slaughter. But now, with about three million Chinese working in Africa and many more millions visiting as tourists or entrepreneurs, there are much more direct ties between African poachers and those who purchase their purloined tusks and horns. A raft of male and female Chinese traders have been caught in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Namibia and South Africa trying to board aircraft to China or Hong Kong with suitcases stuffed with ivory or horn.

The rare purse-lipped black rhinoceros (which is actually grey in colour) has already been killed in West Africa. Between it and the wide-lipped white rhinoceros, 1,000 are being slaughtered by poachers each year. Only 25,000 remain.

In Namibia in March, three Chinese men were about to board an aircraft at Windhoek's international airport when they were apprehended with 14 rhino horns and a leopard skin. According to the Namibian police, the smugglers had been in Zambia and Namibia for only two weeks, and had visited Namibia many times before.

Last year in Kenya, on different occasions, several Chinese individuals were caught attempting to fly out of Nairobi with concealed bundles of ivory and rhinoceros horn. In 2011, more than 150 Chinese citizens were arrested across Africa, from Kenya to Nigeria, for smuggling ivory. And there is growing anecdotal evidence that poaching increases in elephant-rich areas when Chinese construction workers are building roads.

In 2013, Hong Kong customs agents seized 189 elephant tusks worth approximately $1.5 million. That shipment, from Cote d'Ivoire and destined for China, weighed nearly 1,700 pounds (770 kilos). It was the third interception in Hong Kong of illegal African ivory and other goods since July of that year, the first being worth $2.2 million and the second $5.3 million. The first came from Togo and the second, which also included rhinoceros horn and leopard skins, from Nigeria.

Nearly all of the lucrative trade in elephant and rhinoceros tusks and horns is illegal, and the result of poaching by Africans, many of whom are employed by Chinese entrepreneurs living throughout mainland Africa. Wildlife trafficking syndicates consistently sell poached ivory and rhino horn at Chinese markets in most of the major cities of southern Africa, particularly in Johannesburg and Maputo. An undercover sting in one market found abundant quantities of ivory and rhino horn being sold by Africans to Chinese middlemen.

The United Nations Environment Program says that since the largest ivory market in the world is in China: "Nowhere is the need for demand reduction more critical."

"China is the epicentre of demand," said a senior U. S. State Department official. "Without the demand from China, this would all but dry up." There is no African market for ivory or horn that is not driven by external demand.

IKIWANER

Lions are not being poached, but for genetic reasons, about a third of the lions of Africa have disappeared in the past 20 years.

Responding to such international critiques, early this year China publicly pulverized a large amount of illicit ivory. Chinese officials reported that the 6.1 tons (5,500 kilos) of destroyed ivory were but a part of a larger trove of confiscated illegal elephant tusks taken by customs and other officials in recent years. The officials in charge of the destruction of the ivory would not reveal how much more illegal ivory is held in government warehouses, but they did acknowledge that the ivory in question had been intercepted by customs officials scrutinising containers from Africa as well as from shops in China selling carvings and other artifacts.

In an effort to put ivory merchants and smugglers on notice, Chinese customs and forestry officials made a large public show of piling up ivory ornaments and carvings to display the illegal loot. Tusks too long for the display were sawn up into smaller fragments. Then the massive heap was fed into two giant crushing machines.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare rightly congratulated China for engaging in a powerful symbolic act. It said it was pleased that China was "concerned about the toll ivory trafficking is taking on elephant populations, as well as the other threats to regional security that arise in connection with wildlife crime." It constituted a clear message to consumers and middlemen that "ivory buying was unethical and wrong."

China joined the United States, the Philippines and Gabon in such public displays of ivory destruction. In June 2013, the Philippines smashed five tons (4,500 kilos) and in November, the U. S. crushed six tons (5,400 kilos) in. In 2012, Gabon burned five tons worth then about $10 million. In all cases, the ivory in question had been confiscated over many years and had remained in storage.

China's stockpile destruction may well discourage purveyors of elephant tusks from seeking new supplies. In an additional effort to alter Chinese views about elephants, in southern China, the authorities recently created a special reserve for endangered Asian elephants. Local Chinese populations, at least, may develop a new reverence for them.

South Africa and Mozambique share a border that joins the mighty Kruger Park in South Africa to the Gorongoza National Park in Mozambique. South Africa has an active anti-poaching regime, reasonably well-paid game guards, vigilant rangers and abundant tourist traffic. But across the poorly patrolled border, large animals have been shot, rangers are few and the poachers are better organised and much better paid than the guards. Moreover, until a treaty was fortunately signed between the two countries in April, it was not illegal to poach rhinoceroses in Mozambique.

As of mid-April, poachers can be apprehended in Mozambique for attacking rhinoceroses (and elephants). South Africa is also starting to fund Mozambique's surveillance and ranger efforts since Mozambique is too poor to do so. South Africa's elephants and rhinos may now be safer as renegade Mozambicans can be apprehended and charged in either country.

Lions are not being poached. But, for genetic reasons, about a third of the thousands of the lions of Africa have disappeared in the past 20 years. In particular, say experts, the lions living in West Africa and Central Africa are close to extinction. There may be no more than 400 to 800 West African lions and 900 in Central Africa (the Congo and the Central African Republic). Curiously, too, scientists using analytical DNA techniques have recently discovered that the West African and Central African lions are more closely related to the remaining 400 lions of the Kathiawar Peninsula in western India than they are to southern and eastern African lions. The West and Central African lions are also related to extinct lions of the Barbary Coast (Morocco, Algeria, and Libya) and to a pair of lions incarcerated in the Tower of London in the 14th and 15th Centuries.

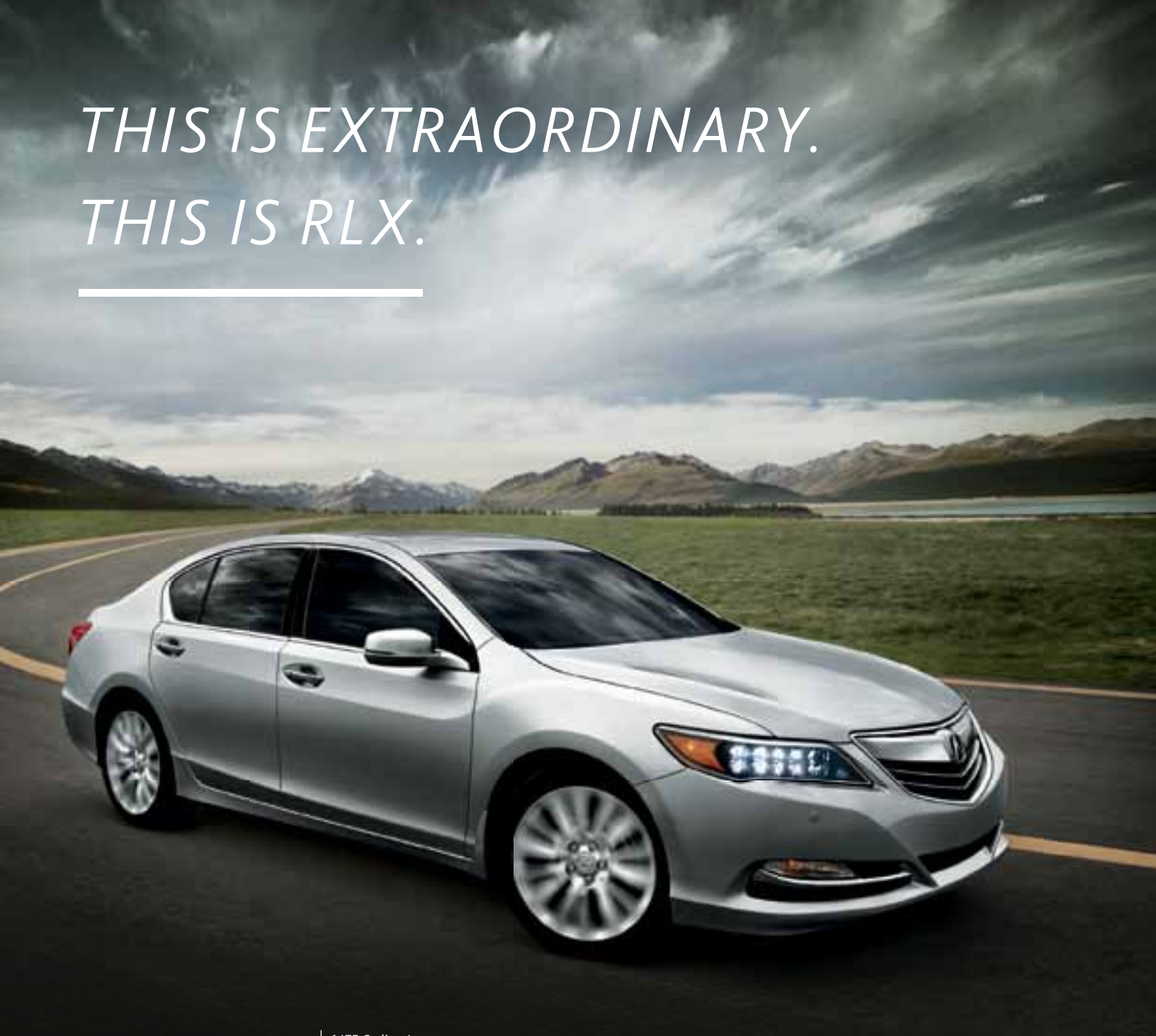
Many international and national organisations are actively attempting to save elephants and rhinoceroses. Kenya has successfully converted poachers into rangers and is arranging protected areas for elephants with British assistance. Botswana has created a well-guarded sanctuary for a large and growing rhino herd. "Our No. 1 focus," said the chief warden, "has been to make local people aware that these animals are worth more alive than dead." Many countries have also begun to share tourism revenues with indigenous groups living near game parks.

Crushing ivory in China and the Philippines, banning the import of ivory of any kind into the United States and also forbidding the movement of ivory objects (even pianos with ivory keys) across state lines within the United States, is intended, ultimately, to stem the loss of elephants and rhino to poachers. Educating Chinese and Vietnamese consumers about large African mammals could help. So will a serious campaign, if it comes, by China on the many outlets in major Chinese cities that still sell ivory objects, and on those — including elite members of the ruling Communist Party — who still covet ivory. Expanding Kenyan- and Botswanan-type initiatives will also help. So will redoubled patrol and enforcement efforts everywhere, and the ending of war in the Sudan, the Congo and elsewhere.

Without such redoubled global efforts to reduce demand in Asia, African elephants and rhinoceroses could easily go the way of the woolly mammoth and the Barbary lion.

Robert I. Rotberg is a senior fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation. He is the Founding Director of Harvard Kennedy School's Program on Intrastate Conflict and President Emeritus of the World Peace Foundation.

SAJJAD SHERALLY FAZEL



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DREAMSTIME

The travel world's treasures

Our annual ode to travel looks at 10 destinations that are reasonably priced and also may not top your go-to list

By Wolfgang Depner

What do we want out of a vacation? Always intensely personal, the answer says a lot about who we are — our preferences, priorities and decision-making process. Travel forces us into difficult choices about two very precious resources — time and money.

But travel is not merely about maximizing some cost-utility function that fits a limited budget into a constrained schedule. It is also about making and sharing experiences, broadening horizons and learning something about the world in which we live. Ultimately, it's an inward journey of self-discovery with a chance to shed comfort and familiarity in favour of surprising ourselves, whether in relaxation and reflection or in extraordinary experiences.

Given the personal nature of travel, no one can claim to answer the riddle of finding the perfect vacation spot that is accessible and affordable, yet far removed from the massive tourist traps that offer their guests little chance to breathe and find themselves.

With these provisos in mind, we present the Top 10 reasonably priced, but not ordinarily top-of-mind destinations. But, let's get three things out of the way. First, in the 21st Century, few regions are secret anymore. Unless we are talking about North Korea, most places have something resembling tourism and even in the case of North Korea, that barrier has been broken with the emergence of a small state-sponsored tourism that appeals to western curiosities about that country's ghoulish government. Second, the term "reasonably priced" is relative. Third, this list does not offer itself as an authoritative travel guide.

The specifics of booking tickets, finding accommodations and organising activities in a timely manner is best left to genuine professionals in the travel industry rather than brief entries on a list such as this. However, it does aim to inspire.

While undeniably subjective, it follows at least three standards. First, it aims for geographic diversity. Second, it seeks to acknowledge places that might have flown under the radar simply because they are overshadowed by larger, better-known rivals. Third, it aims to recognise places whose perceived uniqueness by way of geography and people promises to produce that special moment that will last forever.

1. Riga, Latvia

From its founding as a Christian outpost in 1201 following a papal decree to its role as a centre of open political resistance against Moscow during the final days of the Soviet Union, Riga has experienced the full sweep of history.

Today, it is one of the world's most eclectic cities.

Its status as a commercial and cultural crossroad stems from its location at the mouth of the Daugava River as it enters the Baltic Sea. Between April and October, when both waterways are navigable, visitors can glimpse the importance of this strategic location during a sightseeing cruise on the Daugava and Riga Canal. Riga's geography has made the city a treasured possession of foreign powers across the centuries, creating a constantly changing mix of languages, religions and ethnicities.

The city's cobblestoned core evokes the former economic might of the Hanseatic League, while its fine collection of Art Nouveau buildings from the 19th Century is a reminder of a not-so-distant era of bourgeois confidence and prosperity. Not surprisingly, Riga's cosmopolitan tradition has shaped some of the world's greatest thinkers and artists, including philosopher Isaiah Berlin, filmmaker Sergey Eisenstein, dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov and artist Vija Clemins. Even a young Richard Wagner briefly worked in Riga. And yet, the city has kept its modern edge, on a par with Europe's largest cities in terms of activities and attractions, yet undeniably more accessible and affordable.

Must-see attractions include Riga's many markets, starting with the Central Market, an architectural marvel. Also notable is the Green Market. It sells everything, from ecological produce grown at local farms, home-baked bread, cured and smoked meat and fish to homemade cheese and antiques.

Finally, the Vidzeme or Matīss Market might be the best place to sample local culinary specialties, such as fresh-salted cucumbers. This locale also sells a rather unusual hangover cure — a glass of pickled cabbage juice.

Vendors might be particularly busy this year, because of the increased activities that come with Riga's status as the European Capital of Culture, a position it shares with the Swedish city of Umeå. Not that Riga needs any more titles. In the minds of many partygoers who flock to the city's nightclubs, Riga has become "The other city that never sleeps."

2. Great Barrier Island, New Zealand

The Maori aptly call Aotea — their name for Great Barrier Island — the "land like a white cloud." The island, 28,500 hectares in all, lies 90 kilometres northeast of Auckland, and is reachable by plane or by car ferry.

Despite its proximity to New Zealand's largest metropolitan area, this island is a quiet retreat from modern life. In fact, its 1,200 permanent residents lack many of the things we might take for granted. The absence of a networked power supply on the island means residents rely on diesel generators, solar panels and windmills for power, as electricity demand often exceeds supply. Residents also make do without well-stocked grocery stores, banks and countless other mainland conveniences. In exchange for these sacrifices, they enjoy a rural lifestyle that harkens back to a simple past.

Riga, the capital of Latvia, has seen the full sweep of history, from its founding as a Christian outpost in 1201 to the final days of the Soviet Union.

DREAMSTIME

Great Barrier Island is a quiet retreat from modern life.

Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your perspective, word is getting out. According to one estimate, between 12,000 and 15,000 people visit the island during the peak summer season to enjoy its rugged beauty. Key attractions include the Glenfern Sanctuary, a nature preserve that protects threatened local animal species; Medlands Beach, an easily accessible surfers' paradise, bookended by expansive dunes, and the Aotea Track, a network of easy walking tracks, steep climbs, stairways and bridges that loop the central mountainous area of the island, offering a number of panoramic views along the way. Visitors can also check out the island by booking a fishing tour — *The New Zealand Herald* recently called the Great Barrier Island "the island that time forgot."

3. Quito, Ecuador

Quick: Name the main tourism attraction of Ecuador. If you said the Galapagos, you would be spot on.

To reach those famous islands, visitors generally make an overnight stop in Ecuador's capital, Quito. Of course, this is not nearly enough time to experience one of the world's most underrated cities. Part of Quito's appeal is its unique geography. Located at a height of 2,850 metres above sea level, Ecuador's official capital and second largest city occupies a small basin in the great central plateau formed by Pichincha, an active volcano whose towering presence watches over the city from a distance.

Equally unique is the human settlement history of Quito, whose name derives from the Quitus, pre-Columbian indigenous people who inhabited the region long before the Spanish conquest. In February, archeologists discovered human settlements that date back more than 4,000 years. The city itself was founded in the 16th Century on the ruins of an Inca city.

Despite a massive earthquake in 1979, much of the city's historic core remains intact. Of particular interest is its religious architecture. The historic section alone features 40 colonial churches, 16 convents and various plazas. Don't miss seeing the monasteries of San Francisco and Santo Domingo, as well as the Church and Jesuit College of La Compañía, where the architecture blends Spanish, Italian, Moorish, Flemish and indigenous art.

Quito deftly bridges tradition and modernity. A number of modern museums have sprung up, perhaps none more famous than La Capilla del Hombre, or the Chapel of Man, an impressive architectural complex conceived by Oswaldo Guayasamín, one of Ecuador's greatest artists.

Those looking to experience Quito's natural splendour and culinary specialties can book a bumpy car ride up the slopes of the Pichincha Volcano for a romantic dinner overlooking the city in the Hacienda Rumiloma, a rustic restaurant that serves local favourites such as cordero La Cantera, a savoury lamb dish. And those who still have some energy after all the food and high altitude can begin their night out with some people-watching at Plaza Foch, a popular gathering spot for locals before they hit the bars, which are generally open until 3 a.m.

Recommended activities during the daytime include visits to the Art Nouveau Itchimbía Cultural Centre, whose observation deck offers stunning views of the city, and the Folklore Olga Fisch, a shopping destination offering indigenous and Ecuadorean art. In nearby El Ejido Park, visitors can haggle with local artisans over the prices for handmade jewelry, alpaca scarves, wooden flutes and other crafts.

Quito combines modernity and tradition and it might it be precisely this tension that makes Quito such an attractive, but also exotic, destination.

Quito, the capital of Ecuador, is alive with dazzling architecture, culture and night-life.

DREAMSTIME

4. Dakar, Senegal

About a seven-hour flight separates the eastern seaboard of the United States from Senegal's waterfront capital on Africa's westernmost tip. Yet this teeming city of contrasts might as well be another world.

Downtown Dakar is a fascinating, crowded and chaotic place that, for many, is well worth the precautions against pickpockets. More generally, visitors to Africa should keep an eye on changing political developments and prepare themselves for unfamiliar, frequently jarring conditions. But for adventurous globetrotters, this sprawling city of one million people (two million if you include the larger metropolitan area), pulsates with unbridled and often unexpected activity. According to *Lonely Planet*, Dakar is a place where "horse-cart drivers chug over swish highways and gleaming SUVs squeeze through tiny sand roads, where elegant ladies dig skinny heels into dusty walkways and suit-clad businessmen kneel down for prayer in the middle of the street."

Dakar especially shines at night, when visitors can submerge themselves in the city's vibrant music scene, internationally headlined by Youssou N'Dour, the most famous practitioner of *mbalax*, a mix of Latin and Caribbean music with African drumming. In fact, Dakar is considered one of the best places on the planet for live music performances. But the city also offers something for more reflective types. Dakar's Musée Théodore Monod is known as one of the best museums in West Africa, featuring 9,000 displays that describe the region's history and cultural fabric. And it would be a mistake of major proportions to miss the Village des Arts, a shared space for some of the country's most prominent artists.

Recreational options abound. Visitors can book kayak, diving and snorkelling excursions through Océanium, a national association focused on environmental protection, or rent a surfboard from private operators. Dakar is also the touch-off point for tours of Senegal's small but growing network of domestic nature reserves, most of which are located along the coast. Senegal also features seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the Djoudi National Bird Sanctuary, one of the largest migratory bird sanctuaries.

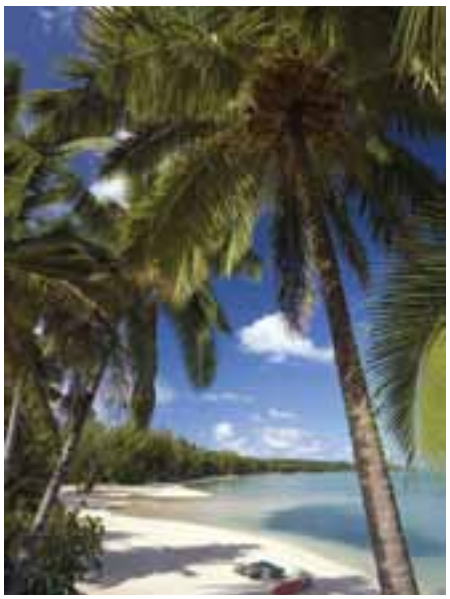
For adventure-seeking travellers, Senegal's capital, Dakar, pulsates with unexpected activity.

Likely the most haunting of Senegal's UNESCO sites is the Island of Gorée, located less than four kilometres directly opposite Dakar. Between the mid-1500s and mid-1800s, this small island was Africa's largest slave trading post. Successively ruled by the Portuguese, Dutch, English and French, this site "processed" an estimated 20 million Africans. Visitors can contemplate the contrast between the grim quarters of the slaves and the elegant mansions of their captors.

5. The Cook Islands

It would not be a stretch to suggest that the Cooks Islands, located 2,600 kilometres northeast of New Zealand, halfway to Hawaii, combine the best aspects for discriminating travellers.

On the one hand, they are geared towards tourism. Thanks to an international airport on the main island of Rarotonga, the islands annually attract about 115,000 visitors whose spending accounts for 75 percent of GDP. On the other hand, the world that lies beyond the airport is far removed from the garish fast-food signage and showy resorts that have spoiled other tropical locations. In fact, previous efforts by an Italian investor to build a massive resort ended up in ruins when his shadowy business dealings were exposed and he had to flee the wrath of locals.



Small wonder that tourism dollars account for 75 percent of Cook Islands' GDP.

The islands' rustic accommodations are likely fine with visitors, given the natural beauty that awaits them. Consider Atiu,

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one of the northern Cook Islands. Covered in tropical fauna, its 28 snow-white, largely deserted beaches promise visitors splendid views of humpback whales. With technology limited and months separating supply ship runs, residents are resourceful with what they have, to the point of brewing their own beer from oranges and honey.

