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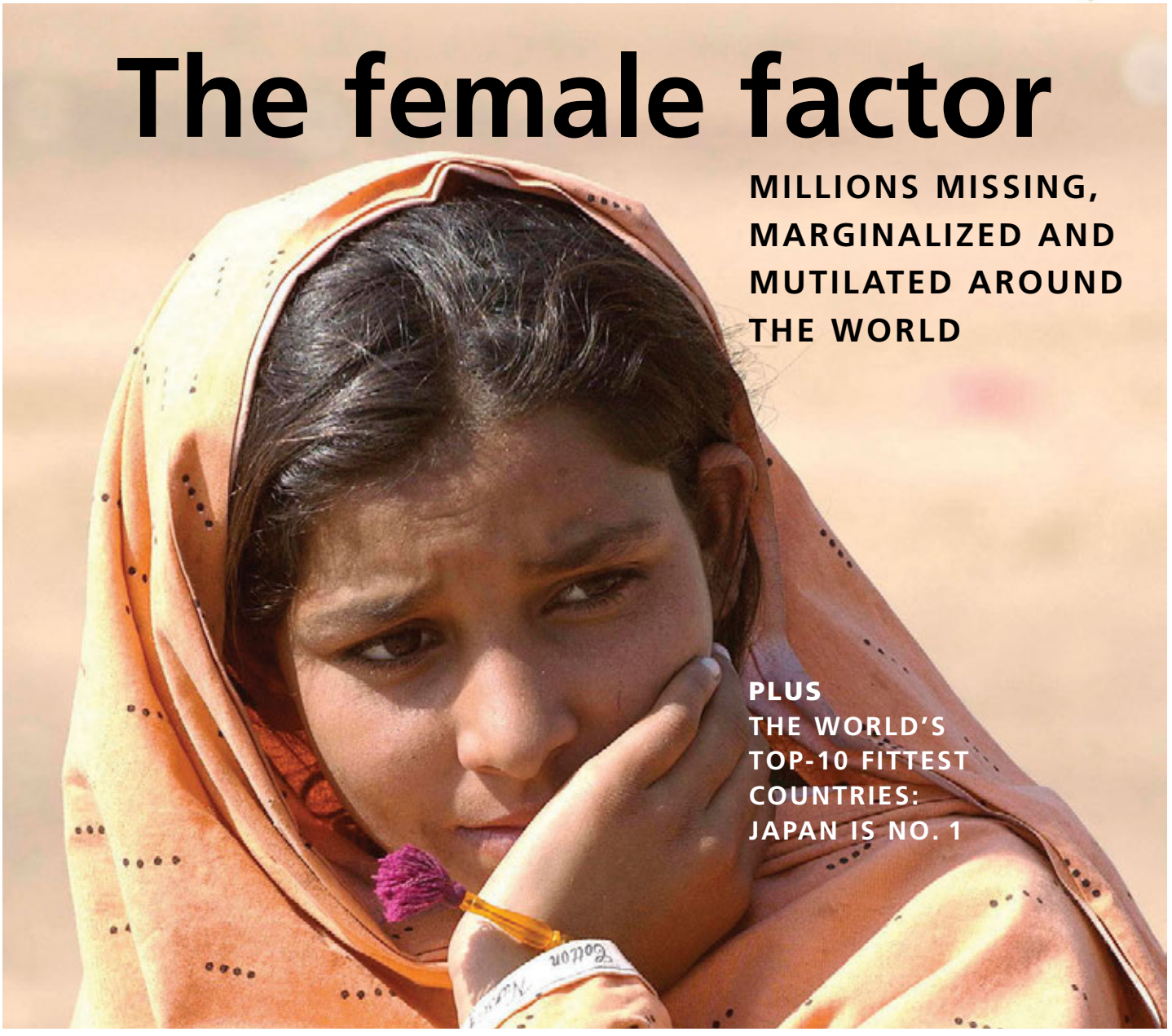

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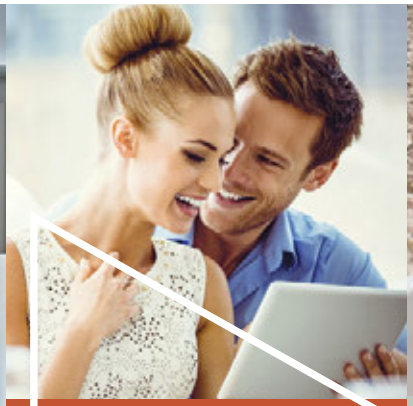

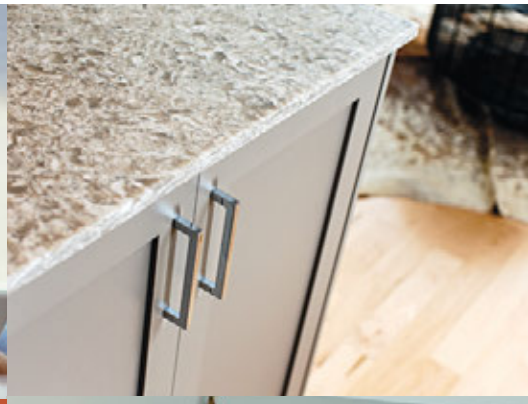

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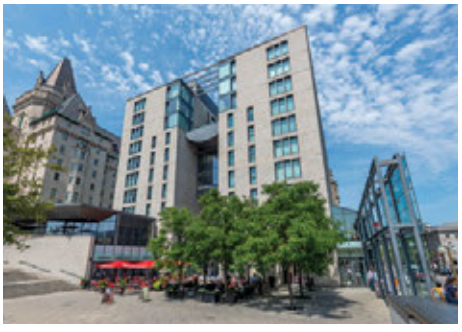

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Jennifer Campbell

How girls and women suffer

The numbers are staggering. In countries where female genital mutilation is practised, UNICEF calculates that 90 percent of girls and women have undergone the procedure. In Somalia, the number is 98 percent; 96 percent in Guinea; 93 percent in Djibouti and 91 percent in Egypt. In Yemen, 97 percent of females endure the practice at home, three quarters of them with a blade or razor. It's all in the name of religion, social conventions, traditional practices and family pressure, often from their mothers.

And this is just one of the fates that befalls females. In a special report, Alana Livesey examines a woman's life — from birth (and some don't even make it to birth) to death. She details the experiences that befall those who are less fortunate, simply because of their gender. She begins with the world's missing girls — those who are never born because their parents find out the gender and decide to abort, and those who are given up upon birth because girls aren't as highly valued as boys in some cultures.

Livesey looks at access to education and reports that 75 million school-aged girls around the world aren't in school, mostly because poverty prevents their families from paying the school fees. She examines forced matrimony — one in three girls in the developing world will be married by the time she's 18 and one in nine will be married by 15. She writes about gender-based violence in schools, cities that are unsafe for women and girls, intimate partner violence and unequal opportunities for political participation. It all adds up to a grim picture for many of the world's females, but Livesey also presents case studies of particular countries that are combating the problems head-on.

Also in our Dispatches section, Wolfgang Depner examines the world's fittest nations, just in time for January's New Year's resolutions. Not surprisingly, Japan, which tracks the health levels of its citizenry, comes out on top.

In the same section, Jim Parker reports from South Africa's Kruger National Park, where he volunteered with forces fighting rhino poaching. In spite of scientific studies showing they have no medicinal value, there is a huge market in Asia for rhino horns, which are more valuable than gold, selling for $65,000 a kilogram. Whole villages in neighbouring Mozambique, home to most rhino-horn poachers, rely on the industry.

Defence strategist Richard Cohen brings us his analysis of what the West needs to do to deal with Russian aggression, and calls for Canada to renew defence spending. Finally in Dispatches, Kathy Clark details how Hungary is facing, with conviction, its Holocaust demons.