The borders of this archipelago stretch across a territory the size of India, yet its sparse population inhabits only 15 separate specks of land, with most living on Rarotonga, where visitors will find most of the main tourism destinations, including Titikaveka Beach, a spotless oasis with crystal-clear water. Snorkelling enthusiasts, meanwhile, can book expeditions with Cook Island Divers. Visitors looking for something different should check out the Cook Island Christian Church in the capital of Avarua, where colourfully dressed locals celebrate mass with angelic but rhythmic hymns in a relaxed environment that readily welcomes visitors. The Cook Islands are, indeed, a tropical paradise.

Reachable by thrilling cable car ride, Langkawi's curved suspension sky bridge provides great views of Langkawi Island, Malaysia.

6. Langkawi, Malaysia

This archipelago of more than 100 largely uninhabited islands off the coast of Malaysia, north of the Strait of Malaga, promises to be a kaleidoscope of experiences. Its central hub of activity is the island of Langkawi.

Less than two decades ago, it underwent a stunning transformation, from rural backwater to popular attraction. A preferred destination for Malays themselves, Langkawi also attracts travellers from Thailand, Singapore, the Middle East and Europe. For nouveau-riche Russians, Langkawi has become a maritime playground and a berth for their luxury yachts. For western Europeans, the island has become a pit-stop on the way to other destinations. This confluence has created a unique cultural landscape. It would not be unusual to see burqa-clad Muslim women bare-chested macho men from northern Europe.

Diversity is also evident in the available activities, ranging from golf to sailing. Key attractions include the Kilim Karst Geoforest Park, a rugged limestone formation that is home to a unique mangrove forest, and the Langkawi Cable Car. It takes visitors to the top of 700-metre-high Machincang Mountain to the Langkawi Sky Bridge, where they will be able to take in panoramic views of Langkawi and southern Thailand. Accommodations on the island are equally diverse, from luxury resorts, such as the top-ranked Berjaya Langkawi, Casa del Mar and the Westin Langkawi Resort & Spa, to rustic beach houses. Indeed, it may be precisely this variety that accounts for Langkawi's appeal.

Visitors can zip around the island on scooters, lounge on its beaches or shop duty-free in its many markets. Food and drink budgets can also be stretched thanks to a variety of culinary options, from European and Asian cuisines to more local varieties.

Langkawi can be quite busy during national holidays, as locals flock to the major sites. But once the inevitable hustle and bustle has dissipated, Langkawi's charm takes over almost immediately.

7. Porto, Portugal

Portugal's second-largest city might well be the perfect stop for the young and the young at heart, who are looking for a modern take on life in a setting full of continental charms and natural coastal beauty.

Located in Portugal's northern corner along its rugged Atlantic coast, Porto's youthful vibrancy reflects its status as a college town that attracts students from across the region and beyond. Accordingly, it offers a variety of activities that appeal to this demographic, which naturally overlaps with budget-conscious globetrotters looking to party the night away. They include various locations along Rua Galeria de Paris and Rua Cândido dos Reis, parallel downtown streets. Also popular are the various bars and outdoor cafés in the historic Ribeira district, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that uniquely blends successive waves of architectural styles with a complex natural landscape that includes the mouth of the Douro River.

In fact, visitors can enjoy this landscape from a sightseeing boat that tours Douro. Likely the architectural focal point of such a tour would be Ponte Dom Luís I, one of several bridges that span the Douro, linking Porto and its sister city, Vila Nova de Gaia. While technically its own municipality, Gaia is linked with Porto through its history of port-making. Visitors can literally taste the history of this iconic world-famous fortified wine by touring one of the many port cellars in Gaia or book a

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Porto's historic city centre with the port in the foreground offers port-tasting and river tours combined.

full-day cruise up the Douro into port-making country, returning home by bus.

Back in Porto, other must-see stops include city hall from which visitors can gaze down Avenida dos Aliados, the city's showpiece boulevard and main shopping area. Porto's cultural richness also reveals itself in countless theatres, art galleries and bookshops. Cosmopolitan and outward-looking since its founding by the Romans, the birthplace of Henry the Seafarer has continuously found ways to reinvent itself. Easily accessible from inside and outside Portugal, its unique flair makes it second to none.

8. Martinique

This tiny arc of land in the Lower Antilles is truly unique. In contrast to its immediate Caribbean neighbours, Dominica and St. Lucia, Martinique's colonial history has been largely shaped by France. In fact, modern Martinique has remained a French overseas possession, fully integrated with its political core.

This relationship also means that visitors are entering the European Union when they set foot on this Caribbean island, whose land mass barely totals 1,000 square kilometres, slightly less than the total area of Hamilton, Ont. And while an ocean might separate Martinique from France, Francophiles will immediately recognise the island's sophisticated feel, a mélange of local customs and Gallic culture, as evidenced by the high number of restaurants that blend Creole and French cuisine. As *Lonely Planet* puts it, Martinique is a "sunnier, slightly less crowded version of the motherland," where "good food and the latest fashions aren't optional." In other words, dressing up wouldn't hurt.

This said, life happens at a pace far more in line with a tropical island than Paris. Easily navigable except for the mountainous north, Martinique entices visitors with long, snow-white beaches such as Fond Blanc, where they can enjoy ocean swimming. Those inclined towards more adventurous experiences can explore the world that lies beneath the waves, as Martinique offers some of the best scuba diving in the Caribbean, if not the world. Visitors can choose from no less than 10 diving outfitters.

Martinique offers some of the best scuba diving in the Caribbean Sea.

Visitors can also explore Martinique's rugged landscape, dominated by Mont Pelée, a still-active volcano that wiped out Martinique's former capital of St. Pierre in 1902, killing all but a handful of its 30,000 inhabitants. One of the few survivors was Ludger Sylbaris, who survived the explosion and the aftermath in a prison cell, where he was in solitary confinement. Visitors interested in this catastrophe can learn more by touring the Musée Volcanologique overlooking the ruined city.

The island is also popular with flower lovers and birdwatchers. The night life in Fort-de-France, Martinique's capital, is famously lively. Visitors may also note that the city's architecture would not be out of place in New Orleans' French Quarter. And while costs vary with the tourism season, budget-conscious travellers will be able to stretch their dollars, thanks to camping options, affordable travel by way of car-sharing and a wide variety of food options. Top-recommended choices include L'Hibiscus Restaurant, which serves Caribbean cuisine, Al Casanova, which serves Italian, and the self-explanatory Cap Crepes. La Paillotte Bleue has also received high marks for serving up classic French dishes with a Caribbean twist. And in a way, that perfectly describes the island itself.

9. El Calafate, Patagonia, Argentina

Located near the edge of Argentina's tip on the shores of Lago [Lake] Argentino, El Calafate is the entry point to one of the most spectacular places on the planet — Los Glaciares National Park. Fed by the icy peaks of the Andes, this UNESCO-protected nature preserve is home to 48 glaciers, with none likely more magnificent than the Perito Moreno Glacier, one of the largest freshwater reserves in the world.

This slow-moving, majestic tribute to the inexorable forces of nature lies a two-hour bus ride away from El Calafate, now itself increasingly shaped by the fast-flowing forces of tourism. Once a quaint, rustic town, the inevitable proliferation of stores hawking various knick-knacks to foreign

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El Calafate is the entry point to Los Glaciares National Park, one of the most spectacular places on the planet.

tourists has undeniably changed the face of El Calafate. This said, compared to other parts of Argentina, shopping in El Calafate is limited. People come to marvel at the glaciers and experience the wind-swept vistas in which snow-capped peaks rise above rocky plains to puncture a seemingly boundless sky.

Those seeking more than glaciers might want to check out La Leona Petrified Forest, about 100 kilometres out of town. Key attractions in El Calafate itself include the El Calafate Historical Interpretation Centre, the Plaza de los Pioneros and Laguna Nimez Reserve, a wildlife sanctuary less than one kilometre from town.

In many ways, Los Glaciares National Park is a place of contrasts. As one recent account put it, it is a place where eternity and transience share the same space, forever linked in a fragile embrace. One moment, visitors may encounter the region as a domain where silence reigns, only to hear it shattered by a shard of ice plunging into frigid waters. Patagonia, including El Calafate, is no longer "off" the map, so to speak. But it still offers plenty to those who want to get away from it all.

10. Kathmandu, Nepal

As *Lonely Planet* notes, Nepal's capital and largest city is nothing less than "an assault on the senses." Visitors stepping off the plane are likely to be startled and shocked by Kathmandu's sights, sounds and smells, "a blend of fume-shrouded traffic chaos, clanging temple bells, cooing doves, the sticky scents of temple food offerings, wafts of incense and the sound of the ubiquitously piped Buddhist mantra *om mani padme hum* pouring from the shops in the tourist neighbourhood [of Thamel]."

Yet just beyond this visceral confusion and beneath its chaos lies the metaphysical essence of a place where past and present, heaven and Earth, life and death intersect, as *Der Spiegel* put it. Thanks to its central location on the Asian continent, Kathmandu has been an ethnic, linguistic and cultural melting point. Nepal is home to more than 100 ethnic and caste groups, with more than 92 spoken languages and dialects, according to UNESCO. This diversity is also apparent when it comes to religious matters. Likely no other place on the planet is home to more deities than Kathmandu, itself largely a living, breathing shrine to Hinduism, practised by 80 percent of Nepal's population. Buddhists make up the second-largest religious group, about 10 percent of the population.

Not surprisingly, many of the city's top attractions are of a religious nature. They include the Bodnath Stupa, believed to house the bones of Buddha; the Swayambhunath Temple, another Buddhist Stupa; and the Kopan Monastry, another Buddhist site. The Changu Narayan, a temple dedicated to the Hindu deity Vishnu, is northeast of Kathmandu. Visitors looking for a quiet moment can retreat to the Garden of Dreams, whose neo-classical design would not be out of place in Europe.

Other modern imports include a couple of casinos, tourist-oriented restaurants, climbing walls and paintball facilities. All of these add to Kathmandu's colour and diversity, but this range is not the central reason behind Kathmandu's appeal. Rather, it lies in the moments when one might catch a glimpse, in the distance, of the world's highest mountain, Mount Everest, (8,848 metres), in all of its sublimity.

Wolfgang Depner is a doctoral candidate at the University of British Columbia – Okanagan and the co-editor of *Readings in Political Idealogies since the Rise of Modern Science*, published by Oxford University Press.

Ranipokhari is a historic artificial pond created in the heart of Katmandu. The city is a study in contrasts with the chaos of a modern city, coupled with the serenity of attractions such as this.

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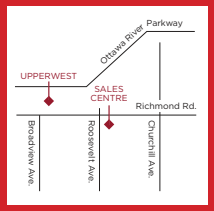

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Azerbaijan moves toward the limelight

The western-leaning, former Soviet petro power in the Middle East becomes a geopolitical player.

By Donna Jacobs

The five-star Fairmont Baku, part of the Flame Towers complex that dominates Baku's skyline, is a spectacular example of Canada's iconic Fairmont hotel chain.

"Azerbaijan — moderate, secular and with a majority of its population Muslim — lives in a tough neighbourhood. We should give whatever encouragement we can in terms of [this emerging] democracy."

— Barry Devolin, a Conservative MP who was commenting on the merits of opening a Canadian embassy in Azerbaijan.

Preparing to vist Azerbaijan always met with the same query.

"You're going where?"

"Azerbaijan."

"Where exactly is it?"

"South of Russia and north of Iran."

"Oh…. what a location!"

Many conversations about Azerbaijan start like that — people are intensely curious about a rarely mentioned (in North America, anyway) country with such controversial and pugnacious neighbours. It deserves curiosity for much more than that, though, as an ancient, fascinating and increasingly globally strategic nation.

Azerbaijan is moving into the limelight on all fronts: with pipelines and energy to a power-strapped Europe and with travellers looking for a new-but-very-old destination. It was elected to a two-year term in 2012 as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Foreign Minister John Baird was to visit Azerbaijan in April. His trip was cancelled because of the death of Jim Flaherty, who had just weeks before resigned as Cana-

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da's finance minister.

Azerbaijan is beginning to fashion itself as a world conference centre à la Dubai — rich with culture and history. The blend works wonderfully with daring modern architecture set against ancient stone buildings, and with the comfort and beautiful buildings of opulent 1800s Europe dominating the downtown of its capital city, Baku.

Azerbaijan is known as the Land of Fire for the underground natural gas pockets that are endlessly aflame. And Baku has a skyline to match. One of the most arresting sights is part of Canada's Fairmont hotel chain — five-star in lavish interior and service — the Fairmont Baku at the Flame Towers.

The triple towers light up at night with 10,000 lightbulbs that send up alternating patterns of multi-coloured stripes or undulating flames. By daylight, the towers contrast with ancient structures, such as the 12th-Century Maiden Tower and alongside ornate 19th-Century buildings.

In the past few years, oil wealth has produced government buildings so bold in design they become tourist attractions. One such building is the State Museum of Azerbaijan Carpet and Applied Art, which carries the pattern and circular roof line of a rolled-up carpet. Then there is the white Heydar Aliyev Center, whose swooping lines, inside and out, appear as fluid as cloth. It houses auditoriums, a museum and a gallery.

Baku and its astounding skyline on the shores of the Caspian Sea recently commanded major features in no less than *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* magazines.

In June 2015, Baku will host the inaugural European Olympic Games and was one of five countries bidding on the 2016 and 2020 Summer Olympics.

Mixed blessing of oil

Primarily, Azerbaijan is a petro-power. Oil has brought it both wealth and subjugation by its conquering neighbours.

With a population of 9.2 million and a GDP of $75.7 billion, it has more than tripled its per capita GDP since 1992, the first year of its independence from the USSR. According to DFATD, Azerbaijan's 2013 per-capita GDP was $8,131. Canada exported $31.6 billion to Azerbaijan (mostly machinery, mechanical, electrical and agricultural products). Canada imported $465.3 billion from Azerbaijan (mostly oil).

One of the world's first and oldest continuous petro-producers and pipeline builders, by the early 1900s, it was producing half of the world's oil. The country came to international prominence when — alongside Azerbaijani entrepreneurs — Sweden's Nobel brothers and France's Rothschilds made a fortune and built their Baku mansions from Azerbaijani oil. (When Albert Nobel established the Nobel Prizes in 1901, he funded them with 12 percent of his share of Nobel Brothers' Petroleum Company in Baku.)

Foreign Minister John Baird planned an April visit to Azerbaijan.

cut

Stalin plotted revolt with Baku's oilfield workers.

Lenin coveted Baku's oil for Russia's survival.

Stalin as labour organiser

During the 20th-Century oil boom, Stalin (then Ioseb Jugashvili, the revolutionary from Georgia), plotted with Azerbaijan's oilfield workers in taverns after their day's work. And from Lenin's perspective, in 1918, he said: "Soviet Russia can't survive without Baku oil. We must assist the Baku workers in overthrowing the capitalists so they can join Russia again."

Azerbaijan's proven crude oil reserves, estimated at 7 billion barrels in January 2013, put the country in the top 20 largest oil exporters. But gas will catapult Azerbaijan to the forefront, given production from the Shah Deniz field in the Caspian Sea, considered one of the world's largest gas and condensate fields.

With Russia using its gas and oil as political weaponry to back up its military influence and mobilisation, first in Georgia and now Ukraine, Europe will look increasingly to Azerbaijan and its pipelines to circumvent Russian-controlled gas, oil and pipelines.

The Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline carries crude oil 1,768 kilometres from the Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli oilfield in the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. It links Baku with Turkey's Mediterranean port city of Ceyhan via Georgia's capital, Tbilisi.

BP, the Shah Deniz operator, estimates 40 trillion cubic feet in that gas field alone, which will reach full production in 2017.

Less dependence on Russian gas

A new pipeline holds much promise for getting the Caspian Sea gas to Europe, circumventing Russia and Ukraine. The Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) will carry natural gas from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz field to the new pipeline, which will begin in Greece, cross Albania and the Adriatic Sea and reach land in southern Italy — and beyond, to other European nations by 2018 or 2019.

Because Russia supplies an estimated 130 billion cubic metres of natural gas to Europe annually, Caspian gas will not

DFATD / WIKI / SOERFM

supplant this source. It will provide Europe with 10 billion cubic metres, with an option to double that output.

As the BBC's David Shukman put it: "With about one-third of Europe's gas coming from Russia and about half of that gas flowing through Ukraine, these are tense times."

While top European dependencies range widely, they are high. Virtually 100-percent-dependent countries are Finland, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Romania. Poland is 80 percent dependent on Russian gas; Czech Republic at 87 percent, Hungary at 60 percent, Greece at 52 percent, Slovenia at 45 percent and Germany at 35 percent.

The other reasons to look closely at Azerbaijan:

• On a light note, but still one symbolic of its westernised culture, Azerbaijan won the Eurovision Song Contest 2011 with "Running Scared," a love song by Eli/Nikki;

• It is a moderate Muslim country with western leanings and almost no terrorism;

• It is friendly towards the East and the West, and, more unusually (as Egypt once was), it's a friend and partner of Israel;

• It was the first country in the Muslim world to give women the vote — (1918) one year before Canada, the U.S. or Britain;

• It was the first democratic republic in the Muslim world (1918-1920) with a European-model Parliament. No. 4 in that republic's Charter of Rights: "The Azerbaijani Democratic Republic guarantees to all its citizens within its borders full civil and political rights, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, class, profession, or sex."

Timeline of turmoil

In a chilling timeline of armed conflicts among Russians, Armenians, Georgians and Azerbaijanis, Fuad Akhundov, writing in *Azerbaijan International 1998*, gives this background on the final days of the young republic, a republic many yearn to reclaim.

"Without a doubt, the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan existed during the most turbulent, unstable and complicated period of local history in the 20th Century. Ethnic conflicts and continuous wars with Armenia, aggravated by the collapse of the Russian Empire, communist coups, civil war in Russia and the consequences of World War One, brought the region of the Caucasus into complete turmoil. This, in turn, facilitated the occupation of the entire region by the Soviet Army."

1919

May 26: The Republic of Georgia declares independence from Russia.

May 28: Azerbaijan and Armenia declare independence. Azerbaijan forms the first Cabinet of Ministers.

1920

April 27-28: 11th Red Army troops enter Baku. The Communist Party demands the resignation of the Parliament of the Azerbaijan Republic. Soviet power is declared in Baku.

May 20: The Soviet Army occupies the remainder of Azerbaijan. An uprising in Ganja is suppressed. Horrific atrocities occur when the Communists kill 40,000 [by other accounts 20,000] Azerbaijanis.

Summer-Autumn: Further dissemination of Soviet power in Azerbaijan.

December: Fall of the Republic of Armenia. Soviet regime is established in Yerevan, Armenia's capital.

1921

February: Soviet occupation in Georgia.

1922

Dec. 22: Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia become part of the USSR.

Make a nearly 70-year leap to 1991 when Azerbaijan declared its independence after the fall of the USSR.

Many of the Soviet bloc countries struggled to fight corruption and/or the economic aftershock of losing Russian-style communism and the security it bestowed. Still, many willingly exchanged it for democracy, or more democracy, and their people made difficult sacrifices to fix their economies.

In January, the Embassy of Azerbaijan and Carleton's University's Institute of European, Russian and Eurasian Studies sponsored a wide-ranging seminar on Azerbaijan.

One of the speakers was Conservative MP Barry Devolin. He chairs the Canada-Azerbaijan Inter-parliamentary Friendship Group which, in a pro-democracy initiative, has overseen exchanges between Parliamentarians. He has gone on three such visits himself.

He favours strong parliamentary ties between the two countries. "Azerbaijan is an emerging democracy with challenges in democracy, voting rights, fair elections. I think we have an interest in supporting countries [to promote] democracy, liberal law and trade."

Azerbaijan-Canada university ties

Beyond lawmakers' visits are educational exchanges. Last year, Baku State University and the University of Waterloo signed a memorandum of understanding allowing Baku's mathematics and science faculties to apply to Waterloo's faculties. And, in January, Carleton University signed a memorandum of understanding to promote academic and cultural relationships and eventually exchanges of students and professors. Today, 170 university students from Azerbaijan are in Canada under the auspices of their government's study-abroad program.

Rashad Ibadov, assistant law professor at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy in Baku, told the Carleton seminar that Azerbaijani (rather than Russian) has become its language of instruction. Minorities are allowed to hold classes in their own languages. And, though an unsurprising announcement in the West, he made special note that science is taught in Azerbaijan's schools. (This contrasts with some Middle Eastern countries that favour educating children, sometimes only boys, in religion and not pursuing modern studies of math and science.)

Heydar Mirza, research fellow at the Azerbaijani government's Center for Strategic Studies, discussed Azerbaijan's unique relationship with Israel.

Among all post-Soviet states, Azerbaijan is Israel's "top trade partner," supplying more than one-third of its oil. Crucial security of pipelines has also made the U.S. and Israel allies of Azerbaijan.

Beyond that, Israel has sold Azerbaijan ground-based missile defence systems and anti-ship missiles as part of a $1.6-billion weapons package. It prompted, said Mr. Mirza, "organised hysteria" in many Iranian, Russian and Armenian media that had interpreted the purchase as directed at the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

Comprising 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory, this region in southwestern Azerbaijan has been occupied for 20 years by Armenian separatists who won some of that land in the brief 1992-1994 war and then added seven more regions to it.

This disputed region is a key issue, nationally and internationally, partly because it carries the threat of regional instability and of proxy provocations, with Russia and Iran supporting Armenia and Turkey

Azerbaijan resides in a tough neighbourhood with Russia and Iran as its neighbours.

supporting Azerbaijan.

Just in case these alliances aren't confusing enough, Russia remains Azerbaijan's main supplier of military equipment, even as it supplies Armenia militarily.

Rumour has it that Israel (and its ally, the U.S.) can monitor Iran's cyberspace warfare program and provide Azerbaijan with valuable intelligence. The Israeli military deal with Azerbaijan was made partly because the U.S. and Europe have restrictions on selling weaponry to Azerbaijan, fearing it may be used against Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh if Azerbaijan's patience to secure a settlement runs out.

A frozen conflict

Meanwhile, Iran is generally believed to be stoking the fires of separatism in Azerbaijan in the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh where Iran, Armenia and Russia support its secession. In the mid-2000s, Moscow hosted meetings with leaders of Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and has met with representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh in support of their independence.

Despite the many polarising forces at work, Azerbaijan manages to keep peace with Armenia. The 1992-94 war ended with Armenian occupation, 30,000 people dead, 586,000 Azeris driven out and another 250,000 expelled from Armenia, according to Swiss journalist André Widmer in his years-long investigation that resulted in the documentary photography book, *The Forgotten Conflict: Two Decades after the Nagorno-Karabakh War.*

The conflict has created one million Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons. The government says it is one of the largest, if not the largest, refugee populations per capita in the world.

To this day, bursts of fire across the border kill patrolling soldiers on both sides. Shelling of civilians in Azerbaijani towns regularly breaks the ceasefire, sometimes lethally. Villages and cultural landmarks have been razed during the occupation.

Mr. Widmer, who spoke at the Carleton seminar in January, said that last year alone, 20 soldiers died at the border. He went there to write a brief magazine article but spent years on research and photography because Azerbaijani refugees pleaded with him not to "let us be forgotten." Many live in primitive conditions as they await a return to their homes, though the Azerbaijani government has embarked on a program to build new homes for them.

Meanwhile, Armenians in the rest of Azerbaijan have an uneasy existence, which international observers fear could make them vulnerable to aggression or discrimination.

Despite resolutions by the UN General Assembly calling for withdrawal of occupying forces, and affirming the inviolability of international borders and prohibition of use of force to acquire territory, the conflict remains in a frozen state.

And despite Iran's support for Armenia, Azerbaijan engages with fear-provoking neighbours Russia and, to a much lesser degree, Iran.

For example, Iran-Azerbaijan trade rose 23 percent in 2013, to $1 billion.

That said, Azerbaijan has geographically served as a buffer for Russia from Iran and Turkey. And, to complicate matters further, Iran's population of Azeris is large, and more than double the number of Azeris in Azerbaijan itself. A source of Iran's concerns over separatist Azeri movements within its border, Azeri population estimates range up to 25 percent of Iran's population, mostly in the northern region, which is adjacent to Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan has a strategic alliance — based on economic, military and security issues — with Georgia and an alliance based on energy and pipelines with the U.S., Turkey and Israel.

As for its growth spurt, once released from Soviet rule, Azerbaijan GDP increased from $1.2 billion U.S. in 1991 to

$60 billion today — largely from the multinational development of its energy sector.

That democracy was the driving theme of the Carleton University seminar was hard to miss, as it was held in honour of Mammad Emin Rsulzade, one of the founders of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.

A 10-minute historical, grainy and dramatic 1953 film (www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HLKBl6seaw) with footage from 1918 carries his voice, speaking to the world from Washington D.C. over the Voice of America. He joyfully announced the freedom and democracy of his country, finally, after generations of conquest.

The golden age of democracy lasted two years (1918-1920), ending when Russia invaded and quashed the new republic. The same film eerily shows, decades later, Joseph Stalin speaking from a lectern, calmly pouring out and sipping what looks like beer — the man responsible for extinguishing million of lives and imprisoning generations behind the Iron Curtain.

But before that, when Stalin was still one of the Allies, a little known or heralded Azerbaijan and its oilfields helped defeat Hitler.

Hitler had planned to attack Baku on Sept. 25, 1942, to deprive Russia of fuel for its tanks and planes, and to power his own conquest. In playful anticipation of his successful attack, Hitler's staff prepared a Victory Cake. Hitler ate the piece with "Baku" written on it, while the generals shared "Caspian Sea." A bitter winter in 1942 stalled the German troops in the North Caucasus Mountains, making Britain's plan to blow up the oil fields unnecessary.

With the fall of the USSR, Azerbaijan once again declared freedom in 1991 and adopted its 1918 flag. It remains on decent terms with Iran and Russia. Azerbaijan declined to join Russia's Customs Union. (Hillary Clinton, as President Barack Obama's secretary of state in 2012, called the customs union Russia's attempt to "re-sovietise" the countries of the former USSR. "Let's make no mistake about it. We know what the goal is and we are trying to figure out effective ways to slow down or prevent it.")

But Azerbaijan is equally constrained from joining NATO, however much some in the country might wish to do so.

Black January, 1990

On the streets, one rarely hears people criticise Russia despite "Black January." On Jan. 19, 1990, 26,000 Soviet troops attacked Baku by night. The alleged provocation was "a state of emergency" that Mikhail Gorbachev signed. In the attack, the Russians killed 130 people and injured more than 700. By one account, "many citizens lay wounded or dead in the streets, hospitals and morgues of Baku. The violent confrontations and incidents lasted into February." The Russians detained hundreds of people.

Later, it was revealed that Mr. Gorbachev had been deliberately misled by his security forces, which were trying to save the disintegrating Soviet empire. In his apology for Black January in 1995, Mr. Gorbachev called it "the biggest mistake of my political life...."

One does not see terrorism, extreme Islam, extreme intolerance of any other religion but Islam, tremendous interference in government by religious figures and religious statutes in Azerbaijan.

Remarkable progress, democratic shortfalls

Azerbaijan is a weak democracy. Its president and his family are powerful. The judiciary is not independent of the executive, perverting the trial system. Elections are flawed. A number of political opponents and journalists are imprisoned. Corruption is a serious problem. There is a price for this relative calm. In the context of the region, however, this country allows freedom of religion; indeed it generally supports it.

On Jan. 19, 1990, 26,000 Soviet troops stormed Baku. Martyr's Alley, above, honours Azerbaijanis killed in the attack.

On the hill on which Baku is built, stands a memorial park, shaded by trees, that draws families who look along row after row of identical gravestones, with the machine-etched names and photos of Azerbaijanis who were killed during the Russian invasion.

Still, Russia remains very much part of the culture of Azerbaijan. Many of its citizens have "russified" their names and most speak Russian. They seem to practise their religion quietly and personally. In Baku, one sees almost no long robes or public prayer. Occasionally one spots a man saying his prayers on a prayer rug he rolls out in the corner of a small grocery store, but it's rare. It is a western city with a Muslim heart.

Contrast this to some of its neighbours, where merely speaking of the Bible can bring a death sentence, adultery provokes a stoning and showing a female wrist or ankle, a flogging.

Leyla Aliyeva, director of Baku's Center for National and International Studies, a non-governmental pro-democracy think-tank, puts it this way: "The current situation with the recent arrests and politically motivated trials does not give reasons for optimism."

Late in 2013, she said there were 142 political prisoners and that just more than half the polls in the Oct. 9, 2013 elections were suspect. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) reported "significant problems coming

BAKU87

in the opening, voting and counting procedures." It reported clear indications of ballot-box stuffing in 37 polling stations and said the counting was assessed negatively in an unprecedented 58 percent of the stations observed.

In stark contrast, the Council on Europe, a regular critic of Azerbaijan, went against the general assessment by labelling the elections "free, fair and transparent."

MP Barry Devolin notes that the country's independence dates only to 1991. He says there are "challenges in democracy, voting rights, fair elections. What is an appropriate standard to measure it against western democracies?"

He adds: "Given the tough neighbourhood, they've made a remarkable transformation."

U.S. soldiers participate in Operation Enduring Freedom, the U.S.'s war in Afghanistan.

US ARMY

Without question, the country is modernising rapidly. The blessing of petro manats (Azerbaijan's manat is worth about $1.40 Canadian) does not reach equally beyond the blocks of downtown Baku's designer stores and government buildings. Unemployment inland is likely high, though the official statistics put the national average at 6 percent, a great improvement over a short period.

The government prides itself on multiculturalism and stability because without these, economic growth will be even harder to achieve. Heydar Aliyev, the late president of Azerbaijan and father of the current president, is credited with establishing post-Soviet Azerbaijan, and with modernising and developing its resources more fully by welcoming in foreign oil companies.

Aliyev on multiculturalism

Diplomat went to Azerbaijan on an invitation from the organisers of the Third Baku International Humanitarian Forum last autumn. It was a massive undertaking, covering hundreds of speakers on multiculturalism, science, education, biology, national identity, economics and globalising mass media.

Co-sponsored by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Russian President Vladimir Putin (who sent his representative to speak), it was a rare chance to listen to 10 Nobel Laureates sharing the stage as they described their work in economics, chemistry, physics, physiology and medicine. Another panel featured the former presidents of Estonia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Bulgaria and Serbia and the president of Turkey as speakers.

In Mr. Aliyev's opening comments, he called Azerbaijan "the most rapidly developing country in the world in economic terms." He acknowledged, though, that natural resources cannot take the place of humanitarian development, which he labelled his government's top priority.

He championed the "relatively new concept" of multiculturalism. "But we in Azerbaijan have lived in an atmosphere of multiculturalism for centuries. Multiculturalism has great traditions, not only in Azerbaijan, but also in many countries and neighbouring states. So I think it is inappropriate and harmful to question multiculturalism or talk about its failure now because there is no alternative to multiculturalism. The alternative to multiculturalism is self-isolation."

Neither Azerbaijan nor Russia is closely associated with humanitarianism, partly because of a democratic deficit, limits on free speech and expression and because of corruption. In 2009, a referendum in Azerbaijan eliminated term limits on its presidents.

For all that, despite the West's ability to do business — a lot of business — with regimes such as Russia and China and other undemocratic countries, it is often critical of Mr. Aliyev.

Former U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan, Matthew Bryza, speaking just after the allegedly flawed 2013 elections in Azerbaijan, acknowledged the sharp criticism by the OSCE. He noted: "Facebook activists and journalists who call for the government's demise are often met with confrontation."

But he sees improvements, too. Publication of official pricing of government fees and the use of electronic payments systems "have eliminated many under-the-table payments," to corrupt officials, he said. "Prominent businesspeople recently told me they're suffering fewer shakedowns by customs and tax authorities."

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index ranked Azerbaijan 127th out of 177. However, Azerbaijan ranked 46/142 in global competitiveness and 91/187 on human development or "high." On press freedom, it ranked 162/179.

Reporters Without Borders ranks Azerbaijan as 160th out of 180 countries, with No. 1 having the most press freedom. Finland ranked No. 1 while Canada was 18th.

The former U.S. ambassador concludes: "The West has a significant strategic interest in supporting Azerbaijan's reform efforts." As an example, he said, less than 24 hours after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington, Azerbaijan opened its skies to U.S. military aircraft and aided in their delivery of non-lethal supplies to Afghanistan.

And while students pay for grades in some — not all — universities, he noted that the president has appointed a new "young reformer" as minister of education.

He pointed to Azerbaijan's Shiite-majority, whose multicultural toler-

AZERBAIJAN'S DECADE OF DIPLOMACY WITH CANADA

Farid Shafiyev is an historian-turned turned-diplomat. He can tell you the day, month and year (and, he laughs at the suggestion, probably the hour and minute) of the many turning points in his nation's eventful history.

As Azerbaijan's ambassador to Canada, he is marking the 10th anniversary of the establishment of Azerbaijan's embassy in Canada as a significant milestone.

He arrived here, as counsellor, when the embassy opened in 2005. He then became charge d'affaires and was named ambassador five years ago. "It is sort of an usually long posting but it was quite interesting." During that time, he also earned a master's in public administration from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

"It is a good moment to reflect on what we have achieved and have not achieved," he said. "We still hope for reciprocity in that Canada will open a diplomatic mission in Azerbaijan. Linked to that, I would like to stress that the potential of bilateral relations, especially in trade and investments, still remains unrealized.

What he can speak of "with some sense of accomplishment," he said, is that he and his predecessor "tried to put Azerbaijan on the map of policymakers in Canadian government and Parliament.

"I think we have registered some success," he said, noting especially that the Canada- Azerbaijan Friendship Group has produced parliamentary exchanges.

Bombardier and the Iron Silk Road

On the asset side of his end-of-term accounting is an upswing in trade and investment over the past two years. Especially significant is the contract with Canada's Bombardier on a railroad project 20 years in discussion that, by the second half of 2015, should be operational. It will connect Baku in Azerbaijan with Tbilisi in Georgia and Kars in Turkey.

"We call it the Iron Silk Road because it is supposed to make a connection with Turkey and the rest of Europe," says Mr. Shafiyev. "We have a connection with the Central Asian countries through ferry, from Baku to Turkmenistan. The railroad will allow landlocked countries, such as Azerbaijan, to supply to and receive goods and cargo from global market by train. And also it will move people. This is one of the important projects for us."

Mr. Shafiyev's other goals include agriculture — a delegation from Saskatchewan to Azerbaijan was scheduled for June. The key trade will be live cattle and grain production, notably wheat. "We would like to be self-sufficient to increase our food security."

Seeking Canadian business ties

Other areas with "big potential for development" are information technologies, communications and engineering and tourism. "There is a big potential for development there," he says. A Canadian company is helping build a water park close to a ski resort in Gabala, in north-central Azerbaijan, to boost its profile as a tourist hub.

Mr. Shafiyev, who, for all his pragmatism, also comes across as an academic, has a special interest in education. This past year, Azerbaijan sent 170 bachelor's and master's students to Canadian universities under their government's sponsorship.

"We'll see," he added, "and maybe we'll have campuses of Canadian universities in Azerbaijan."

Broad-spectrum diplomacy

Mr. Shafiyev offered an unusual insight into the diplomatic world: The importance of non-government liaisons for envoys. He has focused on media, academia and NGOs as well as government: "In a democracy, you have to work not only with the government but with multiple actors because they form opinion. They have a certain degree of influence on the country's domestic and foreign policy."

The flip side of that is the drawback of "lobby politics," he said. As an example, he referred to ethnic groups that promise votes to a politician in exchange for support of the group's position. Sometimes, he says, the politician "tries to appease radicals in ethnic groups," rather than defuse strong positions by delivering "a message of conciliation."

Including non-government liaisons "complicates the job," he laughs, "in the sense that once a diplomatic mission has a partner and goes to government and deliver its message, government says 'yes' or 'no' to that view. In countries in such as Canada," he added, "it's not like that."

Is he referring to the frozen conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan — the Armenia-supported breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan?

"It's about Nagorno-Karabakh, though not only. But I am pleased that all three major parties in Canada, Conservative, Liberal and NDP, support the position of Azerbaijan in terms of our territorial integrity and in terms of the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

"We shouldn't be complacent working with all Canadians, across the political spectrum [on this issue]."

Azerbaijan-Canada trade fluctuates

Trade has varied greatly, reaching $1.2 billion in 2012, mostly in oil imports from Azerbaijan. Canada exported $40.6 million worth, mostly agricultural products, metal products and machinery. In 2013, Canada's trade dipped to $465 million in imports from Azerbaijan and $31.2 million in exports.

Diversifying trade away from the oil sector, he says, "has not produced a big achievement." Oil imports from Azerbaijan to New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Quebec account for the bulk of trade because it is cheaper than to deliver oil from Alberta.

Looking back over his long stay in Canada — he finally left his posting in June — he concluded: "I have a lot of friends here. That is, I would say, the greatest asset." He hopes the internet's easy contact allows him to maintain ties. "The advice from friends helped me a lot and I enjoyed it when my relationships, which began as professional, became friendships."

ance allows, among other religions, a 1,400-year-old Jewish community to "enjoy strong state support."

He warned critics against piling on while failing to acknowledge the incredible strides the country has taken. Poverty has dropped significantly and, despite cases of fraudulent voting, the president is "popular," he said.

Like many petro-states without democratic cultures, power resides in a ruling family or an elected official whose friends and family benefit from revenues, and who run businesses and dominate industries. Petro-wealth also provides the power and resources to rapidly modernise countries.

He concluded: "The United States and its European allies would be wise ... to pursue the full range of interests and values they share with this small, but strategically significant country."

George Friedman, chairman and founder of Stratfor, a Texas-based geopolitical intelligence firm, recently visited Azerbaijan and came away with a similar view. He characterised a current U.S.-Azerbaijan standoff by saying the U.S. won't sell weapons to Azerbaijan "because of what it regards as violations of human rights by the Azerbaijani government. The Americans find it incomprehensible that Baku, facing Russia and Iran and needing the United States, cannot satisfy American sensibilities by avoiding repression — a change that would not threaten the regime.

"Azerbaijan's answer is that it is precisely the threats it faces from Iran and Russia that require Baku to maintain a security state. Both countries send operatives into Azerbaijan to destabilise it. What the Americans consider dissidents, Azerbaijan sees as agents of foreign powers. Washington disputes this and continually offends Baku with its pronouncements. The Azerbaijanis, meanwhile, continually offend the Americans."

Likewise, Azerbaijanis don't understand how, after aiding the U.S. in Afghanistan, "risking close ties with Israel, maintaining a secular Islamic state and more, the United States not only cannot help Baku with Nagorno-Karabakh, but also insists on criticising Azerbaijan," Mr. Friedman writes.

Russian invasion and 9/11

The recent history of Azerbaijan is a living example of why Azerbaijan is concerned about security against aggressive neighbours. Invasion and occupation often have huge blow-backs in the form of unintended consequences. Perhaps the very best example is the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

The USSR's invasion of Afghanistan links to the 9/11 attacks.

Without that Soviet invasion, there would have been no 9/11. The countdown to that attack on the U.S. started in December 1979, when the Soviets sent thousands of troops into Afghanistan to prop up the faltering Communist regime in Kabul. The U.S. and other countries armed the Afghan resistance fighters, the mujahedeen (Arabic for "those who engage in jihad"). Osama bin Laden, then 22 years old, left Saudi Arabia to join the resistance and to provide funds to Afghan mujahedeen.

The long, bloody conflict ended 10 years later when the Soviets withdrew, leaving Afghanistan in civil war. But the year before that, anticipating Russian defeat, bin Laden and his associates planned to continue jihad against the USSR. Expelled from his base in Sudan due to pressure from the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, he took al-Qaeda to Afghanistan, where he turned the country into a safe training and supply base.

From there, al-Qaeda executed its spectacular airline hijackings and crashes into New York's World Trade Center Twin Towers and the Pentagon in Washington. The plane likely headed for the Capitol Building was heroically crashed as passengers and crew struggled with the hijackers to stop the plane from hitting its target.

Economically devastating, the warping effect of 9/11 on world finances in the hundreds of billions of dollars raised national deficits and diverted money from productive industries to defensive national security and intelligence.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan changed the world overnight. It triggered an intensified, organised bloody terrorism that has, ever since, forced the world onto uneasy alert.

Azerbaijan, on the receiving end of two Soviet invasions in this century alone, and preceded by a history of Russian imperial occupation, has broken free of that past. Looking ever westward, while keeping peace with its neighbours, Azerbaijan is carving from its ragged history an independent path to prosperity and prominence.

Donna Jacobs is *Diplomat's* publisher

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East-Europe's economic triumphs and territorial worries over Ukraine

By David Kilgour and Peter Lin

The implosion of the Soviet Union after December 1991 brought freedom to almost 20 restored or new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. Europeans were reunited, independent and free after almost half a century of oppression under an earlier version of *Homo Sovieticus*.

Russian leaders Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin supported national self-determination and democracy. The European Union added 10 east-central European countries in 2004 and 2007 and almost 80 million European citizens to its union of democratic nations that followed the rule of law.

Soldiers without insignia on march in Perevalne, Crimea. Vladimir Putin conceded in April that they were Russian troops.

Economic transitions

The transition from totalitarianism and command economies to democracy and market-based ones brought many changes to all these nations. Liberalisation required markets rather than central planners to set prices. Trade barriers were removed to allow free movement of goods and services; many state-owned enterprises and resources were privatised; financial services were created. The economic performances of Poland, the Czech Republic, the Baltic States, Hungary and a number of other such nations over the more than two decades since, have been strong despite serious adjustment problems.

Poland

Problems inherited from communism, including poor growth and low incomes, led Poland to adopt a strategy for transition to a market economy in 1990. The government of Lech Walesa removed price controls, privatised state-owned enterprises, eliminated subsidies and imposed spending restraints. The reforms eventually functioned well. Before the world economic crisis of 2008, Poland enjoyed an annual real growth rate of more than 3 percent. Its real economic growth rate was 3.9 percent in 2010 and 4.5 percent in 2011 — two of the best results in Europe.

Czech Republic

The disappearance of despotism from Czechoslovakia after 1989, with Vaclav Havel moving, in only months, from prison to presidency, afforded an opportunity to carry out major political and economic reforms. The new government also maintained strict fiscal policies and created a good climate for investment. The country enjoyed flourishing exports and rising direct foreign investment. The global recession brought down its growth rate, but it has rebounded since 2010.

Baltic States

The Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) have a combined population of only 6.32 million, but all are determined and resilient. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, each wasted no time in declaring independence and aggressively pursuing economic reforms and integration with the rest of Europe. In the 2009 global recession, all three made major budget cuts and their initiatives succeeded. Between 2000 and 2007, the Baltic States had the highest real growth rate in Europe, ranging from 6 to 12 percent. Austerity measures helped each to weather the subsequent recession; from 2011 on, they have enjoyed the fastest economic recoveries anywhere in the EU.

Hungary

Hungary made the transition to a market economy after 1990, despite significant

DREAMSTIME

losses in markets for exports and in subsidies from the former Soviet Union. In 1995, it privatised state-owned enterprises, cut the current account deficit and shrank public spending. Many Hungarians suffered great hardship during the transition, but their economy grew about 4 percent in real terms between 2000 and 2006 and rebounded after 2010.

In short, the national transitions were difficult, but in virtually all east-central European countries, life appears to be significantly better now than in 1989. Despite its current serious problems, the EU, with 28 member countries and already a population of 503 million and prospect of further enlargement, continues to be a beacon for democracy, human rights, economic prosperity and stability for many across the world.

Is 'then' now back?

An ailing Boris Yeltsin resigned his presidency in 2000 to former KGB lieutenant colonel Vladimir Putin, who would later assert that the "collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century." Mr. Putin's clear aim is to destabilise the interim Ukrainian government in Kiev as much as is feasible.

Somehow, Mr. Putin must be persuaded by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other leaders, through "smart sanctions" and whichever Russian oligarchs he listens to, that a collaborative engagement with the larger European community is necessary in today's world lest Russia be isolated internationally. One much-discussed option is for Ukraine to follow the example of now-prosperous Finland and not join NATO, but trade and be on good terms with all neighbours.

Vladimir Sorokin of Russia, writing in the May 8 issue of *The New York Review of Books*, compares today's post-Soviet bear to the Soviet one:

> *…the only thing they have in common is the imperial roar. However, the post-Soviet bear is teeming with corrupt parasites that infected it during the 1990s, and have multiplied exponentially in the last decade. They are consuming the bear from within… There are no muscles, the bear's teeth have worn down and its brain is buffeted by the firing of contradictory neurological impulses: "Get rich!" "Modernize!" "Steal!" "Pray!" "Build Great Mother Russia!" "Resurrect the USSR!" "Beware of the West!" "Invest in Western real estate!" "Keep your savings in dollars and euros!"…"Be patriotic!" "Search and destroy the enemies within!"*

In fact, prosperity continues to elude most Russians. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) says the average household net-adjusted disposable income for a Russian family in 2013 was $15,286, ranking number 30 of the 36 OECD developed-economy nations.