In our Diplomatica section, columnist Fen Hampson offers his predictions for 2016. Terrorism, armed conflict, economic uncertainty, commodity prices in free fall and China's mounting tensions — it's not a pretty picture by any means.

We also have my interview with Perrin Beatty, former finance minister and now head of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. A former Conservative cabinet minister, he's politically neutral in his new role and in his comments on the new prime minister.

In our Delights section, books columnist George Fetherling brings us books on libertarianism and Myanmar, while food columnist Margaret Dickenson turns her tastebuds to the cuisine of the Philippines. Margo Roston tours Chinese Ambassador Luo Zhaohui's residence and history writer Anthony Wilson-Smith salutes Black History Month. Finally, in our Destinations section, Ülle Baum offers a unique perspective on Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, after visiting the city last spring.

Jennifer Campbell is *Diplomat's* editor.

UP FRONT

The plight of girls and women worldwide is the subject of our cover story as we enter 2016. Writer Alana Livesey's package, which details the lot of females, beginning with their birth, confronts issues such as female genital mutilation, forced child matrimony, gender-based violence in schools and unsafe cities. The special report begins on page 52.

CONTRIBUTORS

Alana Livesey

Alana Livesey is program manager for Plan International's *Because I am a Girl Urban Program*, where she provides technical expertise and guidance on adolescent girls' safety and inclusion in cities. For the past decade, Livesey has worked on gender equality and children's rights programming, research and advocacy with various UN and international development organizations, including Plan International, UN Women China, UNICEF China, UNICEF Canada and UNESCO INRULED China. Livesey has an MSc in development studies with a specialization in gender equality from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London.

Richard Cohen

Richard Cohen is an independent consultant and senior associate with Hill + Knowlton Strategies in Ottawa. From 2007 to 2011, he was senior adviser to the minister of national defence. Cohen was a career soldier in the Canadian and British armed forces, serving in a wide variety of command and staff positions around the world. In the early 1990s, he led the military co-operation branch (with the former Eastern Bloc countries) at NATO headquarters in Brussels. From 1994 to 2002, he was professor of NATO and European Security Studies at the George Marshall Center in Germany.

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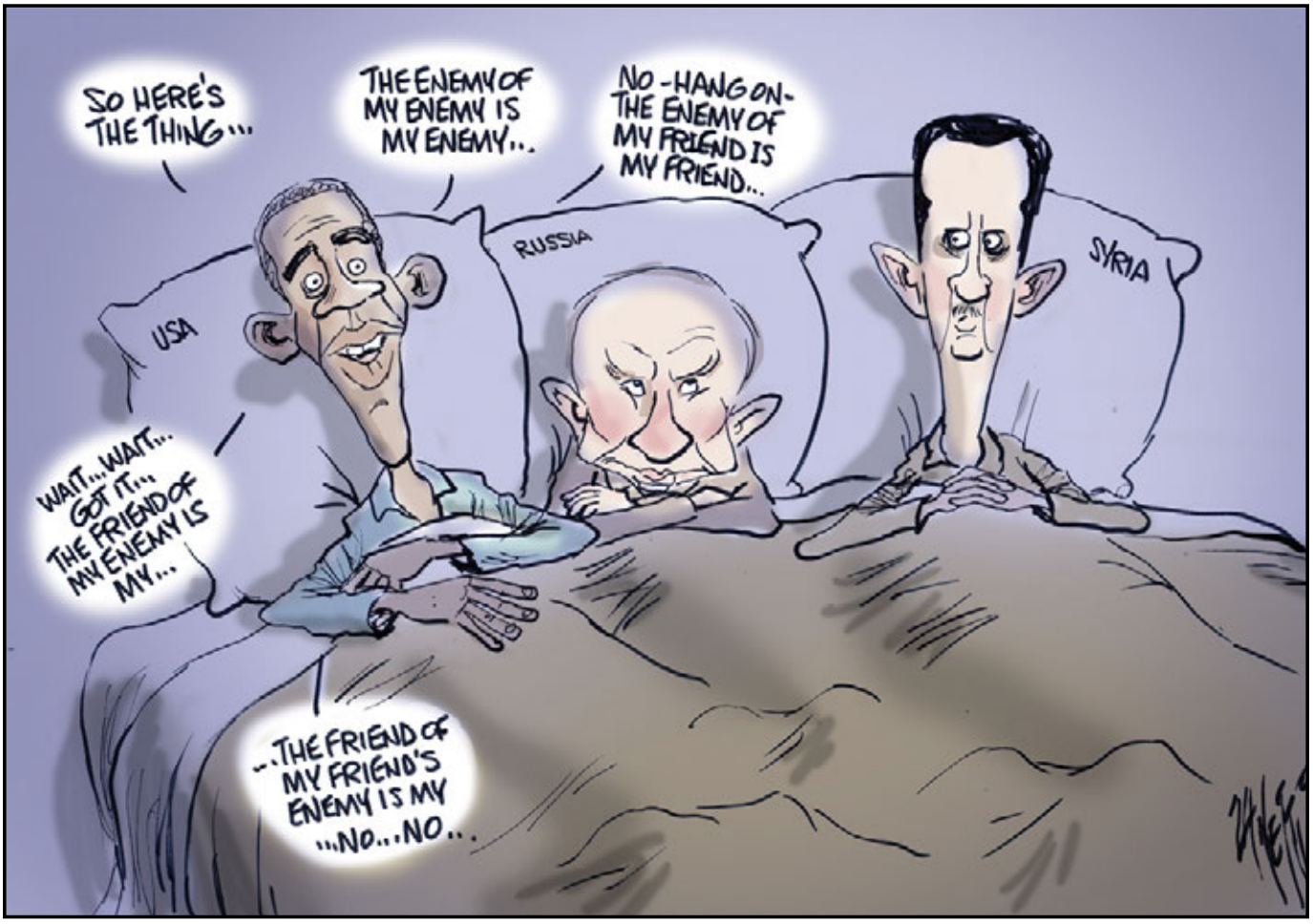

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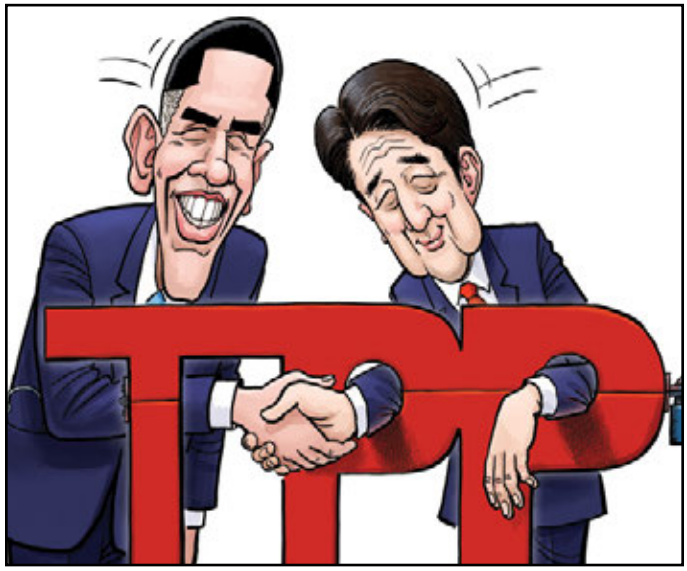

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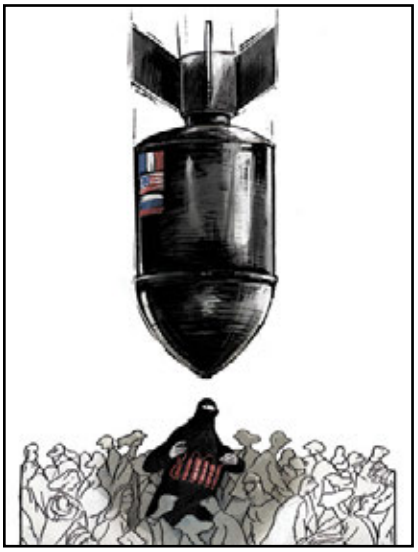