Russia is now a petro-state, sustained mostly by the insatiable need of foreigners for oil for their vehicles and gas for homes and businesses. Since 2000, the economic and political focus of Mr. Putin and about 140 oligarchs has been the oil and gas industry. Keeping Europe dependent on Russian imports in a period of growing international oil and gas abundance has proven to be a good strategy. Now that the Crimea crisis is reported to have precipitated a flight of capital from Russia in the first quarter of 2014 as large as $70 billion, Mr. Putin and his supporters might accept that European harmony is necessary if the Russian economy is to improve the lives of its citizens.

Conclusion

In Ukraine and Russia, ousted president Viktor Yanukovych and Vladimir Putin continue to misrepresent the democratic uprising in Ukraine. No one has cut through the propaganda in Russian state media more effectively than Timothy Snyder, history professor at Yale and author of *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*.

"Ukraine (under Yanukovych) was governed by probably the most financially corrupt regime … which by the end of its rule was not only physically oppressing, but finally killing its citizens … (for) exercising their rights to speech and assembly.

"In all of these ways", the writer continues, "the 'decadent' West, as Russia's foreign minister put it, was present … The Russian press presented the protest as part of a larger gay conspiracy. The (Yanukovych) regime instructed its riot police that the opposition was led by a larger Jewish conspiracy. Meanwhile, both regimes informed the outside world that the protesters were Nazis. Almost nobody in the West seemed to notice this contradiction."

Given the long-simmering divisions within Ukraine that Mr. Putin is now exploiting, newly elected president Petro Poroshenko from central Ukraine must try to win support at home by reaching out to Ukraine's 24 oblasts with their differing ethnic and economic needs. It is not too late to begin a real dialogue with the regions and start talking about a Ukraine that respects diversity, assuring them that their rights and interests will be safeguarded within a federal system. Key leaders from the eastern provinces could be invited to have a say in the formation of a new Ukraine.

Ukrainians understand what western support can and cannot accomplish. It can provide useful moral, political and military leverage and much-needed financial support. However, western support by itself cannot resolve Ukraine's problems.

Given Ukraine's position and its political and economic structure, its leaders must recognise that peace can only come through some accommodation with Moscow. Mr. Poroshenko should consider flying to Moscow to talk directly with Mr. Putin. It is both futile and counterproductive to threaten the Russian president. Instead Mr. Poroshenko should seek to reduce Russian concerns that Ukraine will not be exclusively pro-western and anti-Russian.

Kasparov: "Banks, not tanks"

The former world/Russian chess champion and democracy advocate Garry Kasparov observed in the *Wall Street Journal*:

- *Vladimir Putin has twice during six years sent Russian troops across internationally recognised borders to snap off pieces of neighbouring countries, first in Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) and now in Ukraine (Crimea), thereby joining an exclusive club with Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic….*
- *Trying to seek a deep strategy in Putin's actions is a waste of time. "There are only personal interests, the interests of those close to him who keep him in power, and how best to consolidate that power." If the West punishes Russia with sanctions and a trade war, "it would be cruel to 140 million Russians, so instead sanction the 140 oligarchs who would dump Mr. Putin ... if he cannot protect their assets abroad. Target their visas, their mansions and IPOs in London, their yachts and Swiss bank accounts. Use banks, not tanks."*

Mr. Kasparov, already a proven master of logic and strategy, makes a lot of sense.

Dr. Peter Lin was a senior economist at Statistics Canada in 1995 and a professor, director and dean at various universities in Taiwan. David Kilgour is a former MP and was secretary of state for the Asia-Pacific, Latin America and Africa.

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Canada's principled and firm stand on Ukraine

Ukrainians have demonstrated their determination to turn their backs on their communist past and be part of the western spirit of democracy and freedom, writes Peter Van Loan.

By Peter Van Loan

Vladimir Putin's recent actions represent the greatest threat to security in Europe we have seen in some time. The Russian military occupation of Crimea and the transparent involvement of Russia in efforts to destabilise Ukraine are serious, but they represent a troubling approach to advancing Putin's perception of Russia's national interest. With the echoes of his Georgian military intervention still fresh, the Russian's latest actions point to efforts to reverse what he calls the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the 20th Century — the collapse of the Soviet Union. All his actions are steps on the path to restore that empire.

In this context, the need for a firm, principled and decisive response from western countries is fundamental if Putin's ambitions are to be contained. Canada continues to show leadership in individual and multilateral actions in response to Russian actions. In a free and democratic West, continued public and media attention to Putin's actions, and public support for a firm reaction, will be key elements in a successful response.

The broader threat to the region is clear. The Putin regime's military aggression and illegal occupation of parts of Ukraine continues to threaten the stability and security of Central and Eastern Europe and the rule of law between nations. Those

DREAMSTIME

actions clearly contravene the overriding principles of liberty that Europe has worked so hard to move forward since the era of the World Wars and especially the end of the Cold War. Ukrainians have strived to move in the same direction. They have demonstrated time and again their courage and determination to turn their backs on their communist past and be part of the western spirit of democracy and freedom in which human rights are respected and the rule of law prevails.

These events in Ukraine are especially troubling for Canada and Canadians, because the relationship between our two countries is a rich and strong one. In 2011, many Canadians joined with our Ukrainian-Canadian community to celebrate the 120th anniversary of the first Ukrainian settlement in Canada. Ukrainian-Canadians have helped build this country and are proud of what has been achieved and contributed. In 1991, Canada was able to acknowledge this contribution in a dramatic and concrete way: We were the first western country to recognize Ukraine's independence. And we did so on Dec. 2 — just one day after Ukraine had itself affirmed its independence. Since then, Canada has worked closely at the governmental level and informally through community and civil society organizations to help Ukraine rebuild after 70 long years of Soviet tyranny. Recently, Canada pledged more than $220 million in support to help Ukraine stabilise its economy and promote economic and social development.

Our government fundamentally believes democratic countries should be free to choose their alliances and associations in the global community. It was the Ukrainian choice to build alliances with a free and democratic European Union that prompted the Russian interference that has propelled recent developments. From the beginning of Ukrainian citizens' efforts to defend their freedom and sovereignty, our government has been vocal in its support. As Russia has escalated efforts against Ukraine, we have called on Putin to respect international law and commitments. Mr. Putin's escalation and aggression has forced our government, in co-ordination with our partners and allies, to impose economic sanctions and take actions that have further isolated his regime diplomatically.

In response to our government's efforts to stand-up against Russian aggression in Ukraine, I was included on a list of 13 Canadians sanctioned by the current regime in Russia. The sanctions brought against me are a small sacrifice when compared to the threat currently faced by the people of Ukraine. Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea violates Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Most troubling though, is its violation of the values of freedom, democracy and human rights — values Canadians and so many others have fought for, time and again.

As a man of Estonian heritage, the current arguments and approach used by Russia to enter Ukraine are familiar to me. They are the same used to justify the Soviet occupation of the Baltics in 1939 following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact by which Stalin and Hitler carved up Europe. The Russian troops then moved into the Baltics, Stalin said to "protect" a Russian minority, to defend legitimate traditional interests in what was once part of a Russian empire, to take on local fascists, and in response to local demands. Now, 75 years later, the propaganda to justify Russian military occupation and expansion in Ukraine is identical. Troubling for the Baltics in 2014 is that some of the same rhetoric is being aimed at them from Russia today.

My roots and the experience of my family have taught me that democracy and freedom can be easily lost and must be vigorously defended. It is the driving force behind my becoming involved in politics. It has been one reason why I have been actively engaged in our government on responding to this issue and Russian aggression. However, regardless of one's roots, it is clear that members of the Conservative government, including Prime Minister Harper, and Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird, approach this issue from a principled position of acting to defend freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

I am proud of Prime Minister Harper's leadership in working with our allies to suspend Russia from the G-8, and to demonstrate a strong united front against Russia's reckless aggression. The only way Ukrainians can be defended against this aggression is through sound determination by those who really believe in, and are willing to defend, freedom and democracy. Our government has taken a lead in that regard. I wish every Canadian could see what I've seen at numerous international national summits, specifically, the way our prime minister commands a room. Now, as the senior statesman of the G-7, his arguments lead the way. In this particular crisis, it is no secret that Canada's arguments have been a catalyst for action. Critically, we have recognised the importance of using our leverage to bring allies along, resulting in a stronger and more unified response. Canada's public has also demonstrated strong support — among the strongest in the world — for the firm response provided by its government.

We need to ensure we do not see the same type of Russian violations to human rights and democracy that have occurred in the past. Our government will continue to stand with our allies and condemn Putin's military intervention in Ukraine.

Molotov signs the Nazi–Soviet non-aggression pact. Behind him are Ribbentrop and Stalin.

Pro-Russian protesters in the Donetsk People's Republic, proclaimed April 7.

Peter Van Loan is leader of the government in the House of Commons

Water and Sanitation: Everyone, Everywhere by 2030

By Peter Allen

Shamefully, millions upon millions of human beings today are unable to meet one of their most fundamental needs for survival: access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. What many Canadians take for granted for themselves and their pet cats and dogs remains inaccessible to children, women and men around the globe, and with terrible consequences.

Disease, caused by dirty water and the unsafe disposal of human waste, is the second biggest global killer of children under the age of five. Diarrhea alone claims the lives of about 500,000 children every year. Think about it: The equivalent of all the children in five local grade schools suffer and then die *every single day* because of this completely preventable disease.

In economic terms, the crisis costs African and Asian countries up to six percent of their GDP annually; in Sub-Saharan Africa, this amount is more than the total amount of aid flowing to the continent each year. Productivity is sapped by preventable water-and sanitation-related illness, which fills half of the world's hospital beds at any given time.

What's clear is that the global water and sanitation crisis is one of the most fundamental public health challenges facing the developing world today. It is a crisis that hinders progress in nearly every area of development, from economic growth and gender equality to child and maternal health.

What these statistics hide, however, is a heartbreaking and shocking state of affairs, the impact of which can only be truly understood once lived or witnessed firsthand. It is a crisis that overwhelms the senses and causes immeasurable human suffering day in and day out.

Let's for a moment dispense with the euphemism "lack of sanitation" and call it what it really is: "no toilets." In the absence of one of the most basic things that human dignity demands, people do their business wherever they can manage a moment's privacy: by the roadside, in the ditch, behind the bushes, on the riverbank.

WaterAid works in partnership with a number of local organisations in the slums of Dhaka, Bangladesh, to help poor communities gain access to communal water-points and latrine blocks. The water-points are connected to the mains water supply provided by the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority.

In the absence of the luxury of a flushing toilet, or in many cases any means of separating human waste from daily life, human fecal matter can come to contaminate their entire community. Human feces contaminating water supplies contributes to 1 in 10 of the world's communicable diseases. It's not surprising given that one gram of feces, the weight of a paperclip, can contain 10 million viruses, 1 million bacteria and 1,000 parasites.

In many of the world's urban slums, rivers relied upon as primary sources of drinking water are turned into little more than sewage channels, or giant toilets, bubbling with methane gas. "Flying toilets," plastic bags filled with feces, litter streets, attracting flies, baking in the sun and emitting foul odors that cause one's eyes to water. In rural areas, residents, especially women, seek privacy behind bushes or wait to relieve themselves under cover of darkness — a practice that places them at risk of attack and rape.

In all cases, lack of toilets and clean drinking water traps people in a pervasive cycle of poverty. In the words of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon: "Achieving sanitation and water for all may not be cost-free, but it will set people free."

Today, there is a global movement afoot — one that has the potential to relegate one of the world's most lethal public health emergencies to the history books. It is a movement fuelled by collaboration, supported by indisputable evidence and driven by a singular vision of a world

WATERAID/CHARLIE BIBBY/ FINANCIAL TIMES

where everyone everywhere has his and has her fundamental right to water and sanitation met. This is a movement working towards a deadline of 2030.

With a broad cross-section of development actors throwing their weight behind this vision for the post-2015 development agenda, with a burgeoning political will catalysed by the "Sanitation and Water for All" partnership and with a growing interest from the general public, we believe this is a vision whose time has come.

Looking back

Fourteen years ago, world leaders representing 189 nations met in New York to make an unprecedented commitment to the eradication of extreme poverty by 2015. Eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established, each with a clear target and timeline, together intended to build a more equitable, secure and sustainable future for all people.

Among these goals were ambitious targets to reduce by half the proportion of people living without access to improved sources of drinking water and basic sanitation facilities.

The global target for safe water access was among the first MDGs to be met. In a 2012 announcement, the United Nations went further, to say that over the past two decades, more than two billion people had gained access to safe water. This is a great testament to the concerted efforts of a great many who have recognised water as fundamental to fighting global poverty. It demonstrates the power of setting ambitious, yet achievable, development goals.

Improvements to safe water access, however, have been massively uneven between and within countries, with the poorest communities in Sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania lagging far behind. Also compounding the crisis are the pressures of increased urbanisation, rapidly growing populations, competition for finite water resources and the effects of climate change. A total of 748 million people — many of them the poorest of the poor — still have no improved sources of drinking water.

Progress toward the MDGs' sanitation target has been lagging dangerously behind, and at current rates of progress, the target will likely be missed by half a billion people. Put another way, if current funding and planning trends continue, the MDG target for sanitation will not be met in Sub-Saharan Africa for another 150 years. Today, more than 2.5 billion people — more than one in every three individuals — lack access to adequate toilet facilities. And one billion people openly defecate where they can. These are shocking statistics for 2014.

Despite compelling evidence of their health and economic benefits, water and sanitation services have suffered from a lack of political attention:

- Globally, in 2012, the total amount of development aid for water and sanitation remained below 2002 levels despite the growing need;
- Investments continue to pale in comparison to many other sectors, such as education and agriculture;
- Aid has been poorly targeted with most channelled to those who need it least;
- More than 30 percent of foreign aid pledged to the sector between 2002 and 2010 was never actually paid by countries and agencies that made the commitments.

What's clear is that progress has been made, but efforts must be redoubled.

Looking ahead

With the 2015 MDG deadline looming and the "post-2015 development agenda" consultations in their final hours, a critical window of opportunity has opened and a new vision is being touted: Universal Access to Water and Sanitation by 2030.

It is a vision that is ambitious and achievable. It has the backing of a growing global critical mass, including 60 organisations worldwide, ranging from foreign ministries and leading academic institution to multilateral organisations and civil society groups. It's a call-to-action that also resonates with concerned citizens around the globe, as evidenced by a recent petition signed by more than two million people.

The momentum could be felt on April 11, as UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and World Bank President Jim Yong Kim opened proceedings at the Third Sanitation and Water for All high-level meeting of the partnership in Washington, D.C. They warned that failure to address this sanitation and water crisis will hinder efforts to eradicate poverty. The meeting, attended by government ministers representing more than 50 countries, produced in excess of 250 commitments to work toward universal access to water and sanitation.

Achieving this new vision won't come easily. It will require developing country and donor governments to increase their financing for water and sanitation; it will require us all to get better at making projects more sustainable; and it will require that we move beyond serving those who

WATERAID/ JON SPAULL

At this Ghanaian site, WaterAid worked with Rural Aid, a partner organisation, to hand-dig a well that is now at the centre of the community whose natural water source completely dries up between September and May.

are easiest to reach, to include all those who are living in remote areas, or who find their access limited by disability, gender or ethnicity.

Above all, it will require an unprecedented level of co-ordination: A multi-partner approach that can tap into the expertise of leading international organisations, empower communities to demand their rights, develop innovative relationships with socially responsible global corporations and funders and work to overcome impediments at all levels of government.

Progressive moves

At WaterCan, an Ottawa-based water and sanitation charity, we knew that this demanded change on our part, as well.

So, with this bold new vision of universal access by 2030 in mind, WaterCan has joined forces and become the Canadian member of WaterAid's international federation, the world's leading water and sanitation charity. By streamlining our operations, speaking with a unified voice and consolidating our expertise, we will be able to magnify the scope and impact of our work, while making the most effective use of every charitable dollar.

WaterCan could have continued on its path of delivering solid results as it has for the past 27 years, but given our experience, our skills and our passion for our mission, the rare opportunity to have a much, much larger poverty-fighting impact was impossible to pass up. And, at the end of the day, what matters most is our ability to do more good for more people in more places.

WaterAid works in 27 countries across Africa, Asia, the Pacific region and Central America. Since 1981, WaterAid has reached 17.5 million people with safe water and, since 2004, 12.9 million people with sanitation. As the Canadian member of WaterAid, WaterCan will contribute to the global federation's current goal to assist 25 million people directly with access to safe water and sanitation, and to influence policies and practices of government and service providers to reach a further 100 million.

WaterAid works with local partners to help communities gain access to safe water and sanitation. WaterAid uses only practical technologies and makes sure that the right skills exist in the community so that they can keep equipment working long into the future.

By working with local partners in developing countries, WaterAid is able to invest in the future of local communities so they can continue their good work. This is an essential part of our work, as we believe that local ownership and participation lie at the heart of progressive and sustainable development.

At this rural commune in Madagascar, WaterAid is working with Miarintsoa Association, a partner organisation, on a project that will feed 17 community water points.

Yet the sheer scale of the crisis means we can't solve it alone. So, WaterAid uses its experience and research, and works with communities to influence decision-makers to make safe water and sanitation a priority.

WaterCan joining forces with WaterAid to become WaterAid Canada is a critical strategic step toward profoundly increasing our effectiveness in ending the water and sanitation crisis. It is a coming-together in support of a vision that can be achieved — and achieved in our lifetime.

WaterAid in Ivato, Madagascar: Change through direct-service delivery

On the island of Madagascar, off the east coast of Africa, more than half the population of 30 million has no access to safe water and only 11 percent have a toilet to use. The resulting impact on health and productivity has been staggering, including the deaths of 4,000 children every year from diarrhea caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation.

The impact of safe drinking water and basic sanitation is nowhere more evident than in Ivato, a forgotten village in the Ambohimanambola commune, located in the Betafo district in the highlands of Madagascar.

Here, the promise of water and sanitation gave way to remarkable efforts on the part of village residents that have ultimately connected Ivato to the world and given future generations a chance at a much brighter future.

"Nobody noticed our situation before the project came. We were isolated in our own corner … quite far from the municipality in Ambohimanambola," explains Jean Randriatahiry, a 25-year-old teacher at Ivato public school. "With no toilets or clean water facilities, we used to face many difficulties every day. Pupils could not concentrate in class as they were thirsty and hungry. There were always children missing from school every day due to diarrhea and other health problems. It was really hard to teach here and I was on the verge of giving up."

Not a single one of Mr. Randriatahiry's 27 Grade 5 students passed the national CEPE exam (or Certificate of Primary Studies) in 2012, a discouraging result that was repeated almost annually. The shockingly low primary graduation rate from Ivato limited young people's job prospects and fuelled a pervasive cycle of poverty from which few could hope to escape.

WATERAID/ERNEST RANDRIARIMALALA

Bringing clean water and sanitation to Ivato didn't come easily, but residents rose to the challenge.

Given Ivato's extremely isolated location, villagers, parents and children first needed to construct a five-kilometre road so building materials could be delivered. This three-month-long effort was followed by digging pipelines for the new gravity-fed scheme to feed multiple water points throughout the village. Community members then also actively participated in letting people know the health hazards associated with open defecation, led by empowered local community agents. This has resulted in dozens of households in Ivato building basic toilets, supported by a local woman who has been trained to make and sell "sanplat slabs" to safely cover their latrine pits.

"They are really proud of what they have done so far," Mr. Randriatahiry says. "Since we got water and sanitation in our village and in our school, the situation is dramatically changing. Now the boys and girls can drink safe water at any time in school and at home and I've even noticed that their concentration is much better now in class."

Since completion of the project, school enrolment has risen from 86 to 130. Not only are parents more likely to send their children to school, they have also taken a greater interest in fostering a vibrant and healthy school environment. Parents, teachers and students have received training on multiple uses of water for the garden and a fish pond, and are in the process of creating a school feeding program to fight against hunger.

"For me, and I think for everyone here in Ivato, this water and sanitation project has opened doors and helped us develop in a number of ways," Mr. Randriatahiry says. "We can now produce more crops, we can sell those crops because we now have roads and we can ensure the future of our children. We now have what we lacked since the village was born."

In 2013-2014, WaterAid supported six fokontanys (municipal offices), including Ivato, through the construction of four wells and three gravity-fed schemes that ultimately feed 17 community water points. In addition, more than 300 household toilets have been constructed.

WaterAid in Dhaka slums:
Creating change through influence

The urban population in Bangladesh is growing at an astounding rate of eight percent every year. Many of these teeming masses migrating from rural to urban areas find their new homes in wretchedly overcrowded and impoverished slums such as those found in the capital of Dhaka.

Here, people with no official address have no legal right to a water connection. This leaves more than 90 percent of Dhaka's slum-dwellers relying on illegal water traders known to charge as much as a quarter of a typical slum-dweller's meagre income.

Dhaka is the only city in Bangladesh with a piped sewage system, but even there, only 17 percent of residents have access to it. During monsoon season, rainfall turns streets in the slums and low-lying areas into rivers of open sewage, contaminating water and food sources and seeping into homes. The resulting diseases are responsible for 24 percent of deaths in Bangladesh.

WaterAid has worked to address these appalling water and sanitation conditions since 1986. This past year alone, 284,000 people gained access to safe water and 670,000 to improved sanitation as a result of WaterAid's efforts.

Construction of locally appropriate water and sanitation facilities is only part of WaterAid's role in effecting change in Bangladesh. Influencing government policy to leverage even greater results has been high on the NGO's agenda in Bangladesh and globally.

In 2008, WaterAid and its local partner organisation secured a landmark decision by the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (DWASA). Compelled by a strong business case advanced by WaterAid, the DWASA changed its policy to recognise people living in slums as legitimate users of public water facilities. Prior to its adoption, NGOs were required to act as intermediaries or guarantors of slum-dwellers wishing to apply for a water connection. Needless to say, water access has been accelerated as a result.

WaterAid has also been instrumental in supporting the development of the government's national sanitation strategy, the result of which has been a remarkable 35-percent reduction in open defecation between 2003 and 2010. This success has served as an inspiration to many others around the world.

WaterAid and HSBC in Ghana:
Creating change through partnerships

In 2012, the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited in Dohani-Yepala, released compelling new evidence of the economic value of water. A report, prepared for HSBC by Frontier Economics, found that universal access to water and sanitation would amount to a $220-billion economic gain worldwide, with every $1 invested generating a $5 economic return.

Against the backdrop of these new findings, HSBC announced a $100-million, five-year water program to tackle the world's water challenges.

WaterAid is among three global charitable partners selected to execute HSBC's ambitious mandate. Over five years, WaterAid, with the support of HSBC, will reach 1.1 million people with safe water and 1.9 million with sanitation in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Nigeria and Ghana.

In Dohani-Yepala, northern Ghana, the life-changing impact of HSBC's investment is now being felt and lived by residents every day. In particular, it has had significant impact on the health and well-being of women, children and youth who, prior to the intervention, collected water from a nearby dam they shared with local livestock.

At one time, the collection and treatment of locally available water sources dominated the lives of local women and children. "At night, we couldn't even sleep because whilst sleeping, we were thinking of where to get water from the next morning," explained Rahi Mustapha. As a mother, she worried often about the health of her children, suspecting that the reddish-brown water drawn from the dam was causing their high temperatures and vomiting. Shockingly, at one time, residents continued to collect water from the dam for several days before realising a dead body was floating in it.

In late 2012, Ms Mustapha and her neighbours celebrated the inauguration of a new water kiosk that got safe water flowing in Dohani-Yepala for the first time. "The pipe water has given me peace of mind," she says. "Everything will be much easier now that I don't have to travel far for water."

Although life is still difficult for residents, a heavy burden has been lifted, giving way to improved health and productivity. WaterAid's partnership with HSBC continues to effect change in communities throughout Ghana, with an aim of reaching 120,000 people with safe water and more than 80,000 with sanitation by 2017.

Peter Allen is CEO of WaterAid Canada (formerly WaterCan).

VARGKLO

The scourge of malaria

Successes in curbing the disease are many, but 600,000 people still die every year.

Story and photographs by Don Cayo

Simple bed nets, treated with insecticide, are the single-most powerful weapon against malaria. Their widespread adoption in northern Liberia, for example, has reduced the infection rate in children from more than 60 percent just a few years ago to less than 30 percent today.

Imagine a city the size of Vancouver, teeming with life, where 90-plus percent of the inhabitants are very young children. Now try to envision the horror of this place if everyone in it were dead.

This mental exercise dramatises, in the first case, the striking success of global efforts over the last 12 years to rein in killer malaria, and in the second, the daunting scope of the challenge that lies ahead. The benign image is of the 600,000 or so annual survivors who wouldn't be here but for the inroads made since 2002 to prevent and cure the parasitic infection that's spread by mosquitoes throughout much of the developing world. The latter gut-wrenching image depicts the 600,000 who still die each year.

The success to date is thanks to many factors — billions of dollars from governments and private donors, better and better-targeted insecticides, effective environmental measures, easy and cheap diagnosis, new medicines, education on how to prevent malaria and when to seek treatment, community empowerment to ensure people get the prophylactics and care they need. And it will take at least as large an arsenal — with luck, bolstered by a promising vaccine — if the fight is to end.

The catalyst and guiding hand for much of the progress, and no doubt a vital player for the future, is the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. It has not only funded billions of dollars worth of work on several fronts since its first grants in April 2002, it has also marshalled political will around the world, focused prevention and treatment initiatives, and co-ordinated research to a degree never seen before.

The Global Fund's role was one of my interests last fall when I set out on a round-the-world research trip, supported by my employer, *The Vancouver Sun*, and funded by a grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. At every stop — the funding and research hubs of Washington and Geneva, and the fieldwork centres in Northern Liberia, Northern Namibia, Western Kenya, the Indian border region of Bangladesh and the remote hills of an off-the-beaten-path Philippine island — the depth and breadth of its influence became ever-more apparent. So did the complexity of the challenge — how to stay

a step ahead of the parasites' and mosquitoes' ability to evolve, the dicey politics of cross-border approaches and the cost of not getting this right, the need for adaptable approaches in different cultural and geographical contexts or as infection rates rise or fall.

Wildly varying results in different countries — close to extirpation in some, but stalled or worsening in others — demonstrate that today's tools and techniques can work, but only if they're well implemented.

"Theoretically, we could eliminate malaria," says Carl Lowenberger, a Simon Fraser University professor who has for 30 years worked to understand malaria vectors. And yet… new breeding sites can be created by something as simple as cows leaving footprints in the mud during a rainstorm, he said. Proven medicines and insecticides can lose their punch at least as rapidly as new ones can be developed. Funders tend to lose interest over the long haul. Successful anti-malaria programs require regional co-ordination and co-operation — rare commodities in places rife with national or tribal tensions. And anti-malarials even become a weapon of war, withheld by some governments at times to make it more difficult for rebels to get the upper hand.

"So you've got economics, you've got politics, you've got technology," Dr. Lowenberger says. "I don't think we'll eradicate this disease in my lifetime."

Mosquitoes usually get the blame for spreading malaria, but humans are also complicit, and our forebears helped turn the disease into the scourge it is today. Although the malaria parasite, a protozoan called plasmodium, has existed for at least 50 millennia, it didn't become common until about 10,000 years ago. That was the dawn of agriculture, when people started living in larger, more settled groups. Such big pools of human hosts, with our nourishing blood and livers, are vital to the species' life cycle — the one-celled parasites reproduce only in human bodies and mosquitoes can't infect new victims unless they bite someone whose blood already carries plasmodia.

Today, malaria is a tropical disease, but until less than a century ago, it was also found in much of Europe and North America. Variants of the anopheles mosquito — the kind that carries the parasite — remain common across Canada and in most temperate countries, but good public health measures have extirpated the parasite. So malaria is no longer endemic in developed countries, though imported cases pop up occasionally.

Most variants of mosquitoes that carry the parasite are night-time or early-morning biters that can be foiled — or killed — by insecticide-treated bed nets.

There are parasite variants, too, the most lethal being plasmodium falciparum. All variants are tiny, too small to be seen with the naked eye, but when their manic reproductive cycle takes hold inside a human body, the results are catastrophic. Infected people get sick — chills, fever, sweats, fatigue. Without treatment, especially if victims are small children with yet-to-develop immune systems, many die.

A simple and fast diagnostic test that can be administered by minimally trained villagers has greatly reduced the problem of wasting expensive treatments on people who had some other kind of fever. All it takes is a drop of blood and a low-cost test strip.

In addition to the horrific death toll, the economic cost is huge. Hundreds of millions of working days are lost in scores of countries when workers fall ill or stay away from their fields or off the job to care for sick children.

And health is inextricably connected to education and economic progress.

"In a village where malaria is endemic, life expectancy goes down," says Sir Fazle Abed, the founder and head of BRAC, a multi-faceted, Bangladesh-based NGO that has grown into one of the largest development agencies on Earth. "If half the time I'm sick, my productivity will go down, and I'll always be a poor person. All kinds of other deprivations will happen because of my poverty, and each deprivation will mean I can never get out."

Rosemin Kassam, an associate professor at UBC's School of Population and Public Health, who has worked on malaria-related issues in Uganda and elsewhere, says the early impact of malaria on children can drag them down for life.

"Even if they don't die, they're likely to be left with some kind of morbidity. It can be significant — paralysis, brain damage and retardation, a lot of negative consequences. Even just carrying the parasite can create anemia, which can make it difficult to sit in school and concentrate."

Malaria doesn't only strike the poor — most malaria workers interviewed for this series, even professionals well paid by their countries' standards, had bouts of it themselves and had seen it in their families. Yet the rich places — southern Europe, Washington D.C., the U.S. South, even Ottawa — eliminated it years ago.

The Global Fund aims to turn the tide in places where malaria remains endemic by not only co-ordinating prevention and cures, but also by covering much of the cost.

These costs are big when you add them up. Fifty-four donor governments have given or pledged more than $30 billion since the fund's inception, and private

sector partners, most notably the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, have added hundreds of millions more.

But individual interventions are cheap. The international benchmark for cost-effectiveness of health programs is $150 per year of healthy life, and a British study estimates that with malaria this cost is between $8 and $110 — depending on the location and distribution complexities — for insecticide-treated bed nets, or $89 for drugs to treat diagnosed cases.

The best tactics vary around the world, but every malaria-control program shares three key elements: Cheapest and best is prevention. This may include low-tech environmental measures — things such as clearing brush around water sources where mosquitoes breed or homes where victims sleep. But the most effective component is insecticide-treated bed nets, often accompanied by spraying walls. Various insecticides are used, even highly effective DDT in a handful of countries that haven't banned it yet. Treated nets and sprayed walls provide double-barrelled protection. The obvious benefit is preventing sleeping people from being bitten. The not-so-obvious plus is that, even if a mosquito doesn't die until after it has bitten, at least it won't live long enough to bite again. This is significant because mosquitoes don't carry the parasite unless they bite somebody who has it. So a mosquito that dies after biting once is not a danger.

The second essential element is diagnosis, which has become much easier and more reliable than in the past. The Global Fund's promotion and widespread distribution of new rapid diagnostic tests — strips that react to a drop of a patient's blood — mean even minimally trained volunteers can get accurate results. This is a major advance. Previously, every fever was assumed to be malaria, which meant expensive treatments were often wasted on people who needed different interventions.

The final step is treatment. This is also simpler, thanks to new combination drugs. Precise combinations vary from region to region and are changed as necessary to combat any resistance that develops in the parasite.

But insecticides and drugs face moving targets. Mosquitoes develop resistance to sprays and parasites become drug-resistant in alarmingly short order.

The parasite, in particular, is genetically primed to adapt, says Dr. Chris Ockenhouse, senior scientist with the PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative in Washington, D.C.

He notes that while viruses typically comprise a couple of dozen proteins, the complex malaria parasite has 5,000. Its life-cycle includes six unique environments — three inside mosquito carriers and three in a human host — so it's inherently adaptable.

Thus, widely used medicines rapidly lose their punch as new generations of parasites become immune.

For researchers pursuing the holy grail of an effective vaccine, the question is whether this adaptability will shorten the useful life of what they come up with. It may not, Dr. Ockenhouse said, because drugs and vaccines work differently. Drugs attack the infecting agents, so any parasite not killed will propagate its drug resistance. Vaccines, however, stimulate the body's immune system to protect itself and don't interact with the invader. So if parasites survive, it's because of the person's weak immune response, not the parasite's genetic resistance.

Several potential vaccines are under development, but only one — a Glaxo SmithKline product targeting early stages of a malarial infection — has undergone somewhat successful trials and regulatory approval is being sought.

The most recent trials ran at 11 sites in seven African countries and focused on young children — six to 12 weeks in some cases, and five to 17 months in others. The best results were for the older children, who enjoyed roughly 50-percent protection for at least 18 months. This doesn't mean half the vaccinated children never get malaria. Rather, they experience only half as many bouts of malaria as the unvaccinated — perhaps an average of two a year instead of four.

These results fall well below the performance of vaccines for most diseases, but for Dr. Walter Otieno of the Kombewa Clinical Research Centre near Kisumu, Kenya, they're heartening.

For one thing, vaccination halves the risk of a protected child's death or disability. For another, like every preventive measure, it shrinks the reservoir of human carriers who can infect mosquitoes that will, in turn, infect other humans.

So, Dr. Otieno thinks the vaccine should be rolled out for general use, and soon.

Yet 50-percent efficacy doesn't look so good to many drug researchers working to refine artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACTs), which cures virtually all cases if victims are treated in time. (Artemisinin is isolated from the sweet wormwood plant Artemisia annu, a Chinese

Meticulous record-keeping is a key part of the work being done in the area around Kisumu in Western Kenya. Malaria is highly endemic in the region, which is one of nine sites worldwide where field trials of a promising malaria vaccine have been conducted.

BRAC GETS GLOBAL LEADERS' ATTENTION

Could a Global Fund model work to combat another great global scourge — the plight of 290 million children who don't go to school?

Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, a Bangladeshi philanthropist whose huge-scale accomplishments include providing basic education to more than 10 million poor children, thinks it can. Mr. Abed is founder and chairman of BRAC, which, over 41 years, has grown into one of the world's largest non-profits, though it's little-known in the West.

Now he's thinking even bigger, pitching the establishment of a Global Fund for Education. And many world leaders' doors are open to this tireless 77-year-old.

Gordon Brown, the British Labour leader and former prime minister, was among the first to back the idea, Mr. Abed said late last year.

"He estimates that we need about $3 billion right now to get all the children to school."

This is approximately a tenth of what the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has, or will soon have, spent in total, in a little more than a decade.

"People think you have to have an expensive building to have a school," Mr. Abed said. "You don't."

Mr. Abed built BRAC on a few basic principles — huge-scale thinking, cost-effective spending, evidence-based planning and close monitoring of implementation strategies that reflect his intolerance for cutting corners or corruption.

Last year, BRAC built and staffed 2,000 one-room schools in Dhaka alone. They're dotted throughout the myriad slums in and around the metropolitan area of 54 million.

BRAC also runs many other programs. For example, its micro-lending totals more than $1.1 billion US in loans to 4.5 million borrowers. It employs more than 120,000, mostly female health workers, and it has enrolled 312,000 girls in empowerment programs.

In the past decade, BRAC has expanded geographically. It now runs active programs in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Liberia, Tanzania, Uganda and Haiti.

"A lot of countries think you need to be economically strong to invest in education," Mr. Abed said. "I think they ought to invest in education to become economically strong."

— By Don Cayo

medicinal herb used for 2,000 years as an anti-malarial, among other applications.)

Viollaine Dallenback, the Geneva-based communications co-ordinator for the international Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (DNDI), is more concerned with the push to find drug combinations that stay a step ahead of the parasite's ability to adapt. Another key goal is a one-pill therapy to replace the current three- to 24-pill treatments, both of which tempt patients to take fewer than they need so they can hoard the rest for a possible subsequent bout.

Of course, the question of cost complicates any decision, whether dealing with the vaccine or a new drug, about when to start using a new product and on what scale. Massive rollouts are cheaper per dose, but, as DNDI executive director Bernard Pecoul points out, they may also trigger the development of resistance in the parasite.

And cost, ironically, becomes a bigger issue as countries or regions get closer to eliminating the disease.

In highly endemic places such as the jungle villages of Liberia, the biggest challenge isn't figuring out who's ill or what to do about it. It's laying hands on drugs to treat the disease in a place where the fragile supply chain is often disrupted by dishonesty or incompetence. So the lucky get three pills to take — usually all they need — and the unlucky are left to suffer, or die.

By contrast, on the dusty plains of northern Namibia, where after a decade-plus of progress authorities dare to hope they're on the cusp of eliminating the disease, a now-rare episode of malaria triggers a substantial response. First, the victim gets prompt and supervised treatment. Then a team moves in to trace the source of the infection, and to test and, if necessary, treat family members and close neighbours who may also have been exposed.

In northern Liberia, where the parasite used to infect as many as two of every three children at any given time and may still infect as many as one in four, there are still frequent stock-outs caused by logistical difficulties in getting medicines to remote jungle villages and/or outright theft so supposedly free medicines can be sold in the market. In northern Namibia, where the disease has been reduced to a handful of cases a year, free and effective health care is provided even for visiting Angolans, who cross the border in considerable numbers to get better quality care than they can get at home.

"So getting close to elimination is expensive," said Chris Lourenco, who heads the Clinton Health Access Initiative's malaria program in Namibia. "When you find a problem, you have to carpet-bomb it."

This child is miserably ill with a confirmed case of malaria, but she's one of the lucky ones in northern Liberia. In a timely manner, her mother has taken her to a clinic that has the drugs she needs, and her chances of a full recovery are excellent.

This brings up what former British Columbia NDP MP Svend Robinson, who now works from Geneva to co-ordinate Global Fund relations with governments around the world, sees as the big challenge. It's to keep focused on — and financially committed to — finishing the job rather than using early successes as an excuse to ease off.

Another former Liberal British Columbia MP Dr. Keith Martin, who now heads the Washington-based Consortium of Universities for Global Health, agrees that maintaining the will is key.

"We know how to prevent malaria deaths and disability," he said. "Yet we still have 650,000 people a year dying from malaria. If we know what to do, why are they dying?"

Don Cayo is a columnist at *The Vancouver Sun*. Research for this article was supported by The Sun and financed by a grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

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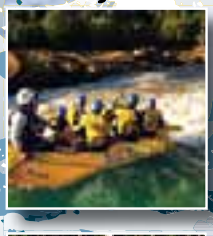






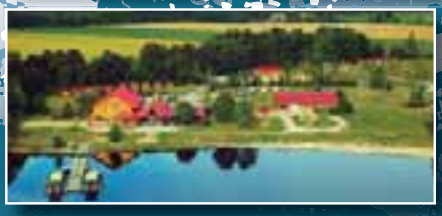

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The logo of a civilisation

By George Fetherling

GEORGE FETHERLING

As I write this, Greece remains the poor boy of the European Union and democracy teeters drunkenly in various places around the world. These facts draw me to remember the Parthenon in Athens — these plus Joan Breton Connelly's new book, *The Parthenon Enigma: A New Understanding of the World's Most Iconic Building and the People Who Made It* (Random House of Canada, $40). When architects and architectural historians speak of the Greek Revival style (picture the British Museum, say, or the New York Stock Exchange building), it is ultimately, or largely, the Parthenon, with its stunning proportionality and dignity, that is being paid tribute. Without doubt, the Parthenon, sitting atop the Acropolis in Athens, is one of the world's most famous and most influential structures.

It was built in the middle of the 5th Century BCE by the Greek leader Pericles. Leader as much as ruler perhaps, because the essence of the Greeks' democracy was that although a certain number of officials were elected to office, the majority were chosen by lottery (an idea that lingers in our own still-breathing version of democracy only in the way juries are selected).

When the Enlightenment was in full bloom and the study of ancient Hellenic culture mushroomed, everyone seemed to understand why the great temple was constructed: to honour Athena, the ancient goddess of war, justice and civilisation itself. Running round the whole circumference of the building, shaded by protruding cornices, was a bas-relief frieze that appeared to depict the Panathenaic festival, celebrated every four years to commemorate Athena's birth. The narrative sculptures ran 160 metres, like a giant marble storyboard, showing a parade of warriors, maidens, musicians, animals and so on.

When architectural historians speak of the Greek Revival style, it is often the Parthenon, with its stunning proportionality and dignity, that is being paid tribute.

As the centuries rolled on, this interpretation remained in force, though the building itself underwent many abuses and the stone narrative lost some of its continuity. At one point, the Parthenon became a Christian church; at another, a mosque. In the 17th Century, the Turks used it to store gunpowder and the Venetians bombarded it with cannon fire. Travellers engaging in the Grand Tour carried off bits as souvenirs.

Then came Thomas Bruce, the seventh Earl of Elgin. Between 1799 and 1803, when he was British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, he bankrupted himself buying large portions of the frieze, which he later had to sell at a loss to the British Museum, where, controversially, they remain. Other portions are in curatorial custody in Paris and Rome, but the Elgin Marbles in London, 75 metres of them, are the most important, partly because they

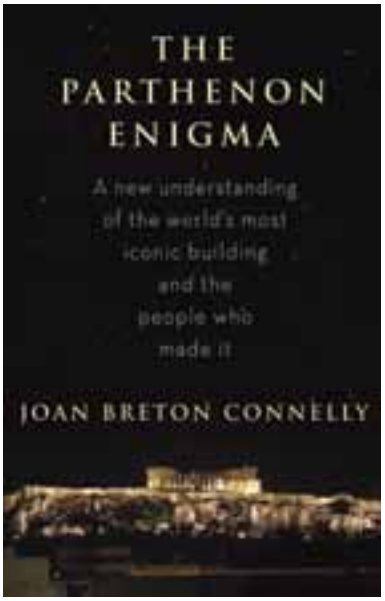
DREAMSTIME

include the section from the east side of the Parthenon over the main entrance. The scene was long thought to show (in fact, still is thought by most scholars to show) two adult figures, male and female, handing out robes to young celebrants. This is where Dr. Connelly comes in.

She is a classical archeologist and a MacArthur Fellow who teaches at New York University. In publishing *The Parthenon Enigma*, she has upset the unanimity of that judgment. To put the matter very briefly, *The Parthenon Enigma* argues that the purpose of the Parthenon was not simply to brag about democracy by showing the Panathenaic procession and thus depicting a part of Athenian daily life at the time. As she said to me over the phone when I called to interview her for *Diplomat*, "No Greek temple" — the Parthenon used to be merely the centrepiece of a large congregation of temples on the Acropolis — "shows anything taking place in what was the present moment." Rather, she believes that the male figure is King Erechtheus of legend and the female one is his queen, the priestess Praxithea, and that they are giving their children shrouds rather than robes. For the legend tells of how the Delphic Oracle told Erechtheus that one of his three daughters must be sacrificed to prevent the city from being overrun by enemies (whereupon, the tale continues, the two other sisters took their own lives in a show of solidarity). In Dr. Connelly's interpretation, this piece of the frieze was intended to honour the spirit of sacrifice that was another essential part of the larger abstraction of Greek democracy. "The public needed protection," she explained, "and one had to give to the civic good" even if that meant sacrificing one's life for the safety of the city-state. Not even kings, queens and princesses were exempt.

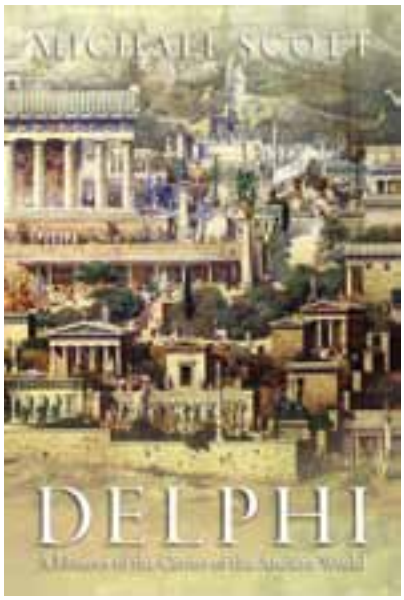
Her theory came about only after a long gestation. "Starting in the 1960s," she went on, "the study of ancient Greek religion was burgeoning, but it was viewed more as politics than as actual religion." It was during this decade that she learned of a certain mummy dating to the era when Egypt was under the rule of Greeks (Alexander the Great, Ptolemy and so on). The mummy had been in the Oxford University collection for generations. When unwrapped, it was found to contain a fragment of manuscript by the playwright Euripides, who was writing very close to the time when the Parthenon was built. Specialists in Paris were able to separate the manuscript intact from the cloth to which it had become affixed. This fragment, 125 lines, was part of an otherwise unknown text dealing with a Greek priestess who had three daughters whose lives she sacrificed to save her culture from invasion and ruin. No coincidence, says Dr. Connelly.