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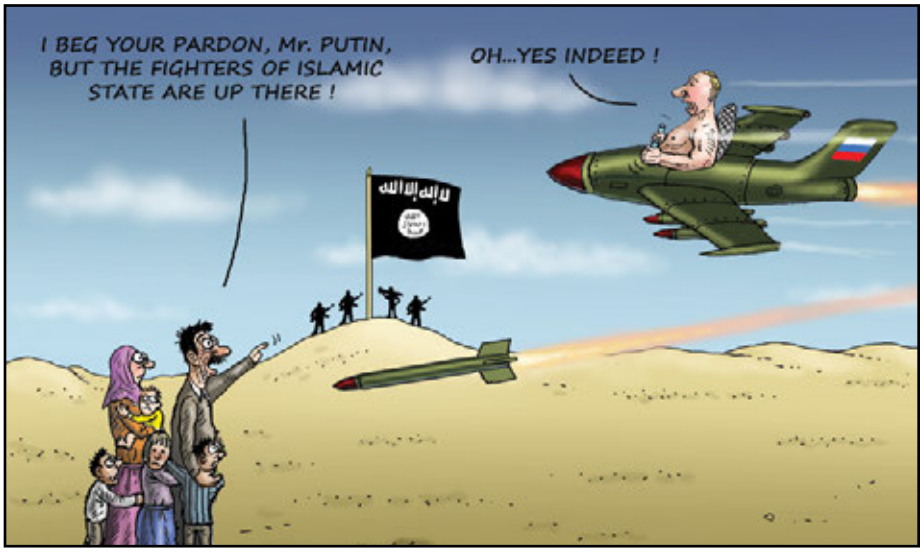

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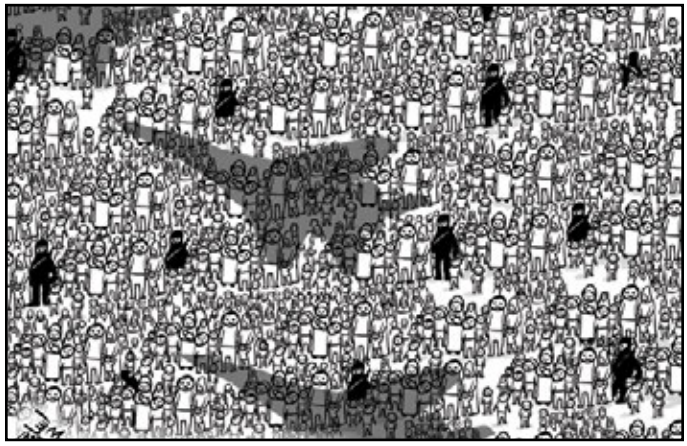

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2016: Political, economic and social upheaval

The terrorist attack in Paris in November serves as a reminder that the wars in the Middle East and North Africa don't stop at those borders.

Fen Hampson

Danish physicist Niels Bohr once said: "Prediction is very difficult, especially if it's about the future." Bohr's injunction is worth keeping in mind as we explore some of the major trends that will shape the global political and economic landscape in 2016.

The shocking terrorist attacks in San Bernadino, California, in December and Paris in November, which followed the murderous bombing of a Russian airliner, attacks in Beirut and, earlier last year, the killings at the offices of the French satirical magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, serve as a stark reminder that the intractable wars of the Middle East and North Africa do not stop at that region's borders.

The earthquake unleashed by the collapse of Libya, Syria and Iraq and their descent into chaos is being felt right across Europe, Russia and in other parts of the globe. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been killed or injured. The number of refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria, alone, is more than four million. The world is witnessing the worst humanitarian disaster since the Second World War. And there is no sign that the conflict in these countries is going to stop anytime soon.

The November 2015 meeting of the Syrian International Support Group of 17 nations and international organizations agreed to a road map of sorts that would see a UN-sponsored ceasefire, the creation of a transitional government led by the current government and opposition groups, and eventually free elections in 2017. But this seems more like wishful thinking. The United States and Russia are at loggerheads over the future of the Bashar al-Assad regime. The Russians and Iranians still want to keep him around, at least for a while, whereas the Americans want him out now.

Middle East contagion spreads

Like the Thirty Years' War in Europe roughly four centuries ago between Protestants and Catholics, sectarian violence between the two predominant branches of Islam — Shiite and Sunni — is changing the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East and beyond.

But the immediate problem is how to deal with the Islamic State, or Daesh, as some western countries now refer to this terrorist group. Far from being "contained," as U.S. President Barack Obama declared, IS is expanding. Chillingly, its henchmen are even training Afghan children. The underlying question is whether the West has the stamina or fortitude to eradicate IS fully, or whether, as Harvard University historian Niall Ferguson has implied, the lack of strong and effective action is a further symptom of the West's inevitable decline.

Most security experts believe it will take "boots on the ground" and not just bombs from the air to eliminate this threat. But don't expect the U.S. to lead the charge during an election year. France is leading the call to arms after the Paris attacks, but is finding few takers, even among its European neighbours. So expect the Middle East contagion to continue.

And you can also expect it to spread southwards to sub-Saharan Africa as groups such as Northern Nigeria's Boko Haram forge alliances with Daesh and embrace its extremist ideology. The terrorist attack on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali's capital, in November, was led by none other than former al-Qaeda commander Mokhtar Belmokhtar, who was responsible for kidnapping two Canadian diplomats in Niger several years ago.

MAYA-ANAÏS YATAGHÈNE

Europe unravelling

When former U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger stepped onto the stage in November 2015 at the Global Security Forum organized by Washington's Centre for Strategic and International Studies, he said the crisis in the Middle East presents "a challenge to the future of Europe." The flood of refugees surging into Europe, he noted, is not just a humanitarian tragedy; it also poses a grave threat to Europe's post-war cultural transformation and the very fabric of its institutions.

The European project began with the European Coal and Steel Community and eventually blossomed into the European Union. It has been focused on erasing borders and promoting the unrestricted movement of goods and people. The Schengen Agreement of 1985, abolishing internal borders and allowing for the guaranteed free movement of persons among its signatory states, is one of Europe's key symbols.

As European governments struggle to control the flow of refugees and migrants and to deal with the scourge of growing terrorism, they are being forced to take control of their borders. The flower that was Schengen may soon wilt.

French President François Hollande introduced border controls for a three-month period under emergency legislation following the attacks in Paris. Trains that run from Malmo, Sweden, to Copenhagen, Denmark, are also now subject to border checks.

The political leadership of Europe, and not just its institutions, may also be affected by this crisis. German Chancellor Angela Merkel is coming under extreme pressure from public opinion and some of her political coalition partners to stem the refugee tide that has seen more than 5,000 refugees a day entering Germany. Her popularity in the polls is taking a major hit. The absence of a bona fide successor to Merkel if she falls is worrying.

Extreme right wing nationalist parties in France and other parts of Europe are also capitalizing on the current crisis to promote their xenophobic political agenda and curry popular favour.

Europe's sluggish economic performance and high levels of unemployment, especially among its youth, will contribute to this volatile brew. Mounting social unrest driven by various social and economic pressures will contribute to Europe's governance challenges.

Europe's crisis of identity is also compounded by the ambivalence of some key EU member states, such as Britain, which will hold a referendum on EU membership in 2017.