"Today, the idea of the ultimate sacrifice is something we associate with military life, not necessarily with civilian life, at least not in the same way or to the same degree," she told me. But this piece of manuscript was something different. In ancient cultures generally, there was little if any distinction between mythology and history, if indeed they were not downright inseparable. But Dr. Connelly thought she detected a true story in this little scrap of Euripides' work. All the more so, in fact, because Euripides, though he dealt with



gods and mythical figures as did the other ancient dramatists, portrayed them in a much more realistic way, as though he were using his characters to describe the life around him.

There's some potential irony here because it's possible that this key piece of the frieze could well have vanished through war or neglect if not for Lord Elgin, whose acquisitiveness a great many people, Greeks most of all, consider hideous kleptomania and downright cultural imperialism. Dr. Connelly says that he can't fairly "be judged by the behavioural standards of our own time, though reading Lady Elgin's letters on the subject—'I took three heads today'—is an appalling experience." Dr. Connelly, of course, favours the marbles' return to Greece so that



what she considers the greatest surviving work of art from the ancient world can be reconstituted.

The story of the Elgin Marbles and the British vogue for gobbling up ancient Hellenic art and bric-a-brac is told in another new work, *Delphi, A History of the Center of the Ancient World* (Princeton University Press, US$29.95) by Michael Scott, a classical archeologist widely known through his television documentaries. As for Dr. Connelly, she first went public with her conclusion about the frieze in a paper published in the *American Journal of Archeology* in 1996. "The article was highly controversial," she explained. "It had its followers, but few people in the field changed their minds. Elder scholars in particular found my work hard to embrace." She continued to pursue her idea through a number of avenues. One result was her book, *Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece* (Princeton, US$39.95). It argues that priestesses in particular, and women generally, played an even greater role in Athens and the other Greek city-states than has been supposed, especially in religious matters, and certainly were never second-class Athenian citizens (except, of course, in the sense that they didn't vote).

As for *The Parthenon Enigma*, an exceptionally elegant piece of prose, it deals with far more than just the enigma of the title. Dr. Connelly discusses everything from the geology of the Acropolis itself to how, by exuberant degrees, the Parthenon became such a universally recognised landmark — the logo of a civilisation, one might almost say. Today it is held together by titanium rods, which replaced the steel reinforcements installed in the 1920s and 1930s. A bit ragged round the collar and cuffs, to be sure, but a magnificent thing in and of itself. I've seen it only once. I was rushing through Athens, which was on fire at the time and full of troops and protesters, and I glanced up to see the great building illuminated with a warm yellow glow, as though flaunting its permanence and mocking the human affairs getting out of control down below.

A Canadian footnote. As governor general of what was then (1848–49) the Province of Canada, James Bruce, the eighth Lord Elgin, son of the dastardly collector, was a key figure in bringing about responsible government. But his decision to compensate francophones for losses incurred in the Rebellions of 1837–38 caused an anglophone mob to attack Parliament in Montreal and burn it to the ground. He later became high commissioner to China where he considered destroying the Forbidden City, but settled for stripping the art treasures from the Old Summer Palace and then setting the vast complex on fire.

VERY BRIEFLY, OTHER NEW BOOKS

What a surprise to find in Ali A. Allawi's book, *Faisal I of Iraq* (Yale University Press, US$40) that the co-founder of the Iraqi state was just as cunning, wise and charming as he was portrayed to have been by Alec Guinness in Sir David Lean's film *Lawrence of Arabia*. With help from Gertrude Bell, Winston Churchill, T.E. Lawrence and others, Faisal (1885–1933) was only the second person to free a Middle Eastern country from European colonialism (both British and French) — Egypt having become a republic previously. He was a nation-builder in every sense and a great proponent of Jews and Arabs living together peacefully. The author is an exiled Iraqi cabinet minister. By contrast, Zaid Al-Ali, a constitutional lawyer, shows, as though we needed reminding, what became of the dream in *The Struggle for Iraq's Future: How Corruption, Incompetence and Sectarianism Have Undermined Democracy* (Yale, US$35).

Robert D. Kaplan's works on geopolitics have been mentioned in these pages several times. His new book, *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific* (Random House of Canada, $31), coolly analyses the growing entanglement of a waxing China and a waning United States, not to mention the added uncertainties that Taiwan, Japan and the two Koreas have regarding the superpowers and one another. Mr. Kaplan does so with his characteristic thoughtfulness and readability, though, to my ears at least, there is always the *thwrap-thwrap* sound of black helicopters in the background. He sat on the Pentagon's defence policy board, works for a private global intelligence firm and is a senior fellow at one of those American think-tanks that are so much scarier than Canada's own more economically focused ones. (See Thomas Medvetz's *Think Tanks in America* — University of Chicago Press, US$25 paper — the most thorough, detailed and up-to-date survey of this nebulous world of so-called policy institutes.)

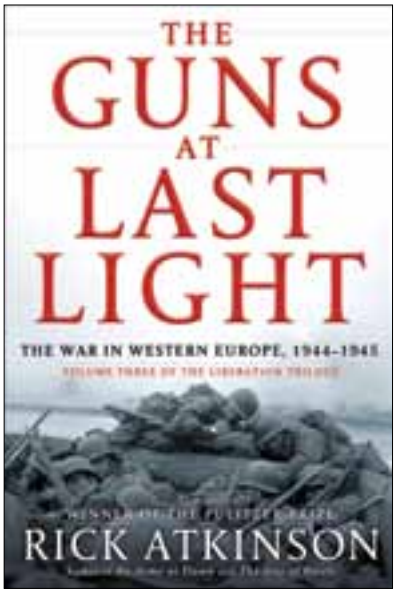
The sour relationship between Japan

and China in particular concerns much more than arguments over small disputed islands. China has never forgotten or forgiven the Japanese invasion of the 1930s, which began with the grabbing of Manchuria, then called Manchukuo. *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-Garde Propaganda in Manchukuo* by Annika A. Culver (UBC Press, $32.95 paper) tells how Japan tried to make itself seem attractive to those it overpowered by using graphics that emphasized how modern and contemporary Japanese society was. *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves* by Peipei Qiu and others (UBC Press, $32.95 paper) includes often gruesome first-hand accounts of how the Japanese army forced Chinese women to become prostitutes — a subject still being argued about loudly in both countries today.

All readers of the *Economist* will have noticed the unsigned political column titled "Bagehot" — most of them, one imagines, without catching the reference. The feature is named in honour of Walter Bagehot (1826–77), the long-serving editor of the paper (the *Economist*, though a weekly magazine, always refers to itself as a newspaper, which it hasn't actually been for generations). He stamped his prose and everything else with his own zesty brand of 19th Century liberalism, suspicious of both intractable conservatives and radical reformers. His *Collected Works* embraced 15 volumes but he never wrote an autobiography or even a memoir. Now comes Frank Prochaska, an American historian cross-appointed to Yale and Oxford, who has written *The Memoirs of Walter Bagehot* (Yale, US$35), mimicking the real Bagehot's prose almost to perfection and synthesising what the living Bagehot probably would have said.

Churchill's First War by Con Coughlin (Raincoast Books, $31) refers to the incursion in Afghanistan during which the British failed to become the second western outsiders to conquer the place (Alexander the Great having at least partly secured some of it for a while). Some people believe that Sir Winston's first published book, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* (1898), was also the finest of his published works, having been composed before victory and old age made his prose rotund. His history of the Second World War in six fat volumes, not to mention the various supplementary works related to it, isn't much read any longer by the general public, though no one denies that such big wars should be examined at length. Three quite sizable volumes have been enough for the latest Second World War narrative history, the one by Rick Atkinson, late of the *Washington Post*.

Reviewers of Mr. Atkinson's first and second instalments, *An Army at Dawn* and *The Day of Battle*, published in 2002



and 2007, respectively, often praised his graceful writing style. Now comes the concluding part, *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Western Europe, 1944–1945*. Naturally enough, this one covers D-Day, the Battle of the Bulge and the Liberation of Paris. Writing about the last of these events, he mentions a bizarre little scene involving a pair of American soldiers (one imagines them as being like Willie and Joe, the characters in Bill Mauldin's cartoons — three-day beards and all). The two GIs approached Ernest Hemingway, who was covering the Allied advance for a New York magazine and had personally liberated the bar of the Ritz. They asked him to ghost-write love letters to their girlfriends back home in the States. And Hemingway agreed. Mr. Atkinson doesn't quote the letters, but one can easily imagine what they must have been like: "Madge, my love for you is like a river. Strong and fast and true. It is deep. It comes down from the mountains and runs through the countryside. It is fast." Good grief.

An expanded 20th-anniversary edition of George Fetherling's memoir *Travels by Night* has been published by Quattro Books.

O! Canada

By Anthony Wilson-Smith

We often say a particularly mature young person is "not as old as he or she seems." Canada, on the other hand, is not, by several important measures, nearly as *young* as it is often thought to be. Every July, we celebrate Canada Day, marking the confederation of the British North American provinces into Canada on July 1, 1867. However, our pre-Confederation history dates back thousands of years to the arrival of the first indigenous peoples. The most recent evidence was the discovery earlier this year of stone walls deep below the surface of Lake Huron that date back to the end of the Ice Age, about 9,000 years ago. In fact, indigenous peoples likely settled in what is now Canada thousands of years before that.

Other visitors and settlers arrived long after, but still many hundreds of years before Confederation. The first Norse settlement existed in L'Anse aux Meadows, Nfld., sometime between 990 BC and 1050. British and French settlers came much later — and have stayed much longer. The settlement of New France dates to 1534. An early British settlement was established in 1583 in what is now St. John's, Nfld.

Yet, even if we use 1867 as a benchmark, our history still pre-dates that of countries we think of as much older. What is now Germany, for example, was founded in 1871. Italy, established in 1861, is only six years older than Canada.

From 1879 until 1982, July 1 was known as Dominion Day — although that designation always had some detractors. The first formal attempt to change the name to Canada Day came in 1946 when a Québécois MP, Antoine Philéas Côté, tabled a private member's bill to rename Dominion Day as Canada Day. The Senate instead suggested a change to "National Holiday of Canada," but when it became impossible to achieve consensus, the status quo prevailed. After the passage of the *Constitution Act* in 1982, which fully and formally made Canada an independent nation, Dominion Day was renamed Canada Day.

Over the years, the scope and volume of celebrations have steadily grown, and the day-long events on Parliament Hill

The day-long Canada Day celebration on Parliament Hill often draws crowds of more than 100,000 people.

— the biggest of the venues countrywide — often draw more than 100,000 people, along with a television audience of many times that. At the same time, commemorative events and programs now extend beyond July 1 itself. For example, at our organisation, Historica Canada (www.historicacanada.ca), our Ottawa-based Encounters with Canada program holds a seven-day Experience Canada week open to new Canadians and permanent residents aged 14 to 17 at our Terry Fox Canadian Youth Centre, located close to downtown. This year's program, from June 29 to July 5, offers youth a window into Canadian history, culture and heritage through visits to Parliament Hill, a trip to a wildlife preserve and tours of other relevant sites in Ottawa and nearby. As with all our programs, it is fully bilingual. (For information, please see www.ewc-rdc.ca.)

We also support several important measures taken by the federal government to better promote Canadian history. These include the renaming and new content planned for the Museum of Canadian History (formerly the Canadian Museum of Civilization) in Gatineau, Que., and Canada History Week, which runs from July 1 to 7 each year. During this week, Canadians are encouraged, as the federal heritage department says, to "visit a museum, tour one of our great national historic sites, or speak to a veteran."

That's good advice for any time of the year. What matters most about Canadian history, after all, is not whether our country is considered young or old, but whether we keep learning and improving as we move toward the 150th anniversary of Confederation in 2017. On that note, Happy Canada Day!

Anthony Wilson-Smith is the president of Historica Canada.

The day the circuses came to town

By Laura Neilson Bonikowsky

When the steamship *Queen Victoria* sailed into Charlottetown Harbour on Sept. 1, 1864, she was the last to arrive at the party, bringing the delegation from the Province of Canada to one of the most significant events in Canada's history. One would expect that the ship's arrival would have been cause for a certain amount of pomp and celebration, perhaps a brass band, a few banners and a crowd waving and cheering. Such was not the case.

When the ship dropped anchor, the harbourfront was deserted. Prince Edward Island's colonial secretary, William Henry Pope, commandeered an oyster boat that was to be rowed out to meet the ship, sharing its interior with a barrel of flour and two jars of molasses. According to local lore, he greeted the future Fathers of Confederation seated on a pickle barrel. Finding no rooms in any of the 20 local inns, most of the delegates from the Province of Canada were accommodated aboard the *Victoria*.

The delegates' arrival took a back seat to a different sort of affair that was well-attended by the Island's citizenry and politicians. When the Charlottetown Conference began on Sept. 1, 1864, the conference and delegates — which included John A. Macdonald, Thomas D'Arcy McGee and George-Etienne Cartier — were overshadowed by the Slaymaker and Nichols' Olympic Circus, the first circus to visit Prince Edward Island in more than 20 years.

While the political circus that had descended on Charlottetown featured a marathon of speeches, protests, political manoeuvring, lobster lunches, champagne balls and resolutions, the Olympic Circus, in town for three days, offered acting dogs and monkeys, performing horses, and the Snow Brothers' daring balancing acts. The political conference — and the founding of our nation — went ahead, literally and with wonderfully balanced irony, with a dog-and-pony-show in the background.

Leading up to the conference, in the spring of 1864, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island contemplated a Maritime union. Prince Edward Island was not enthusiastic about losing its legislature in favour of a union, but the three provinces agreed to discuss the expediency of union. They didn't get further than appointing delegates to a conference to discuss the idea; Prince Edward Island insisted that the conference be held in Charlottetown, which was not acceptable to Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.

Meanwhile, in the Province of Canada (created by the legislated union of Upper and Lower Canada in 1840), the government lurched from one crisis to another as its dual parties failed to resolve its divisive issues. On June 23, 1864, with the Province deadlocked in its struggles between east and west, French and English, conservatism and liberalism, George Brown, leader of the Upper Canada Reform Party, suggested a federation that would include the Northwest or, if that failed, a federal union to remake the united Canadas.

Brown and Macdonald temporarily dropped their differences and agreed to explore a federal union. Governor general Lord Monck asked the Maritime lieutenant-governors if they would entertain the idea of permitting delegates from the Canadas to attend their conference to determine if a proposed union "may not be made to embrace the whole of the British North American Provinces."

A somewhat reserved, but favourable response was returned, which seemed to reinvigorate Maritime enthusiasm for a conference. It was quickly arranged by allowing Prince Edward Island to host it, with the date set for Sept. 1. The purpose of the conference remained to discuss Maritime union, but it was allowed that, if the delegates were so inclined, the Canadian suggestion would be considered. Ultimately, the Canadian delegation commandeered the agenda, subsuming Maritime union with the federal union. Newspapers of the day confirmed that the Canadian delegates presented a detailed plan for such a union.

For eight days, the politicians debated the merits of Confederation and partied hard at balls and banquets. On Sept. 8, the final ball of the Charlottetown Conference was held, spilling over to the next day. Although the conference delegates did not formally consider the Canadian plan, they conducted a general review and agreed to meet at the Quebec Conference the following month to discuss it officially and in detail. By the end of October 1864, the official proposals for the British North American union had been drafted.

Laura Neilson Bonikowsky is an Alberta writer.

Portuguese cuisine: a global mosaic

MARGARET DICKENSON

Those unfamiliar with Portuguese cuisine may understandably assume it is similar to that of Spain. And while many of the same ingredients are featured in both, Portugal's robust cuisine includes distinctively different recipes and cooking techniques that reflect a broad spectrum of terrain and climates and diverse historical influences over the centuries.

With two borders on the Atlantic Ocean plus the archipelago islands of Madeira and Azores, Portugal's seafood and fish reign supreme in local cuisine, Portuguese Ambassador José Fernando Moreira da Cunha, points out. However, each region's traditional cuisine is based on its terrain and the products available. The uniqueness of mainland Portugal and its cuisine, for example, is subtly different from that of the islands where the terrain and climate particularly differ.

Historically, with an emphasis on quality ingredients and limited equipment, simple recipes (many among them the most popular) are prepared in one pot. This said, for the most part, recipes are anything but plain. One significant feature of traditional Portuguese cuisine includes the use of unusual combinations of foods (e.g., pork with clams, trout with pork) that is directly rooted in that myriad of influences witnessed over millennia.

Phoenicians, as far back as 1700 BC, brought olive trees to Portugal. The Romans, intending to transform the Iberian Peninsula into a granary for Rome, introduced wheat as well as onions, garlic and grapes. Later, in AD 711, the Moors' invasion and their resulting grip on southern Portugal for hundreds of years resulted in the cultivation of rice and planting of orange, lemon and fig groves, while a Moorish prince forested an area in the Algarve with imported almond trees so he could enjoy the petal-covered landscape in spring. The ambassador recognises that "without question, the influence of the Moors has been profound." For example, desserts made with almonds, figs and eggs (a hallmark of the Moors) continue to be a favourite to this day.

In the mid-13th Century, after the re-establishment of the Christians and the clarification of the country's national borders (which are close to those of today),

Espetada de Carne (also known as grilled beef skewers)

LARRY DICKENSON

the Portuguese initiated their well-documented history as maritime explorers and colonialists. This proved to be the most critical influence in defining Portuguese cuisine. In the early 1400s, Prince Henry the Navigator built strong seafaring ships that headed off to discover better trade routes to the East. After exploring the coast of Africa, the ship returned from its maiden voyage with coffee, peppers and peanuts. In 1487, the Portuguese, being the first to sail around the Cape of Good Hope to the Far East, promptly initiated a strong and lucrative trade in spices, which also supplied the rest of Europe. The Portuguese, more so than any other people, accepted these new spices (cinnamon, curry, pepper, cloves and nutmeg), as well as chocolate, coconut and coconut cream. They adapted and enhanced their traditional dishes with these exciting new flavours.

Portuguese explorers turned west, discovered the New World and brought back squash, tomatoes, bell peppers, multiple varieties of chillies, potatoes, kidney beans, avocados, pineapples, corn, turkeys and more, including sugar from plantations in Brazil, making Portugal the focus of a culinary revolution in Europe.

Today all, including piri-piri (a spicy chili pepper), vanilla and saffron, remain an integral part of the Portuguese kitchen. And the ongoing obsession with Portugal's national dish — dried salted cod (*bacalhou*) — began when fishermen first harvested and preserved the fish off the coast of Newfoundland in the early 16th Century. It is said there are 365 ways to prepare *bacalhou*, one for every day of the year, but in reality, thousands exist. Most popular are *bacalhou à bras* (a mixture of shredded cod, fried potatoes, onions and scrambled eggs) and *bacalhou com natas* (a cod dish prepared much like a lasagna with layers of cod, onions, diced fried potatoes and loads of cream).

In coastal areas, grilled sardines (*sardinhas assadas*) and horse mackerel are also popular, as is a stew called *caldeirada,* which consists of other species of fish. And what a delight it is to witness the June 12 feast of St. Anthony when sardines are grilled in a carnival atmosphere (mainly using makeshift barbecues) along the streets and alleyways outside restaurants and homes. In Lisbon, the festival continues for the entire month of June — definitely great fun! I know — my husband, Larry, and I experienced it.

There are dozens of popular fish and seafood dishes. Many incorporate clams, cuttlefish (*chocos*) and in the south, *percebes* (translated as goose barnacles). *Percebes* look like unattractive thumb-size claws of some prehistoric creature, but despite their appearance, they are absolutely addictive. *Arroz de marisco*, a decadent seafood-rice combination with lobster, shrimp, crab and oysters, can be savoured at specialty seafood restaurants across the country.

Although fish and seafood dominate, the Portuguese also enjoy meat. Another national dish, *cozido à portuguesa*, a thick vegetable stew, uses several kinds of meat. Pork ranks as the most popular, cooked and served in various ways; however, the Alentejo is renowned for its pork and Tras-os-Montes for its cured meat. In the north, locals favour roasted suckling pig (*leitao assado*) and pork sausages (*chouriço* or *linguiça*). The town of Alcobacca in Estremadura province boasts its *frango na pucara* (jugged chicken and ham cooked in a covered casserole-type dish/pot), while Porto's signature dish since Henry the Navigator decided to conquer Ceuta in Morocco, has been tripe with green beans. To provision the expedition, the citizens of Porto slaughtered all their livestock, leaving only the tripe and intestines for themselves. Ambassador Moreira da Cunha frankly admits, "I am not a fan of strange animal parts; however, well-spiced, this

Margaret Dickenson in Lisbon, lending a hand to a local chef who's barbecuing sardines on the city's narrow streets.

LARRY DICKENSON

tripe dish is absolutely delicious — something extraordinary, something special."

Turning to the islands in the Atlantic, the Azores boasts a delicious stew, *cozido das furnas*, highlighting local products (grass-fed beef, *queijo da ilha* cheese and pineapple) and cooked using the Earth's volcanic heat. On the other hand, the Madeira Islands can lay claim to their famous black scabbard fish served with fried bananas, as well as to *espetada de carne*, seductive cubes of beef grilled over charcoal on laurel skewers (bay-leaf branches). (Note: This archipelago has the largest laurel forest in the world.)

Without question, the Portuguese appreciate their soup. They manipulate very basic ingredients — very often bread — to make exceptional soups suitable for any occasion. *Caldo verde* (a creamy-textured potato and shredded collard greens soup) is the most popular.

Each region prides itself on its own bread and cheese. Wheat and cornbread are favourites. Bread is on the table at almost every meal — it functions as a starter in restaurants — and, at times, a slice of bread serves as a plate. Portuguese cheeses are primarily made from sheep or goat milk with *queijo da serra*, of the Serra da Estrela mountains, being the best known Portuguese cheese, although *queijo de azeitao*, produced near Lisbon, also delights many a palate.

For centuries, sweets have been a prized part of Portuguese life. Along with cheese, familiar dessert choices include caramel custards, flans and cinnamon-flavoured rice pudding. However, the pastries created originally by 18th-Century nuns (and which generated income for them), continue to be outstanding and bear such playful names as *barrigas de freira* (nun's belly), *toucinho de céu* (bacon from heaven) and *papos de anjo* (angels' chins). Creamy, lemon-flavoured custard tarts, sprinkled with cinnamon or powdered sugar (*pasteis de nata/pasteis de bélem*) can only be described as remarkably delicious.

Portugal is renowned for its fortified wines (port from the Douro region and Madeira from the islands), served as an aperitif before or as a digestif after a meal (perhaps one featuring Madeira's legendary *espetada de carne*?) Yes, I am intrigued by this idea and have created my own version offering more discrete notes of bay leaf, counter-balanced by additions of ground nutmeg and cloves. So, to your good health. *A votre santé. Saude*!

Espetada de Carne
(Grilled Beef Skewers)

Makes 4 servings

1½ lb (675 g) beef tenderloin or striploin, cut into 1-inch (2.5 cm) cubes
1½ tsp (8 mL) pulverized* dry bay leaves (hard stems removed)
2 ½ tsp (13 mL) minced fresh garlic
1 1/3 tbsp (20 mL) olive oil (preferably garlic-infused)
1 tsp (5 mL) ground nutmeg
1/3 tsp (2 mL) crushed black peppercorns
Dash ground cloves
To taste salt
8 wooden skewers**
1 cup (250 mL) Lemon Mustard Sour Cream Sauce***

1. Place beef cubes in a resealable plastic bag.
2. In a small bowl, combine pulverized bay leaves, garlic, olive oil, nutmeg, pepper and cloves.
3. Add spicy olive oil mixture to beef, seal bag, turn bag to thoroughly and evenly coat beef cubes; refrigerate overnight or for at least 8 hours.
4. An hour before grilling, remove beef cubes from refrigerator, allowing them to come closer to room temperature.
5. Just before serving, loosely thread beef cubes onto skewers and season with salt. Place skewers of beef on a well-oiled preheated grill (medium to medium-high heat). Cook each of the four sides for about 35 to 40 seconds per side for medium-rare, or longer according to degree of doneness desired. Transfer skewers to a plate, cover with aluminum foil (shiny side down) and let beef rest for 5 minutes.
6. Serve grilled beef on garlic buttered rice with Lemon Mustard Sour Cream Sauce*** and garnish with sun dried olives and slices of fresh bell peppers.

* Use a spice or coffee grinder to pulverise the bay leaves.
** Before grilling meat, soak skewers in water for 2 hours to avoid burning.
*** To make 1 cup (250 mL) of Lemon Mustard Sour Cream Sauce, whisk together 1 cup (250 mL) of sour cream, 3 tbsp (45 mL) of Dijon mustard, 1 1/3 tbsp (20 mL) of fresh lemon zest and, if desired, a couple of drops of yellow food colouring.

Margaret Dickenson wrote the award-winning cookbook, *Margaret's Table — Easy Cooking & Inspiring Entertaining* (www.margaretstable.ca).

Off program: A summer ode to hops

PIETER VAN DEN WEGHE

Beer is the world's most consumed alcoholic beverage. It is so prevalent and has such deep historical roots that it's actually intertwined with the identities of several cultures. Not only does beer pair brilliantly with a great variety of foods, it also goes perfectly on occasions ranging from loud celebrations to quiet contemplative moments.

Yet, despite all that and more, beer is an underachiever. It's drunk in massive quantities, but beer appreciation is more limited. It is neither revered like a sparkling wine nor treasured like a brilliant vintage of Burgundy. It lacks the suggestion of sophistication and good pedigree that gin martinis and rare whiskies offer. Beer's relevance is too often summed up as an easy path to inebriation. Yet, that's changing. Thanks to a resurgence of microbreweries and craft beer, now is the perfect time to discover anew the many possibilities of this ancient drink.

Beer was first brewed 12,000 years ago in what is now modern-day Iraq. Beer-making is so ancient that it preceded pottery. Fermentation first occurred in woven baskets sealed with pitch and leather pouches. Though there have been permutations over the centuries, beer's basic recipe has remained. Cereal grains are heated to convert the grain's starches to sugar, and yeast converts the sugars to alcohol and carbon dioxide. Depending on the producer, the malted cereal grain for modern beer is usually barley, but can also include wheat, rye, corn or rice. Though now a common part of beer lingo, hops, a natural preservative that gives aromatics and bitterness to beer, is a relatively new addition to the recipe. It was only added about 1,000 years ago.

Ales and lagers are the two major types or categories of beer. Ales are called "top fermented" since the yeast rises to the top during a fermentation that takes place between room and cellar temperature. Ales are often fruitier, spicier and sweeter than lagers. They include pale ales, India pale ales, porters, stouts and steam beers.

Lagers were developed in Bavaria in the early 19th Century and are what's called bottom-fermented. When fermentation is cooled down (the Bavarians used ice-filled caves), yeast and other solids settle to the bottom of the brewing vessel. This allows the yeast to convert more of the grains' sugars, resulting in a taste that is generally crisper and drier than that of ales. The word lager is derived from "to store" in German. Originally, during the summer months, lagers were aged and preserved in cool caves. As such, the usage of hops was more restrained than with ales. Styles of lager include pilsner, Munchener and Bock.

Ottawa's Kichesippi Beer Co. produces a Bavarian Lager-inspired beer called Heller Highwater. It delivers a dry, crisp body with clean flavours of cereal malt and a delicate touch of hops. An excellent brew for warm summer days, the Heller is available at the brewery in a 1.89L growler-style bottle.

San Francisco Anchor Brewing's Liberty Ale is a delicious ale with a distinctively strong presence of hops. This beer, produced in 1975 to celebrate the bicentennial of Paul Revere's historic ride, is considered the first modern American India Pale Ale (IPA) brewed after prohibition. An excellent balance of hops and malt is made more complex with notes of citrus. It sells in 6-packs at the LCBO for $14.35.

From Microbrasserie Charlevoix in Baie-Saint-Paul, Que., comes a stunning Belgian-style IPA. The Sainte-Reserve Lupulus has a rich mousse and an excellent interplay of bitter, tart and sweet notes on the palette. The robust 8 percent alcohol/volume is incredibly well integrated. This impressive beer is for sale at the LCBO for $11.70 for a 750ml bottle.

Pieter Van den Weghe is the sommelier at Beckta dining & wine.

The UAE's multi-purpose residence

Photos by Dyanne Wilson

The stunning, high-ceiling front foyer greets visitors to the residence of Mohammed Saif Helal Al Shehhi and his wife, Aseela.

MARGO ROSTON

Ambassador Mohammed Saif Helal Al Shehhi is the third ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to live in the distinctive Rockcliffe home that overlooks charming Rockcliffe Park and the Ottawa River. The house was once the focus of gossip by the chattering classes as it was the first of the many über-sized homes that now dot the neighbourhood. Built on a corner lot on a slight rise, with a great view, it's fair to say that when Richcraft builder Kris Singhal constructed the custom-designed dream house in 1989, it was the first of its kind to dwarf neighbouring historic cottages.

The stone home is architecturally interesting because of the hill on which it is built. The front entrance is located on Birkenfels Road and appears to be two storeys. But its back entrance is one level below and opens onto Lisgar Road, where the entrances to the Danish Embassy and American residences are located.

The ambassador and his wife Aseela, who call Abu Dhabi home, have lived here for two years and have four small children, the youngest of whom is only six months old. So the first impression of a casual guest is of a homey place. The three older children are very much present, running around to tell their father all the news from school.

They seem in no way impressed by their elegant surroundings, the most obvious of which is the stunning, high-ceilinged front hall. A round table from Egypt sits on a small oriental carpet and is topped with a colourful flower arrangement in a gold and glass Italian vase. Two large white and gold vases, topped with greenery, flank a sweeping staircase that rises to meet a stained-glass window decorated with two large, bright peacocks. While some of the decor reflects the ambassador's previous postings in Paris, Geneva and Rome, the stained glass has been retained from the original house.

Three rooms line the north side of the

Ambassador Al Shehhi's favourite room is the family room with blue velvet couches, pictured on page 85.

Arab art and décor fill the residence.

This formal drawing room features gold and cream-coloured sofas and chairs with a tapestry motif, all from the UAE.

The family dining room seats 10 comfortably.

The upscale sunroom looks out into Rockcliffe Park to the Ottawa River.

The foyer from another angle.

The family room is a casual one, with large windows that look out into the yard.

The exterior of the home, in one of Rockcliffe Park's best locations, overlooks the Ottawa River.

The washroom has a basket filled with perfumes for guests to sample, a sign of Arab hospitality.

foyer; the first is the ambassador's favourite, he says. Blue velvet sofas grace the simply decorated family room, where a large TV invites the family to kick back and relax. From the window, you can see the large play set and slide in the side garden.

The room beside it was redecorated by Ambassador Al Shehhi and his wife, who turned it into a more feminine space, according to a staff member. A very formal drawing-room style is expressed with gold and cream-coloured chaises and chairs designed with a tapestry motif. The furniture comes from the UAE. Great swags of cream-coloured silk frame the windows and intricate wood lattice work designs are integrated into the room to create more opulence and interest. Dark-wood-trimmed French doors, matching the colour of the floor, separate the room from the foyer for privacy.

Next door is an upscale sunroom with windows along two sides that look out over a large deck towards the park and the Ottawa River. Slightly more modest in design, it has blinds and cream-coloured upholstery, with pink and cream silk throw pillows.

Across the hall is the family dining room, which seats 10 comfortably. Decorated in soft blues and brown, the centrepiece is the Italian inlaid wood dining table and a matching buffet. Sent from Abu Dhabi, several pieces were damaged in transit. A talented Lebanese craftsman managed to match the woodwork so that it is almost impossible to tell where the damage occurred. A large family kitchen is also located on the main floor.

"The food is simple for the kids," says the ambassador, who adds that his chef, who came from India with the first ambassador from the UAE, can cook many kinds of cuisine. For official dinners, the menu can include anything from seafood to steak and vegetables and meat with rice.

One of the major changes to the house took place when the UAE bought the property in 2001. The second ambassador remodelled the lower level, getting rid of the indoor swimming pool and turning the space into a commercial kitchen. The rest of the basement was transformed into a large dining room and a traditional Arab majelis, a sort of meeting and reception room with chairs placed around the walls. Here is where the ambassador and his wife hold all their large and official events, from cocktails to dinners.

Even the large washroom holds surprises, with a basket filled with all types of perfumes and scents for guests to sample, a sign of Arab hospitality. The official rooms on the lower level: open out to a small garden and a gate leading to the Lisgar Road entrance where diplomatic cars can discharge their passengers.

The residence comes with a cook, two nannies and a secretary and functions harmoniously on two levels: family life on the main floor, official events on the lower level. In short, it's perfect for a young diplomatic family that manages to juggle official duties and day-to-day life.

Margo Roston is *Diplomat's* culture editor.

New arrivals

Sham L. Bathija
Ambassador of Afghanistan

Mr. Bathija comes to this post after a varied career as a development economist and a diplomat. From June 2010 until he came to Canada, he was a minister and senior economic adviser to President Hamid Karzai.

Prior to that, he worked as a representative of the secretary general of UNCTAD (the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) and executive coordinator for the Central Asian Republics and inter-linked institutions. His career has been defined by his advocacy for trade and industry as tools for development.

Mr. Bathija studied law and political science at the University of Kabul and has a master's from Drew University in New Jersey. He's also done post-graduate studies at Stanford and Harvard universities.

He is married and has three adult children.

Norma Ester Nascimbene
Ambassador of Argentina

Ms Nascimbene studied law before enrolling in the National Institute of the Foreign Service in 1978. Her first posting — to Lagos, Nigeria — came one year later. She spent five years (1981-86) at the permanent mission in Geneva before joining the Antarctica department at headquarters. Other postings were to the United Kingdom, Geneva again and Italy before she was promoted to the rank of ambassador in 2009.

In 2010, she was director general for foreign policy and then became undersecretary for foreign policy at the ministry of foreign affairs. She was later the foreign affairs minister's special envoy to several Caribbean countries. Most recently, between 2012-13, she was adviser to the secretary for foreign relations. She is married to former ambassador Alberto Juan Dumont and has two daughters.

Luo Zhaohui
Ambassador of China

Luo Zhaohui, who has a master's degree in history, joined the foreign ministry in 1985 as third secretary in the department of Asian Affairs. Four years later, he was posted to India and was given the title of second secretary during that time.

Mr. Luo then returned to the ministry to work in the North American and Oceania Affairs section before being posted as second and then first secretary to the U.S. On his return to China in 2000, he was appointed counsellor in the department of Asian Affairs and then deputy director general in the same department.

In 2006, he became ambassador to Pakistan, where he was posted for four years before returning to Beijing as director general of external security affairs and then director general of Asian Affairs. He was appointed to Canada in the spring of 2014.

Mr. Luo is married with one daughter.

Rita Claverie Sciolli
Ambassador of Guatemala

Prior to coming to Canada, Ms Claverie Sciolli served for two years as Guatemala's vice-minister of foreign relations, a job she took after serving as ambassador to Mexico from 2010 to 2012.

A career diplomat, she joined the foreign ministry in 1986. She has served as counsellor and minister-counsellor at the embassy in Washington, where she was in charge of judicial affairs, human rights, community affairs, consular and migratory affairs and bilateral and multilateral co-operation.

From 1993 to 2000, she worked at the embassy in Italy, serving as permanent representative to the United Nations agencies headquartered in Rome (FAO, IFAD, and WFP). In 2001, she was named minister-counselor to the Holy See. She also represented her country in the permanent mission of Guatemala to the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington, D.C.

Most Reverend Luigi Bonazzi
Ambassador of the Holy See

Rev. Bonazzi was born in Gazzaniga, in the province of Bergamo, Italy, in 1948. He was ordained a priest in 1973 for the Diocese of Bergamo.

After receiving a PhD in education, he entered the diplomatic service of the Holy See in 1980. In his capacity as a diplomat, he has served in Holy See missions in Cameroon, Trinidad and Tobago, Malta, Mozambique, Spain, the U.S., Italy and, now Canada.

He was posted as Apostolic Nuncio to Haiti in 1999 and Apostolic Nuncio to Cuba in 2004. In 2009, he became Apostolic Nuncio to Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia.

Rev. Bonazzi speaks French, English, Italian and Spanish.

Radnaabazar Altangerel
Ambassador of Mongolia

After studying at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Mr. Altangerel entered the foreign service in 1990 as an attaché in the protocol department. He then became third secretary in public administration before being posted to the embassy in France as second secretary.

In 2000, he became chief of protocol in the office of the president and head of the diplomatic protocol department at the foreign ministry before being appointed state secretary at the foreign ministry. In 2006, he was appointed ambassador to France, Spain, Portugal and Monaco and from 2009 until April 2014, he was director of the diplomatic protocol department.

Mr. Altangerel is married and has a daughter and a son. He speaks Mongolian, Russian, French and English.

CREDENTIALS PHOTOS COMPLIMENTS OF RIDEAU HALL

Bruce Heyman
Ambassador of the United States

Mr. Heyman is a 33-year veteran of Goldman Sachs, where he served as a regional managing director of the Midwest private wealth management group from 1999 until December 2013. The Midwest group covers 13 states and half of Canada.

Mr. Heyman served as a board member for the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Northwestern Memorial Hospital Foundation. He also served as an adviser to the Fix the Debt CEO Council of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. He has been a member of The Economic Club of Chicago and The Executives' Club of Chicago.

A graduate with a BA and an MBA from Vanderbilt University, he maintains close ties to his alma mater. He is married to Vicki (née Simons) of Ashland, Kentucky. They have three grown children and two grandchildren.

Non-heads of mission

Bahamas
Roselyn Dannielle Dorsett-Horton
Minister-counsellor and consul

Marjorie Julien
Third secretary and vice-consul

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Fuad Didic
Counsellor and chargé d'affaires

Brazil
Ricardo Rolf Lima Bernhard
Third secretary

Brunei Darussalam
Faadzilah Raheemah Safri Mohdzar
Third secretary

Sukri Sharbini
Second secretary

China
Ge Hong
Second secretary

Ji Lin
Third secretary

Li Xiaoshu
Second secretary

Yang Tianwen
Second secretary

Yang Xinvu
Minister-counsellor

Zhuang Yaodong
Counsellor

Colombia
Pedro Isidro Lopez-Perez
Counsellor

Carlos Arturo Rueda Vasquez
Military, naval and air attaché

Cuba
Daniel Alberto Gomez Francisco
Attaché

Dominican Republic
Orly David Perez Medina
Counsellor

Ethiopia
Zerihun Adera Lemecha
First secretary

France
Serge Antoine Pierre Krebs
Attaché

Guinea
Bachir Diallo
Defence attaché

Japan
Kaoru Shimada
First secretary

Tetsu Shiraishi
Counsellor

Kazakhstan
Rustem Belgibayev
First Secretary

Libya
Khaled Baiej
Assistant attaché

Mexico
Manuel Carreon Munoz
Deputy naval attaché

Liliana Lopez Rojas
First secretary

Edgar Zurita Borja
Minister

Nigeria
Miriam Chidiogo Udeozo
Second secretary

Peru
Oswaldo Martin Calle Talledo
Defence and military attaché

Alejandro Humberto Marusic Caceda
Assistant defence and air attaché

Alessandro Miguel Mogni Novoa
Assistant defence and naval attaché

Russia
Alexander Ermishin
Counsellor

Evgeny Golubkov
Attaché

Saudi Arabia
Raed Mohammed H. Alajmi
Attaché

Saeed Hadhir M. Alkhathami
Attaché

Raddah H.Z. Alotaibi
Attaché

Sierra Leone
Ibrahim Sorie Conteh
Deputy high commissioner

United States of America
Jennifer Marilyn Wetmore
Attaché

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Celebration time

A listing of the national and independence days marked by countries

July		
1	Burundi	National Day
1	Canada	Canada Day
3	Belarus	Independence Day
4	Rwanda	Liberation Day
4	United States	Independence Day
5	Venezuela	Independence Day
7	Nepal	Birthday of His Majesty The King
10	Bahamas	Independence Day
11	Mongolia	National Day
14	France	National Day
14	Iraq	Republic Day
20	Colombia	National Day
21	Belgium	Accession of King Leopold I
23	Egypt	National Day
28	Peru	Independence Day
30	Morocco	Ascension of the Throne
August		
1	Benin	Independence Day
1	Switzerland	National Day
3	Niger	Proclamation of Independence
6	Bolivia	Independence Day
6	Jamaica	Independence Day
7	Côte d'Ivoire	Independence Day
8	Macedonia	Independence Day
10	Ecuador	Independence Day
11	Chad	National Day
15	Congo	National Day
15	India	Independence Day
17	Gabon	National Day
17	Indonesia	Independence Day
19	Afghanistan	National Day
24	Ukraine	Independence Day
25	Uruguay	National Day
31	Malaysia	National Day
31	Trinidad and Tobago	National Day
September		
1	Slovak Republic	Constitution Day
2	Vietnam	Independence Day
7	Brazil	Independence Day
15	Costa Rica	Independence Day
15	El Salvador	Independence Day
15	Guatemala	Independence Day
15	Honduras	National Day
16	Mexico	National Day
18	Chile	Independence Day
21	Armenia	Independence Day
22	Mali	Proclamation of the Republic
23	Saudi Arabia	National Day

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1. ANZAC Day, a national day of remembrance in New Zealand and Australia, took place at the Canadian War Museum. (Photo: Sam Garcia) 2. At ANZAC Day, back row from left: Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Tom Lawson; Turkish Ambassador Tuncay Babali; Finlay Morrison, son of Adrian Morrison, deputy high commissioner of Australia; New Zealand High Commissioner Simon Tucker and his wife Penny and MP James Bezan. Front row: Cem Babali, Australian High Commissioner Louise Hand and Zara, Lucy and Violeta Tucker. (Photo: Sam Garcia) 3. Cyprus High Commissioner Georgios Chacalli, who is based at the embassy in Washington, presented his credentials to Gov. Gen. David Johnston. (Photo: MCpl Vincent Carbonneau) 4. Netherlands Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans visited Ottawa in during the Tulip Festival. Foreign Minister John Baird is shown with him. (Photo: Justin Tang) 5. Serbian Chargé d'Affaires Mirjana Sesum-Curcic, left, and Indonesian minister-counsellor Cicilia Rushiharini, attended the Mount Sinabung charitable dinner organized by Friends of Indonesia March 22 at the Holiday Inn. The evening benefited victims of the Mt. Sinabung volcanic eruptions. (Photo: Ulle Baum)


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1. The Americas Group of the Heads of Mission Spouses Association (HOMSA) hosted an event at the residence of the Mexican ambassador. (Photo: Ulle Baum) 2. Slovakian Ambassador Milan Kollar hosted an evening of art featuring works by Ottawa pottery artist Susan Kunstadt, left. (Photo: Ulle Baum) 3. Turkish Ambassador Tuncay Babali, shown with Romanian Ambassador Maria Ligor, hosted a concert featuring vocalist Floralove Katz and pianist Natasha Guiller for the Friends of the National Arts Centre. (Photo: Lois Siegel) 4. Cuban Ambassador Julio Garmendia (centre) hosted the 52nd anniversary of the Pioneer Children of Cuba at the embassy. From left, Moraima Rodriguez and minister-counsellor Deborah Ojeda-Valedon. (Photo: Danilo Velasquez) 5. Malaysian High Commissioner "Dato" Hayati Ismail took part in World Press Freedom Day at the National Arts Centre. (Photo: Lois Siegel) 6. The Diplomatic Hospitality Group hosted a bowling event at McArthur Lanes. From left, Huey Pyng Liu and Sherry Su, of Taiwan. (Photo: Ulle Baum)


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1. Armenian Ambassador Armen Yeganian, far right, and his wife, Maria, hosted an evening with Toronto Symphony Maestro Peter Oundjian at the embassy. From left: Maria Yeganian, Oundjian and his wife, Nadine, and Mr. Yeganian. (Photo: Ulle Baum) 2. The Embassy of France and Canadian Heritage, in partnership with the Canadian Film Institute and ByTowne Cinema presented a press launch for DiverCiné. From left: Jerrett Zaroski, Canadian Film Institute; Erika Denis, French audovisual attaché; Tom McSorley, Canadian Film Insitute; and Said Bala, of Canadian Heritage. (Photo: Ulle Baum) 3. Irish Ambassador Ray Bassett and his wife, Patricia, (left and centre) hosted a fundraiser for Thinking in Pictures Educational Services (TIPES), a non-profit educational and therapeutic service that provides support to children, teens and young adults. They are shown with Joan Kellett, right. (Photo: Lois Siegel) 4. Argentine Ambassador Norma Nascimbene and her husband, Alberto Juan Dumont, hosted a reception at the Chateau Laurier to mark their country's national day. (Photo: Ulle Baum) 5. Israeli Ambassador Rafael Barak and his wife Miriam hosted the country's 66th independence day event at the Chateau Laurier May 13. (Photo: Ulle Baum) 6. Chilean Ambassador Roberto Ibarra presented Larry Lederman with the "Order of Bernardo O'Higgins, in the rank of Grand Cross" from the government of Chile. (Photo: Allan Yong) 7. EU Ambassador Mary Ann Coninsx hosted Europe Day at Ottawa City Hall. Foreign Minister John Baird attended. (Photo: Ulle Baum)

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1. From left, South-Nepean Councillor Steve Desroches, Swedish Ambassador Teppo Tauriainen and Mayor Jim Watson mark the naming of three new streets in Riverside South. The namings commemorate the ties that the City of Ottawa has built with Sweden Ericsson, Ikea, Volvo, H & M and the Ottawa Senators hockey club. (Photo: City of Ottawa) 2. Norwegian Ambassador Mona Elisabeth Brøther played host to visiting Norwegian parliamentarians. From left: MP Colin Mayes, Brøther and Norwegian MP Dag Terje Andersen. (Photo: Ulle Baum) 3. The Women Ambassadors of Ottawa (WAO), in collaboration MPs and UN Women Canada, marked International Women's Day on Parliament Hill. From left: Senator Linda Frum, Indonesian Ambassador Dienne Moehario, House of Commons Speaker Andrew Scheer and Labour Minister Kellie Leitch. (Photo: Ulle Baum)

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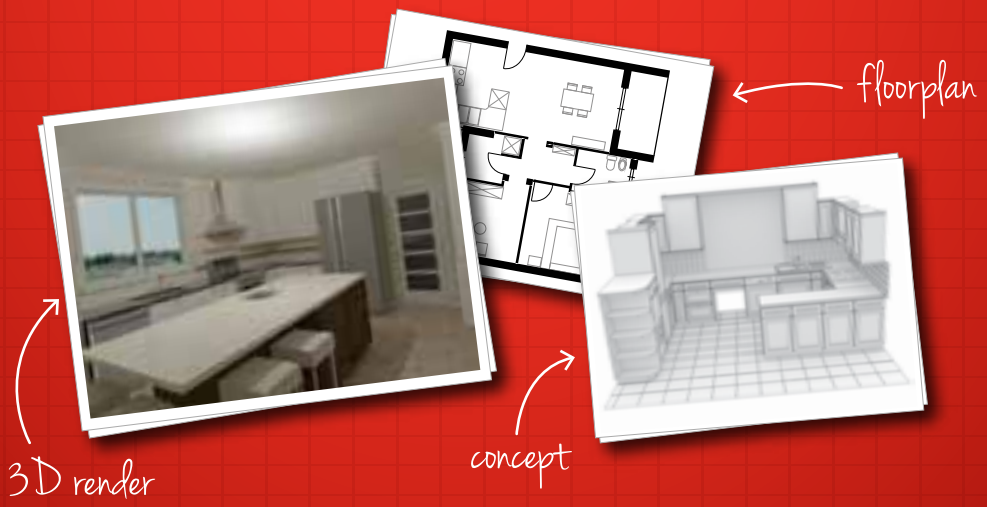

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Day-tripping outside the capital

By Charles Enman

Montreal is Canada's second-largest city — and one of its most reminiscent of Europe. And it's an easy day trip away.