The shock of falling commodity prices

Commodity prices in energy, metals, minerals and agricultural raw materials will continue their precipitous decline in 2016 as they did in 2015. It is not simply Canadians who are being subjected to this rude awakening as their incomes and standards of living fall because of the central importance of the energy and agricultural sectors to the economy. Throughout the world, many countries that benefited from strong economic growth and investment expansion for the better part of decade are also taking a hit.

Nowhere is the shock being felt more keenly than in the emerging economies of sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America where the commodity boom at the beginning of this century, fuelled by Asia's rapid industrialization and growth, proved a boon to countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, South Africa, Nigeria, Angola, Kenya, Ethiopia and Ghana. Now, as revenues fall, economic, social and political stability will be threatened. Some governments may even find themselves unable to provide basic services to their growing populations. In those countries where democratic rules of governance are weak, the spoils to service the vast patronage networks that hold ruling parties together will dry up. This will also affect political stability.

China's mounting yin and yang tensions

We will see more of the yin and yang (darkness and cold versus light and warmth) in China's behaviour in 2016. China's conduct will continue to confound its immediate neighbours and the West. China will likely accelerate expansion its territorial reach in the East and South China seas. It will not be deterred by American naval patrols or overflights of the territorial waters it now claims. China's leadership is driven by mounting nationalistic fervour that will not easily be quelled by the flex of superior American military muscle. The temptation for China's regime to deflect the country's mounting internal economic difficulties and accompanying social unrest toward the world outside is simply too strong.

At the same time, China acutely needs the rest of the world just as the world needs China. Global production value chains reach deep into the heart of the Chinese economy. China's rich portfolio of foreign direct investment and finance

capital also spans the globe. China is not only a major player in international institutions, but it is also developing some of its own institutional innovations, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

China's new Internet Plus strategy, which seeks to build "smart cities" and promote mobile data, cloud computing and the Internet of Things, also means that it cannot be "business as usual" in the way China manages and controls the internet within its borders. If China wants its companies, including its smaller- and medium-sized enterprises, to expand and dominate the global market as part of a bigger push to transform its economy from excessive reliance on heavy industry and manufacturing toward financial services, IT, aerospace, biotechnology and innovation, it is going to have to behave differently in cyberspace from the way it does now, where it is one of the major sources of attacks on the west.

The west's challenge is trying to reinforce the best instincts of the yang in Chinese behaviour, while also curbing the worst of its yin.

American leadership?

You can expect a lot more talk about American leadership in the world in the coming year — but don't expect a whole lot of action. The U.S. will be in full election mode in 2016. Its eyes, and the eyes of the world, will be focused on what is shaping up to be an epic, gladiatorial contest between the Democratic Party, which has all but anointed its leader, former first lady and secretary of state, Hilary Rodham Clinton, and the Republicans, who are still at war with themselves. The Reagan question in the 2016 race will be: "Do you feel more secure than you did eight years ago?" Hillary Clinton would have more trouble than any other candidate with that query.

Obama is in full pursuit of securing his political legacy (and corralling donors to cough up for his presidential library). He is going to do his best to avoid sending ground troops to do battle against IS/Daesh even though he is grudgingly extending the Afghan mission. The Russians know it, which is why Russian President Vladimir Putin is emerging as the go-to guy to help solve the crisis in Syria. And he is going to put that political capital in the bank in his quest for greater control over Ukraine and Central Asia. Regional powers, such as Iran, following the nuclear accord and lifting of sanctions, are also going to increasingly assert their power.

Obama's penchant to "lead from behind" has meant, to paraphrase the Israeli diplomat and politician, Abba Eban, that he has never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity. Whether it be in the early days of the Syrian uprising and Assad's brutal response, the disintegration of Iraq after Obama pulled out U.S. troops, or Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Obama let chance after chance go by. Many critics view his global leadership as an abject failure and it would be hard to envisage any successor in 2017 doing less for the U.S.'s global reputation and credibility.

The prospect of a world in which China is rising as the U.S. continues to struggle at home and abroad, alone guarantees that pinpoint predictions about how all these global forces will play out in the year ahead is, as Niels Bohr said, indeed difficult.

Columnist Fen Osler Hampson is a Distinguished Fellow & Director of the Global Security & Politics Program, CIGI. He is Chancellor's Professor at Carleton University.

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Crossroads International: Empowering women

By Christine Campbell

Fatou Kiné Fall felt trapped. For more than two years, the Senegalese woman suffered at the hands of her abusive husband. She desperately wanted to leave with her children, although she knew that she had no way to support them. Finally, when Fall's husband deliberately spilled a bowl of scalding porridge on her legs, resulting in third-degree burns so severe she couldn't walk, she realized that her life was in danger and she must find a way out.

She turned to a Crossroads International-supported women's centre recommended by her mother. She joined a support group for women who had experienced violence, and staff at the centre helped her navigate the complicated paperwork and legal proceedings of a divorce. She was leaving her abuser in the past, but she still had the future to worry about. With few skills and no formal work experience, Fall couldn't imagine how she could have an income.

Once her burns healed, she decided to enrol in an entrepreneurial training course at the centre. She quickly built skills in accounting and management and also gained the confidence to apply for a micro-loan in the hopes of opening her own business. With the loan secured, she launched her own business — a toiletry and cosmetic kiosk at the central bus station in Kaolack, on Senegal's northern border. With lots of foot traffic and high demand from travellers, her business took off. She is already making plans to expand her inventory.

"Every morning, I wake up knowing that I can provide my children with a safe home, food and education," she says. "That is my biggest accomplishment."

For the first time, Fall is brimming with confidence and sees that her future looks bright.

World Bank studies show that when women have the means to earn an income, they typically reinvest 90 percent of it into their families and communities. Women's economic empowerment improves access to food, clean water, health care and education for all, but economic empowerment is about much more than collecting a paycheque; it gives a woman the autonomy she needs to walk away from violence and into a promising future. As a woman's economic independence increases, so does the power of her voice in decision-making at home and in the community.

Fatou Kiné Fall left an abusive marriage and turned her life around with entrepreneurial training. Now she is the proud owner of a kiosk that sells cosmetics and toiletries to travellers.

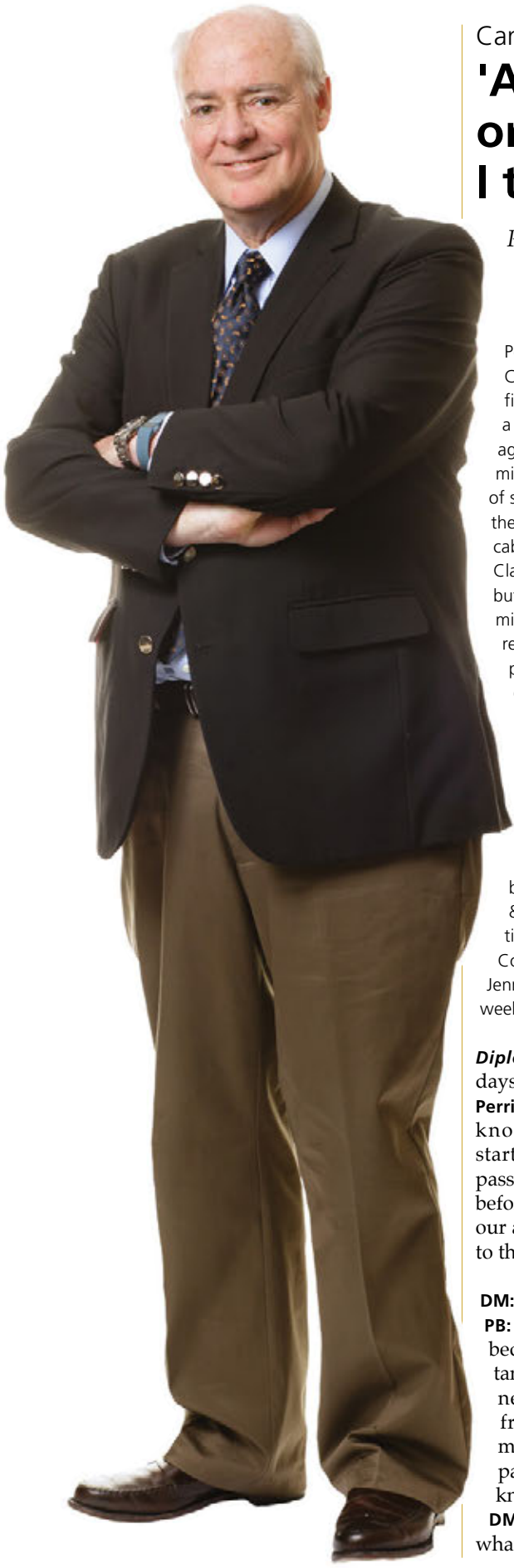
As one of Canada's foremost international development and volunteer co-operation organizations, Crossroads has been fighting inequality for almost 60 years. We accomplish this by bringing people together to create lasting solutions to overcome poverty and advance women's rights. Crossroads supports women, youth and the rural poor; those who are often marginalized in the economy and left out of the decisions that affect their lives. With our partners, we build capacity and individual proficiency through workshops, skills training and improved access to tools such as microfinance loans. More than 5,000 women and youth improved their livelihoods this year through initiatives such as soap-making co-operatives, market gardening and small business start-ups.

Awa Kone, a Malian woman, is a perfect example. Kone's father died when she was 13 and she had to leave school to support her family. She worked the land with her siblings to make ends meet, but she wanted more. With little education and few skills, she didn't think she had any options, and then she heard about the Crossroads-supported entrepreneurial training program in Baguinéda, Mali. After taking courses in finance, management and, Kone's favourite, women's empowerment training, she opened her own restaurant. In only two years, Kone was able to hire four young women as full-time employees. With her income, Kone is able to take care of her mother and siblings and her staff members do the same for their families. But her ambitions don't stop there. She wants her restaurant "to be the biggest and best in my neighbourhood," she says.

Crossroads works as an equal with volunteers and local partners to create decent jobs and empower women to become leaders and live free from violence. We address the causes of inequality by sharing expertise, building networks to address common issues and scaling up successful initiatives. To be part of the change, please visit cintl.org/volunteer to make a lasting difference.

Christine Campbell is interim executive director of Crossroads International, which is based in Montreal and Toronto.

LOUIS-DAVID LALANCETTE-RENAUD



Canadian Chamber of Commerce CEO Perrin Beatty

'Are we living up to our potential or are we stealing from our kids? I think we've been falling short'

Photos by Jana Chytilova

Perrin Beatty, president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, was first elected to the House of Commons as a Progressive Conservative in 1972 at the age of 22. Seven years later, then-prime minister Joe Clark appointed him minister of state for the Treasury Board, making him the youngest person ever appointed to cabinet. He returned to opposition when Clark's minority government was defeated, but in 1984, Brian Mulroney made him minister of national revenue and minister responsible for Canada Post. Later cabinet posts included solicitor general of Canada, defence minister, minister of national health and welfare, minister of communications (no longer a porfolio) and secretary of state for external affairs. Liberal prime minister Jean Chrétien appointed him CEO of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1995, a position he held for four years before becoming CEO of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters. He took up his current position as CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in 2007. ***Diplomat's*** editor Jennifer Campbell sat down with him the week after the federal election.

***Diplomat* magazine:** So, it's been a few days since the election.

Perrin Beatty: Yes. The politicians' door-knocking ended Monday and mine started Tuesday. We had our AGM and passed just shy of 50 resolutions the day before the election, so it certainly gave us our advocacy agenda. There's lots to take to the new government.

DM: You're a Conservative, correct?

PB: No. I was a Conservative. When I became president of CBC, it was important that, as it was the country's largest news organization, I be completely free of any political taint. I gave up my membership to the [Conservative] party. Even my wife and my son don't know how I vote.

DM: Apart from political affinity, then, what do you think of the results?

PB: Well, it was Canadians voting for a fresh start and what I was particularly pleased with is that it's a majority government. So many of the issue s we face in Canada are long-term and structural and I served in Parliament both in majorities and in minorities [in government and in opposition.] In a majority Parliament, you think about 'Where will Canada be four years from now?' In a minority Parliament, you think about 'where will I be four weeks from now?'

You tend to be driven, in a minority Parliament, by the headline du jour, by whoever is complaining most loudly about whatever the current issue is, as opposed to saying 'What are the strategic decisions that we have to make as a country that will benefit us in the longer term?' What we have is the stability, first of all, that the government is able to plan long-term and to attack some of these more important structural issues: trade, skills development, innovation, and a whole range of other areas where it's not a matter of simply passing a bill or putting a new program in place. It also means, from the perspective of investors, that they have the confidence as to the rules of the game. The problem with a minority is investors, if they're making a multi-million-dollar investment in Canada, want to know what the rules are going to be and if they're subject to change. With a minority Parliament, you just don't know. Having the stability that comes from a majority will reassure investors that they know the rules of the game.

DM: When it comes to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, who are your members?

PB: Our members are local chambers and companies, as well as associations. There are really three different groups of members. We have 450 chambers of commerce and boards of trade from across the country, we have about 100 associations that belong — sectoral associations such as the Railway Association of Canada or

'A good deal of my time since 9/11 has been spent on insuring we have an open border with the U.S.'

'We're in a position where the Canadian government… can retaliate against U.S. products.'

'We have to ensure there's close collaboration between the Canadian business community and our government.'

the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, which gives us a window into the various sectors within the country — and then we have individual companies that belong. Most of the companies that people would have heard of are Air Canada, or GM or Suncor or Royal Bank, plus a number of small companies as well, such as entrepreneurial companies and startups. They pay to be members. That's how we finance ourselves. In some countries, it's mandatory to belong to the chamber of commerce; in Canada, it's entirely voluntary.

DM: Regarding the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, an Ottawa businesswoman told me she could see joining because of an export-related service that you offer.
PB: Carnet! You're the first journalist ever to ask me about carnet. That's an achievement. Carnet is a passport for goods and it means that if CBC, for example, is going to cover the Olympics and they take all of their equipment into another country, they post a bond saying they're not going to leave it and sell it while there. The Canadian Chamber issues these and provides a guarantee to the country that that company will bring those goods back out.

DM: Do you do that for anyone or is there a process?
PB: We'll do it for any company that applies. If you're going to a trade show, for example, and wanted to bring samples, but you weren't planning to sell them, you might want a carnet to authorize that and guarantee that you're going to bring them back.

DM: How often do you get requests for this?
PB: Quite often. And it's a growing part of our business because Canadian businesses are increasingly international. Another similar thing we do is document certifications. If people need to have documents for official purposes that are certified business documents, we can do that. The vast bulk of what we do and our raison d'etre is advocacy, but you managed to identify the one major program that we have as well.

DM: The businesswoman found it useful, but she's not a member, so I guess you don't need to be?
PB: You don't need to be, but there's a discount for members. For companies that do this frequently, it pays for their membership.

DM: As you mentioned, your main job is to advocate for all your members — whether regional chambers, individual businesses or business associations. How do you accomplish that?
PB: We have an AGM where chambers across the country propose resolutions to be considered at the AGM on a wide range of business issues. If two thirds of delegates vote in favour, it becomes policy. We have, at any one time, perhaps 150 resolutions on the books. But at the end of the day, it boils down to one issue and that's competitiveness. What can you do to ensure the success of Canadian business? If we're dealing with skills, the [question] there is how to equip ourselves with the skills we need to be competitive. What is the role that infrastructure plays in terms of our ability to move our goods and services? On Canada-U.S. relations: What does this mean in terms of management of the border and in terms of issues like Keystone XL or country-of-origin labelling or softwood lumber? If it's trade negotiations, what does it mean in terms of insuring access for Canadian goods and services and investors to other markets? All of these issues are seen through the prism of the success of Canadian business.