A visitor to Ottawa has a wealth of choice – lots to see and do in the city, of course, but also a wonderful selection of sites worth seeing on myriad daytrips from Canada's capital.

Place: Montreal, only two hours east of Ottawa
Why go: Canada's second largest city, Montreal offers amazing energy and great cuisine, cultural activities, architecture and people-watching.
What to do there: Mount Royal Park, famous for the 31-metre illuminated cross at its peak, is one of the city's most beautiful green spaces. Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, a co-designer of New York's Central Park, there are two belvederes from which to view the city itself and winter visitors will want to use the groomed cross-country ski and snowshoe trails. St. Joseph's Oratory, a basilica on the edge of Mount Royal, is Canada's largest church and its dome is the third largest in the world. Toured by two million visitors a year, the oratory was the project of Brother André, a humble munk and healer who was declared a saint by the Roman Catholic Church four years ago. The Olympic Park, built for the 1976 Summer Olympics, has a number of exhibits including a biodome, which presents four ecosystems found in the Americas, from lush forests to the harsh and severe Arctic. The Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, one of North America's finest art museums, has everything from Old Masters to contemporary art, including many early Canadian paintings donated by leading Montreal families. Old Montreal, the oldest part of the city, dating back to New France, is a small neighbourhood on the St. Lawrence River just a short walk from downtown. Declared a historic site by the province, Old Montreal has preserved the cobblestones and many of the buildings of a bygone era. There are fine markets, preserved colonial mansions and even horse-drawn calèches that give a sense of having stepped into a time machine. Along Rue Saint Jacques one finds old bank buildings dating back to Montreal's days as Canada's financial centre.
When to visit: Year round

Place: Wakefield, 20 minutes from downtown Ottawa across the Ottawa River in Quebec
Why go: This small, charmingly bohemian community, one of the more bilingual in Quebec, offers a little touch of utopia only a few stones' throws north of Ottawa.
What to do there: The Wakefield time travel experience offers many funky little cafés and pubs in which to pass an agreeable afternoon; several galleries reflecting the rich artistic life of the community; small shops selling fresh baked goods, home décor, and local crafts; a picturesque covered bridge over the Gatineau River; and The Black Sheep Inn, a venue offering some of the best live music in the region.

DREAMSTIME

The Diefunker is a fascinating Cold War relic from the 1960s.

Kingston is a city rich in history and culture.

History aficionados might visit the grave of former prime minister Lester Pearson in the MacLaren Cemetery. Children in particular love the Wakefield Steam Train, one of the last authentic steam trains in Canada, which runs from May to October between Wakefield and the city of Gatineau. Recreational activities include horseback riding, skiing, snowmobiling, dog-sledding, canoeing and kayaking.

Place: The Diefenbunker in Carp, 30 kilometres west of Ottawa
Why go: The four-storey underground bunker, now a Cold War museum, gives a fascinating glimpse into how governments prepared for nuclear attack.
What to do there: There are guided tours at the Diefenbunker, though you can also explore on your own. The facilities were built to house 535 Canadian government officials and military officers in the event of a nuclear war. Named after John Diefenbaker, who was prime minister during construction in the early 1960s, the structure features massive blast doors at the surface designed to withstand nearby nuclear explosions, special air filters to protect from radiation and massive underground storage for food, fuel, water and other supplies needed to sustain people for several weeks. Visitors can see the prime minister's sleeping quarters, the War Cabinet Room, a radio studio for broadcasts to the people, and even a Bank of Canada vault. Many of the original furnishings are still in place.
When to visit: Year round

Place: Kingston/Thousand Islands
Why go: Kingston is rich in history and culture, and the Thousand Islands are a fascinating archipelago of more than 1,800 islands, many of them inhabited, divided between the U.S. and Canada.
What to do there: In Kingston, also known as the Limestone City, there are 21 National Historic Sites and 24 museums. Must sees include the Royal Military College of Canada, the Queen's University campus and Fort Henry, built during the War of 1812 to protect the city from American attack. Kingston has many wonderful restaurants and an active cultural scene. The Thousand Islands begin at Kingston and stretch 80 kilometres downstream in the St. Lawrence River. Two of the islands, Heart Island and Dark Island, have actual castles. There are fine beaches on the archipelago and several opportunities for fresh-water wreck diving. Visitors from Canada will require passports to visit the American islands.
When to visit: Year round

The bohemian town of Wakefield in Quebec boasts this charming covered bridge.

THE DIEFENBUNKER / DREAMSTIME / CARLOS HENRIQUES

Place: Gatineau Park fall foliage tour
Why go: The turning colours of the leaves as summer ends and winter approaches is one of the most beautiful sights in the area. And Gatineau Park's display is one of the most magnificent.
What to do there: The entire park offers vistas of vividly coloured deciduous trees. One of the best views is at Champlain Lookout, which offers a breathtaking panorama of the Ottawa River Valley, but the park's 200 kilometres of winding trails offer many options for exploration. While in Gatineau Park, take in the Mackenzie King Estate, built by Canada's 10th prime minister, with picturesque ruins, a tea house, and a museum dedicated to the country's longest-serving leader.
When to visit: Late September through mid-October.

The fall colours in Gatineau Park are not to be missed.

A FESTIVAL PRIMER

Canada Day Celebrations (July 1): Ottawa has the largest celebration of the country's birthday. Activities on Parliament Hill include concerts at noon and in the evening, and a fireworks display as soon as night falls. Other events take place across the national capital region.
RBC Bluesfest (July 3-13): This festival offers a smorgasbord of musical genres, from blues to rock and pop, country, indie rock and electro dance music. Lady Gaga, The Killers and Queens of the Stone Age are among the main headliners this year.
Music and Beyond (July 5-17): This festival offers classical music performed by orchestras, choirs, bands, wind ensembles, instrumental and vocal recitals as well as a multidisciplinary arts festival showing music's connection to drama, poetry, dance and other arts genres.
Ottawa International Chamber Music Festival (July 24-Aug. 7): The largest chamber music festival on the planet, this festival presents more than 100 concerts, including major performers from around the world, in churches and performance venues in Ottawa.
Capital Pride (Aug. 15-24): This festival supports the spirit of pride in the national capital region's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual communities. Events include a parade, live music, comedy and a beer garden.
Ottawa Folk Festival (Sept. 10-14): This festival offers a lot of folk music, but also indie and alternative artists. Headliners this year include Lorde and Blue Rodeo. A beer garden will offer Ontario craft beers.
Oktoberfest Ottawa (Oct. 2-5): This festival offers a chance to sample a huge range of beers and experience the traditional dance and music of Bavaria, hear many local performers and taste great food.
Ottawa International Film Festival (Oct. 15-19): OIFF is a highly regarded event, where filmmakers from all corners of the world showcase their latest offerings. Held at the Mayfair Theatre, the festival offers tastes of less-encountered filmmakers, all hoping to achieve large-scale recognition.

The crowds at Bluesfest

The Pride Parade weaves through Centretown.

DREAMSTIME / MIKE GIFFORD / LEZUMBALABERENJENA

Enchanting India: sights, smells and tastes to entice

The renowned Taj Mahal in Agra, 200 kilometres southwest of Delhi, sits majestically behind an array of Indian handicrafts.

Nirmal Verma
High Commissioner for India

Exotic, extravagant, elegant, eclectic: India offers different aspects of her personality to travellers. Only there can you go on a camel safari in the hot, mesmerising deserts of Rajasthan, heli-ski in the Himalayas, raft down the mighty Ganges and trek in pristine Garhwal Himalayas, all in the same month. There are 89 national parks, 13 bio-reserves and more than 400 wildlife sanctuaries across the country.

North India

Kashmir is a popular holiday destination and Srinagar, the state's winter capital, is the first stop for most travellers journeying there. Srinagar's great lake and meandering river, exquisite gardens, shikara boat rides and the old-world charm of its houseboats make the city a fitting introduction to the enchantments of the valley. Dal Lake is Srinagar's emblematic feature, with the great Mughal Gardens that rest on its shores. Other destinations in Kashmir include Phalgham, a popular tourist town, and Gulmarg, a mountain and ski resort. Kashmiri cuisine has evolved over hundreds of years, reflecting Central Asian, Persian and North Indian plains influences. Its salient ingredient, mutton, is offered up in more than 30 dishes.

South of Kashmir is one of the world's oldest cities. Delhi offers historical ambience in Old Delhi and modern life in New Delhi, with World Heritage Sites of Red Fort, Humayun's Tomb and Qutub Minar among its treasures.

A bit further south, Udaipur in Rajasthan is often called the "Venice of the East," a city of lakes. The Lake Palace (Jag Niwas), in the middle of Pichola Lake, is an architectural and cultural marvel, while the city itself offers performing arts, crafts and its famed miniature paintings.

Northeast India

Assam is a state of scenic beauty, rare flora and fauna, rolling plains and waterways. It is also a land of fairs and festivals. Kaziranga National Park is home to the rare one-horned rhinoceros. Other attractions

Camping at Chirbasa, one of the reputed hiking areas, in Uttarkhand in the north of India

include Majuli Island, ancient Ahom architectural marvels and golf courses with heritage resorts and colonial tea-garden bungalows.

An Assam cuisine highlight is boiled rice served with Tengamach (sour fish) and Khar (an extract from banana). In the state of Meghalaya, almost next door, rice is a staple combined with spicy meat and fish preparations. You can also try jadoh (boiled rice dough), kikpu, tung-toh (a vegetarian spring-roll filled with water chestnuts, shallots and egg yolk) and pickled bamboo shoots.

Sikkim is not just a beautiful place, but clean and safe as well. With its unique culture and natural landscape, it offers a sense of pristine purity in the Himalayas between Nepal and Bhutan, a paradoxical hotspot of biodiversity and development.

Central India

The Hindu temples of Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh (a huge central state) represent a paean to life, love and joy, perfect in execution and sublime in expression. Life in every form and mood has been captured in stone, testifying to the craft workers' artistry. These temples were built by the Chandela Rajputs, a clan found in Central India, in a short span of 100 years between 950 and 1050.

Kanha National Park's forests are home to diverse natural life, including tigers, hardground swamp deer, black bucks, leopards and sloth bear, as well as birds such as storks, teals, pintails, pond herons, egrets, peacock, kingfishers, woodpeckers, finches and orioles. Occupying an area of 940 square kilometres, Kanha (it inspired Kipling's *Jungle Book*) is a wildlife enthusiast's delight.

The cuisine in Madhya Pradesh varies from region to region, but it is all underpinned by wheat, rice, meat and fish. The capital of Bhopal is known for meat and fish dishes such as rogan josh (aromatic lamb dish of Persian origin), korma (India curry made of yogurt, cream, nut and seed pastes or coconut milk), keema (minced meat), biryani pilaf and kabobs.

West India

Mumbai, on the Arabian Sea, is a compact mix of traditional and modern, a waterfront city with a cosmopolitan identity. From the glitz and glamour of Bollywood, the Victorian buildings of the British Raj, the beauty of Juhu Beach or the maze of alleyways and lively streets of the city itself, few places leave tourists with such vivid impressions. A tour of Mumbai is best begun from the Gateway of India, the most famous colonial landmark and the beautiful rock-cut Shiva temple on Elephanta Island — a short trip by launch across the harbour from the gateway.

Goa, on the west coast of India, was formerly a Portuguese colony, and offers palm-lined beaches with golden sand, lush green countryside and a mosaic of cultural heritage. Its churches, temples, forts and monuments are a synthesis of east and west. The capital, Panjim, replete with colonial architecture, is known for its annual Goa Carnival festival.

Seafood, coconut milk and rice are the main ingredients of Goan delicacies and the tree fruit kokum, which tastes salty and sweet, is a distinct feature. Goan cuisine understandably incorporates Portuguese influences alongside dishes such as pork vindaloo, an Indian curry that originated on the west coast. Its name comes from the Portuguese dish carne de vinha d'alhos, which is made from pork, wine and garlic. Another dish from this area is xacuti, which has complex spices, including white poppy seeds, coconut and dry red chillies.

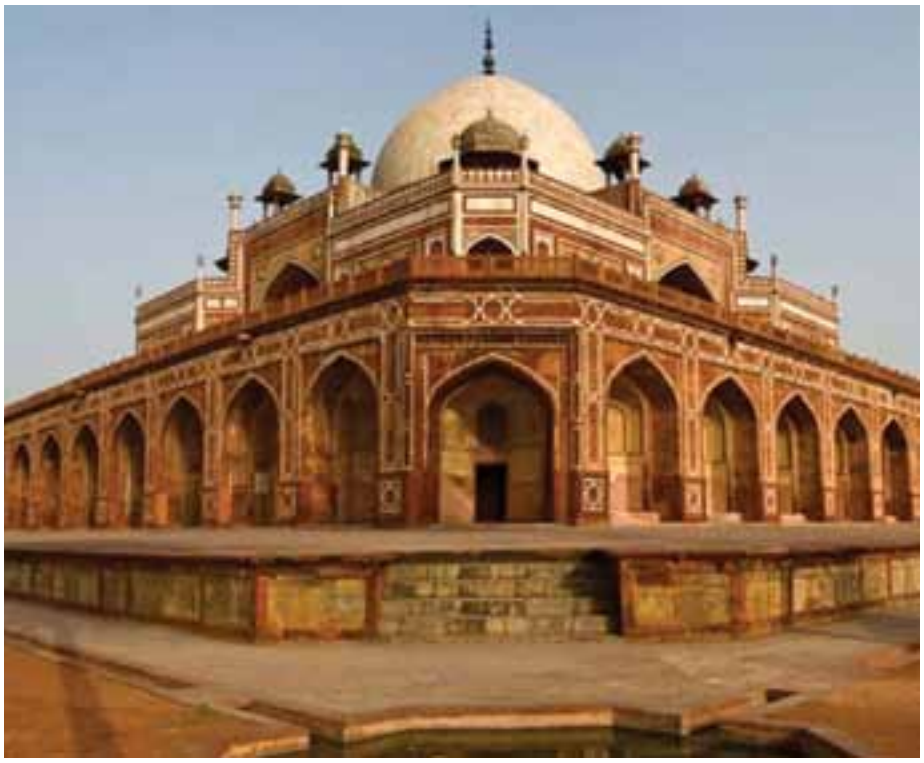
Further south down the Arabian Sea coastline is the state of Maharashtra, (its coastal area is popularly called the Konkan), which boasts its own Konkani cuisine. The interior — the Vidarbha area — also has its own distinctive Varadi cuisine, which is on the spicier side.

The markets in India abound with arts and crafts to bring home as souvenirs.

East India

Visiting the Andaman and Nicobar Islands means a trip of 1,000 kilometres east across the Bay of Bengal to this Indian archipelago of 362 volcanic islands (only 37 of them inhabited) close to Myanmar

MINISTRY OF TOURISM, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



The tomb of the Mughal Emperor Humayun in Delhi was commissioned by his first wife, Bega Begum, in 1569.

and Thailand. Travellers are greeted by a combination of white sandy beaches and swaying palms close to monuments and museums. World-class diving, swimming and sunbathing make this an otherworldly trip. These lush green islands have endured invasions by French, Dutch, Japanese and British newcomers and wars between settlers and the local tribes. The Cellular Jail, where hundreds of Indian revolutionaries were imprisoned during India's struggle for independence from Britain, still stands.

Back on mainland India, Darjeeling, in the east, is in the somewhat confusingly named state of West Bengal. High up near the Himalayas with Mount Kanchenjunga as a backdrop, Darjeeling is worth a visit. Ancient forests, quaint houses and friendly people make the trip to this most famous hill station of India worth the effort. The Darjeeling mystique rests on its landscape, making it a honeymoon and hiking destination.

Established in 1690 as a trading post near the Bay of Bengal for the English East India Company, Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) is the capital of West Bengal and one of the largest cities in India. The city that once served as the capital of British power in India is noteworthy for colonial architecture, including the Victoria Memorial. Other important sights include the Howrah Bridge, an engineering marvel that links the city, Howrah Station and the Indian Museum.

With an emphasis on fish and lentils served with rice, Bengali cuisine is known for subtle flavours, confections, desserts and its use of panchphoran, a five-spice mixture of fenugreek, nigella seed, cumin, radhuni and fennel in equal parts.

Kanha National Park's forests are home to diverse natural life, including tigers.

The beaches at Andaman Island are worth a visit.

South India

Kerala is known by locals as God's own country. With the Arabian Sea in the west, the Western Ghats mountain range towering at between 500 and 2,700 metres in the east, and networked by 44 rivers, Kerala's geographical features have made it a popular tourist destination. Its long shoreline has beaches and tranquil stretches of emerald backwaters. Inland, there are lush hill stations, exotic wildlife, sprawling plantations and rice-paddy fields. Visitors come for Ayurvedic (Hindu traditional medicine) health holidays, enchanting art forms, festivals and historic and cultural monuments.

Puducherry (earlier known as Pondicherry), a French colony until 1954, is a small enclave in India that retains a distinctly French and quiet ambience and culture, known for fine cuisine and good hotels. The ashram (religious retreat), founded by philosopher Sri Aurobindo, attracts thousands of people from all over the country and abroad who come to learn yoga and meditate.

Kerala cuisine has a multitude of fish, poultry and meat dishes. And for early in the day, a variety of traditional breakfast dishes such as appam (a pancake made with fermented rice batter and coconut milk), idiyappam (rice flour pressed into noodle form and then steamed), puttu (a traditional breakfast dish of Kerala prepared with rice flour and coconut) and pathiri (a pancake made of rice flour). As for Puducherry, not surprisingly, it offers an innovative French and Indo-style cuisine.

All of these sights, sounds and tastes await the visitor.

Admiral (Ret'd) Nirmal Verma is high commissioner for India.

MIKE BEEDELL WWW.MIKEBEEDELLPHOTO.CA

Photographer Mike Beedell captured this image during his salmon migration project in 2010. He spent three weeks in British Columbia's Fraser River with the salmon as they migrated to the Thompson River and on to their natal river, the Adams. He swam with them for several hours each day and was inspired by their tenacity to return to where they were born. At times, they were so thick in the water, he had a hard time making it to the surface. Males and females can be seen fighting the current in this photo. Visit www.mikebeedellphoto.ca to order prints or see more photos.

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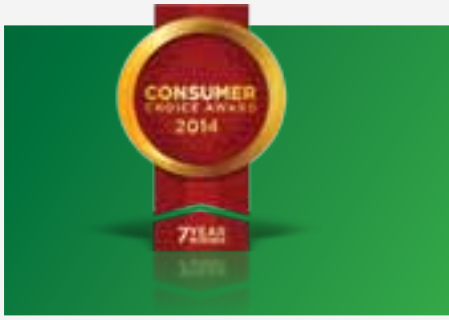
trusted by **Mike Holmes**

OakWood is the first renovator in Canada and the only renovator in Ottawa to meet the stringent partner requirements set out by Mike Holmes for Home Improvement and Renovations.

trusted by **Consumers**

OakWood is the first and only Ottawa Renovator to be awarded the Consumer Choice Award for Ottawa's Best Home Designer and Renovation Company every year since 2008.



trusted by **Better Business Bureau**

OakWood won the 2011 BBB Torch Award for Marketplace Trust in the Home Improvement Category.

trusted by **Ottawa**

OakWood is a recipient of the prestigious "Ottawa's Outstanding Company" BOBs (Best Ottawa Business) award for 2013.

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