DM: Regarding the U.S., what is your priority there for the next four years?
PB: A good deal of my time since 9/11 has been spent on insuring we have an open border with the U.S. After 9/11, we had a border that was simply jammed up. Particularly for Canadian manufacturers, who operate on a just-in-time basis, that's potentially devastating. We need to have a border that's fluid, where people can move across it readily and where we can get our inputs coming this way.

Policies like Buy-America, which discriminate against Canadian companies, are a major concern to us. The [Canadian] government took the U.S. government to the WTO on the basis of the country-of-origin labelling where they were using the identification of products like pork coming into the U.S. and saying this is American, or not American. It was a non-tariff barrier to Canadian products and was found by the WTO to be in violation of the U.S.'s obligations.

DM: Did that change anything?
PB: They dragged their feet. Now we're in a position where the Canadian government has a mandate that it can retaliate against U.S. products. No one wants to see that happen, but that's the lever we have to get the Americans to do away with that legislation on a rapid basis. That's another key issue.

Obviously, we'll also be working with the Americans on TPP [Trans-Pacific Partnership], which is a major part of the Obama administration's agenda. Then, more broadly, there are issues related to the industrial base of North America. Our economies are so deeply integrated, it makes sense for us to take a pan-North American approach and say 'what can we do to ensure the success of the North American manufacturing sector or to ensure the success of North American energy in global markets?' What we should be doing is collaborating more closely with our NAFTA partners in terms of strengthening our business sectors here in North America.

DM: Which one of those many priorities keeps you up at night?

PB: All of them. It's a bit of whack-a-mole. As one goes down, another pops up. There's never a shortage of issues. You hear presidential candidates talking about building a wall along the 49th parallel and think, 'Tell me I dreamed this.'

Unfortunately, where there's politics, people are infinitely creative about causing problems. There's a Hippocratic oath for doctors, which is 'first, do no harm.' I wish we had something similar for politicians. That would be a great thing.

DM: Particularly in the U.S. presidential race at the moment?
PB: Absolutely. And you can see it on the TPP, where the two frontrunners are both opposed to TPP.

DM: Speaking of TPP, what are your hopes on that front? Are you pleased about it, concerned about it?
PB: Both. Anything that removes barriers to trade and gives Canadian businesses better access to global markets certainly is positive because Canadian jobs are very much dependent on our ability to reach foreign markets and we have not been doing well relative to others. Our share of global trade has been shrinking, so we need to have access to the world's fastest-growing economies, many of which are in Asia. But I am concerned about ratification, not so much in Canada, where the reaction so far from Canadians has been very positive, but there's a very tight time-frame for ratification in the U.S. and you have both leading presidential contenders from the two parties who have indicated their opposition. Ratification in the U.S. will set the stage for the other countries and I think everyone will be watching that very closely.

We also have to ratify CETA [Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement.] The last report I had was that the language was still being scrubbed by the Europeans and it's a very long, slow process. I will be stopping on my way to the B20 in Berlin to meet with counterparts in Germany to talk about progress on CETA and the importance of moving ahead on that.

DM: Could TPP negotiations have been more open?
PB: Could the negotiations themselves be more participatory? They should be. If you compared the free-trade negotiations in 1988, where you had sectoral advisory committees, with what's been followed since then, it has not been as inclusive and participatory as it was. Other countries tend to have their business communities intimately involved in negotiations, absolutely informed and consulted at every stage. In Canada, we tend to be briefed. Yes, the government takes input, but there's not the input that takes place in other countries. The whole point of the negotiations is to advance the business interests of your country because it's good for the economy, so business should be at the table as a full partner.

DM: Is that a frustration of yours?
PB: Yeah. I'd like to see improvements there. It's better than it was some years ago. When I attended the notorious WTO ministerial [conference] in Seattle — the battle in Seattle — [in 1999], what was amazing for me was how business was considered then as just another group. There was neither the information flow nor the collaboration that was necessary to ensure the negotiations would be beneficial to Canada. We really do need a Team Canada approach to any of these international negotiations. Other countries are there to advance their international interests, as they should be. We have to ensure there's close collaboration between the Canadian business community and our government. It's better than

it was 10 years ago. But it's nothing like the closeness there was in 1988.

DM: Are you hopeful, given Justin Trudeau's promises to be more open?
PB: Yes. One of the positive things with the outgoing government was a very ambitious trade agenda and that's a very positive thing, but the Liberals also have a tradition of internationalism and of wanting to promote closer trade ties with other countries, so I'm expecting that there will be a good deal of continuity and they'll look for new ways to boost Canadian international trade and investments.

Jean Chrétien, for example, put a lot of emphasis on Team Canada trade missions. We need to realize we're all on the same side and it's in everyone's interest to enhance the business side of Canadian companies.

DM: If you could send the Santa Claus of the trade world a wishlist for the next four years, what would be your top five countries with which to sign trade agreements?
PB: I would start by completing CETA and the TPP. Japan would be next on the list. Japan has said it wants TPP out of the way before it does a bilateral deal with Canada, but our two economies are certainly complementary. If Canada and Japan can't reach a deal, it's hard to see how it can be done with other countries. Other countries have things, such as rice [one of Japan's major exports] as a stumbling block, but we don't have that in Canada. We need to look at how we enhance the trading relationship with China, what form that takes. It could be the accession of China to the TPP. Or we could be looking at other bilateral discussions with them. Those would be my priorities. India would be high on the list as well.

DM: What are your thoughts on the Doha development round of trade negotiations that began way back in 2001?
PB: Doha? I almost forgot what that was! It would be wonderful to see some life breathed back into it. I was in Brussels a year or so ago and there was some hope to see some progress, but very little has been made and that's one of the reasons TPP is so important. My preference would be to see multilateral trade agreements — to see the WTO functioning, and functioning well. In the absence of that, the best hope is multilateral, regional and bilateral agreements. We have to keep moving ahead, but what this does is create a patchwork of relationships as opposed to a common set of rules that apply all over the world. You get business almost looking at a 3D chart where they say 'Chile has a trade agreement with Peru and is it better to put a plant there than here because I can get it into the other market?' Far better if we could have something more coherent and truly international, where business could make its decisions based on sound business criteria as opposed to 'How do I fit within all these legal agreements?'

DM: On the TPP, are the concerns of the automotive industry, and previously the dairy industry, legit?
PB: The government dealt with the dairy producers pretty directly in terms of a major compensation program for roughly 12,000 farms. We need an automotive strategy, which should be part of a broader strategy to revive manufacturing in Canada. The auto sector needs to be at the core of that. The big issue was the transition period [of the TPP] and the fact that it's a shorter transition period for Canada than the U.S. was able to secure. As a consequence, the government will need to look at what sort of measures can be put in place to ensure we continue to attract investment from original equipment manufacturers and from other suppliers as well. The starting point has to be that, as an article of faith, we must have a strong and vibrant manufacturing sector in Canada. We can't allow it to continue to slip away. The idea of having an automotive strategy and saying 'we'll actively go out to build the industry in Canada' is an important starting point for us and then look at what needs to be done to do that.

DM: In terms of encouraging entrepreneurship, are the Liberal policies, such as rolling back the tax-free savings account and looking at pension reform, concerning to you?
PB: There are those, and other issues, such as increasing taxes on people in the so-called one percent. It's amazing how many people fit into that one percent. It creates a disincentive. It's important to recognize that Canadian business people aren't tied to a tree, where they are forced to stay here. They can take their talents and investment anywhere in the world. What we need is to attract more people to Canada who are entrepreneurial as opposed to driving them out. If we increase the costs or make it a hassle to do that, we lose as a country. It's easy rhetoric to attack business and say you'll tax the rich, but what you're doing is putting a tax on success and discouraging people from making investments and taking the risks that are necessary to build the Canadian economy.

DM: Will you be lobbying against that?
PB: Well, it's certainly of concern to us, but we also realize that it's an integral part of the government's platform and it's something they're likely going to do very quickly. But in principle, anything that discourages investment and discourages people from starting a business, growing it, hiring people, is damaging to the Canadian economy. This was central to their platform, but there are other issues that we'll be dealing with. We want to look at changes to the Canada Pension Plan because what we're talking about is a new payroll tax and any payroll tax is a tax on jobs.

DM: How are Canadian manufacturers positioned for 2016?
PB: It's been a tough time for the sector. We've seen it hammered, particularly as a result of the decline in the North American automotive manufacturing sector. But we still have a strong base. When I spoke on this at the *Walrus* talks in Saint John, N.B., the point I tried to make is that we're as entrepreneurial as anybody in the world. It's not a matter of not having good business people or not having people who want to build their businesses, or that they're not putting the energy in. Rather, we have to look at the ecosystem that surrounds them and that's everything from how we look at intellectual property to what sort of incentive there is to commercialize [research and development] in Canada. We need to take a holistic view of the challenges facing our sector, but the starting point has to be that a country that allows its manufacturing to disappear is mortgaging the future of its children. I'll admit that I'm biased. I come from a manufacturing family — three generations — and I believe it's something we do well in Canada, particularly as you get into advanced manufacturing where there's a high knowledge component, where you're not competing on the basis of lowest price. We have a competitive advantage on the knowledge component and one that's sustainable, in my opinion.

DM: Of the elements in that perfect ecosystem, what's the one that needs the most work?
PB: I wouldn't pick just one. During the

election, we set out four key elements in our election platform. First was access to a powerful workforce, ensuring we have the skills that are necessary. No. 2 was access to markets, which involved the trade agreements that would take down barriers and then putting the infrastructure in place to allow us to get our goods to market. We're the only major energy producer in the world without [proximity between our oil and] tide water. The No. 3 issue is access to capital. Many say it's tough to get the capital to keep a business going, particularly in the pre-commercialization stage. There's a valley of death that you go through where you have a proven concept, but it's not on store shelves. The final one is access to technology and innovation. Are we doing enough to commercialize new technologies and to invest in technology for our businesses to make sure they can compete? The answer is no, we're not. There's no one silver bullet. You have to be able to move ahead on a whole range of areas to be successful.

We're eminently capable of doing that, but it will be important for us to set priorities within those areas. For example, we're very pleased that the government is committed to a major infrastructure program. But what will be important is the nature of the program. We've been spending on infrastructure instead of investing in it for the last 40 years. So we have a major gap. There's not enough money in the public sector to meet the need, so we'll have to look at leveraging funds through things like PPP [public-private partnerships].

Even with the money that is available in the public sector, the temptation of politicians is to spread the money like peanut butter across the country. What is vital is that we take the money and focus it on areas where there's an economic return — issues like the roads in key areas, bridges, ports, border management, airports. Those areas which will actually drive economic development need to be the priorities. It can be politically popular to throw a fresh can of paint on the local curling club, but what it doesn't do is create the economic activity that the country as a whole needs. We need to do triage and focus on those areas where we'll get the greatest economic return for our investment.

We have to have a sense of urgency. It's reaching a boiling point. We look out the window and say we have a pretty good life, then you go to other countries and you see the pace at which they're improving. The pace at which people are improving their educational systems, the pace at which emerging economies are moving up the development scale and moving from producing commodities to doing their own R&D and providing global leadership and providing new technologies. You realize that Canada has been falling further back. We're the most fortunate people in the world if you look at our resource inheritance. There's not a country in the world that wouldn't trade places with us. We have every country's first-generation diaspora living in peace. You get the creativity from that, but you also have networks that go back to those countries. Boy — what an incredible base for us to build upon in terms of developing our trading relationships. If you look at it in terms of geography, we're sitting next to the world's biggest market. But are we living up to our potential? Or are we stealing from our kids? I think we've been falling short.

DM: I read a forecast yesterday that even with two interest rate cuts in 2015, and the election of a pro-stimulus government, the economy may yet need another shot in the arm.

PB: We'll see. It's been disappointing that growth has been so sluggish. We're growing, but it's slow growth by any standard. I don't think we can allow a gap to grow between U.S. interest rates and Canadian interest rates. As we start to see [U.S. rates] going up, and I anticipate that happening sooner rather than later, it would be hard for us to move in the other direction. I don't anticipate Canadian interest rates going up in the short term, but I think everyone realizes they can't remain low indefinitely.

DM: What did you think of the Quebec government's cash infusion of $1 billion to Bombardier?

PB: I think it highlights the significance of aerospace within the Quebec economy and the critical role that Bombardier plays in the cluster. We all certainly hope it will be successful. It's a source of pride to see Canadian aircraft being sold around the world. By all accounts, the C-series is a fine piece of technology and we all hope they'll be successful in terms of marketing it.

DM: Just the number of Quebec companies in their supply chain is remarkable.

PB: In Montreal, you're looking at a couple hundred companies so you realize the importance of a company like that in terms of driving so much economic activity. It's not simply the OEM [official equipment manufacturers], but everyone down through the production chain. And again, we've seen it in the resource sector. [I saw it in the] visit I made to Sault Ste. Marie yesterday, where the ore is mined in Quebec, brought to Algoma Steel in Sault Ste. Marie and turned into steel. Then it goes to Tenaris [Tenaris Algoma Tubes in Sault Ste. Marie], where it's made into pipelines and then shipped to Alberta and B.C., where it's used to get oil and gas from the ground. You quickly realize how interconnected the economy is. You can't just pluck out one of the players without serious consequences. D

Two large donations from UAE's embassy in Canada

Over the last few months of 2015, the embassy of the United Arab Emirates injected $20,000 into two Canadian health-care organizations. First, at the end of August 2015, Ambassador Mohammed Saif Helal Al Shehhi held a press conference to announce the embassy's donation of $10,000 to the Canadian Cancer Society to support ground-breaking research and provide cancer information and support services for people living with the disease.

In October, the ambassador announced that the embassy would also donate $10,000 to the Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) in Toronto. That donation was provided in memory of Gertrude Dyke, a Canadian nurse who worked in UAE for 38 years to deliver approximately 90,000 UAE babies. Known as Doctora Latifa ("doctor of mercy") in the UAE, she began her work during the country's early history, when it was poor, and when as many as one in two infants died and one in three women died in childbirth.

"This donation today is, in small part, our way of giving back to Canada a little of what Dr. Latifa gave to us," the ambassador said at the announcement, adding later that Dyke was in the UAE when the country "had nothing" — before the discovery of oil. "As many of you know, the UAE was named the largest donor of international aid, according to its national income, for 2013–14, providing almost US $5 billion dollars each year to humanitarian projects worldwide."

At the cheque presentation, from left, Hamad Al Awadi, counsellor at the embassy; Ambassador Mohammed Saif Helal Al Shehhi; Gabriel Miller, director of public issues for the Canadian Cancer Society; and Jamal Al Zaabi, attaché.

The ambassador quoted Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE's current president, who has said: "Humanitarian diplomacy is one of the main pillars of our foreign policy."

Referring to that day's cheque presentation, the ambassador added: "We hope we are continuing that tradition here today."

SickKids is the most research-intensive hospital in Canada, and the largest centre dedicated to improving children's health in the country. The hospital treats more than 100,000 patients a year and has 10,000 staff members and volunteers. Gifts such as that from the UAE help the hospital achieve its mission to improve children's health, create ground-breaking scientific and clinical advancements and provide training to the next generation of experts in child health.

"We're incredibly fortunate to have the UAE embassy and the ambassador come forward with this donation," said Colin Hennigar, director of major gifts at SickKids, "especially in memory of Gertrude, who was a nurse in the UAE, and what a nice, full-circle thing to come back to help children in Canada. It's a great gesture."

ÜLLE BAUM

Ecuador: Ready for Canadian investment

By Nicolás Fabian Trujillo-Newlin
Ambassador of Ecuador

Visitors will be able to enjoy the year-round, warm Pacific Ocean breeze on Ecuador's beautiful beaches while eating its world-famous ceviche.

Ecuador is blessed with a privileged position on the world map. Located at latitude zero, the country sits right on the equatorial line, nestled between the Andes Mountains, the Pacific Ocean and the Amazon rainforest. It is one of the most bio-diverse countries in the world and is the home of the Galapagos Islands, where the fantastic and unique local flora and fauna inspired Charles Darwin to develop his theory of evolution. You can find all of this in a country with a combined land mass of slightly more than 250,000 square kilometres.

While Ecuador sits atop a significant amount of oil reserves, the country has also invested heavily in renewable energy, and, by 2016, we expect that more than 90 percent of our electricity requirements will be met through hydropower generation. We also believe the time has come for all nations to accept their responsibility to develop and execute guidelines to ensure a sustainable future for our environment, and in turn, for our people.

Ecuador is very fortunate to be led by a highly competent president, a true visionary, with the ability to efficiently execute a well-thought-out development plan. President Rafael Correa is an economist and academic who has earned a master of arts in economics at Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium, and a master of science and PhD in economics from the University of Illinois. He is a tremendously hardworking, pragmatic and motivating leader, who enjoys immense popular support. Thanks to his leadership, Ecuador today is one of the most stable societies in the region, and has seen sustained growth as the country transitions into a thriving post-petroleum knowledge-based economy. Correa's achievements — eliminating poverty while restoring hope in the hearts of our people — continue to advance the socio-economic development of Ecuador and strengthen its regional and international position.

In order to achieve its development goals, Ecuador has diversified its economic partners and actively works to attract responsible foreign investors. Ecuador's laws and regulations set a modern framework for investment in our country, in accordance with the realities of the 21st Century.

The total amount of exports from Canada to Ecuador in 2014 was $377 million, and the top five products exported were meslin (rye and wheat), petroleum, lentils, newsprint and machinery.

The total amount of exports from Ecuador to Canada in 2014 was $368 million and the top five products Ecuador exported to Canada are bananas, gold, cut roses and buds, shrimp and prawns and cocoa beans.

Canadian investors are welcome in Ecuador. In fact, Canada was Ecuador's single largest source of foreign direct investment in 2014, with more than $250 million in foreign direct investment. We have an excellent relationship with leading Canadian natural resources operators and real estate developers, among many others who have invested in profitable ventures in Ecuador. These companies have also cooperated with the government of Ecuador to develop knowledge transfer and establish public-private partnerships.

Ecuador considers Canada one of its key development partners and, as a natural progression of this relationship, we believe the time has come to initiate the process of negotiating a bilateral trade agreement that will serve the interests of both countries for years to come. Ecuador is actively seeking to engage Canadian trade and investment partners, and although progress toward initiating trade negotiations has been made, there is still a long road ahead of us.

In closing, I would like to invite Canadians to visit Ecuador. Visitors will be able to enjoy the year-round warm Pacific Ocean breeze on our beautiful beaches while eating our world-famous ceviche. Adventure-seekers will be able to reach the heights of the Andes Mountains and explore the pristine Amazon rainforest. Tourists can also visit our UNESCO World Heritage sites and taste a hot chocolate beverage made with the world's finest cocoa beans. Of course, the enchanted Galapagos Islands are a must. There, visitors can swim with warm-water penguins and take a stroll near giant tortoises and sea lions. We look forward to seeing ever-increasing numbers of our Canadian friends enjoying the warm hospitality and friendliness that characterize the Ecuadorean people.

Nicolás Fabian Trujillo-Newlin is Ecuador's ambassador. Reach him at ambassador@embassyecuador.ca or (613) 563-8206.

EMBASSY OF ECUADOR

Ethiopia: 11 percent GDP growth for a decade

By Birtukan Ayano Dadi
Ambassador of Ethiopia

An agreement gives textiles tariff-free access to the Canadian market.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and Canada. Although Canada is well-known to Ethiopians, events were held in Addis Ababa and Ottawa to celebrate formal diplomatic ties.

Ethiopia has one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, having managed to maintain an average 11 percent GDP growth rate for more than a decade. The country just concluded its first cycle of a five-year economic plan, known as the growth and transformation plan (GTP I), and has just embarked upon GTP II, which will focus on industrialization.

As infrastructure expansion is one of the central pillars of the GTP, road and railway construction and the construction of hydro, wind and geothermal projects are well under way. The construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, with a power-generating capacity of 6,000MW, is progressing on schedule.

Current data on trade flows and investment relations between Canada and Ethiopia are modest, but there is tremendous potential for growth. Recent years have shown enhanced trade and investment interest between Ethiopia and Canada. Last year alone, we managed to have an Ethiopian trade and investment delegation come to Canada and a Canadian business mission visit Ethiopia.

In 2014, two-way trade volume between the countries totalled $161 million, with $137 million in Canadian exports to Ethiopia and $24.5 million in Ethiopian exports to Canada. The data for 2013 show that Canadian exports were $21 million, while Ethiopian exports to Canada were $17 million. Unusually high amounts of Canadian exports, as seen in 2014, are attributed to the high-value nature of purchases such as aircraft. Ethiopian Airlines imports the Q400 aircraft from Bombardier, a company that has set up a regional maintenance facility for the Q400 in Addis Ababa. Apart from Canadian aircraft, exports to Ethiopia are mainly machinery, spare parts and chemicals. Canada's imports from Ethiopia consist mainly of agri-food products, such as coffee, spices, oilseeds, leather and leather products, textiles and cut flowers.

In January 2010, Ethiopia and Canada concluded an air services agreement that led to the commencement of Ethiopian Airlines flights from Addis Ababa to Toronto in July 2012. Currently, there are three flights per week connecting Toronto to Addis Ababa and, through Addis Ababa, to 49 other destinations in Africa.

A memorandum of understanding, signed between Canada and Ethiopia in 2003, allows Ethiopian exports of textile and apparel goods tariff-free access to the Canadian market. Through this provision, we would like to see more Ethiopian-made textiles and garments exported to the Canadian market. And it's happening to some extent: Ethiopia is emerging as a favoured destination for apparel makers. Canadian fashion and garment companies could set up manufacturing plants to make use of the low cost of labour and power for manufacturing.

Canadian investment in Ethiopia is mainly in the extractive sector. Nearly 15 Canadian companies are licensed and are exploring various minerals, including potash and base metals, and we are now working closely with Canada to build capacity for our extractive sector.

Ethiopia offers attractive investment opportunities for Canadian companies. The Ethiopian Investment Commission provides a one-stop-shopping service for investors and Ethiopia is signatory to the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The signing of a foreign investment protection agreement between Ethiopia and Canada is under discussion.

We would like to see more Canadian investors taking part in the industrialization of the country during the GTP II period. There are industrial zones waiting for foreign investors and plenty of business opportunities for Canadian companies interested in the massive infrastructure projects under way in Ethiopia. GTP II will see construction of more power generation projects, roads and railways.

Ethiopia's recent development and fast-paced growth are now fully acknowledged by international financial institutions and the media. I would like to seize this opportunity to invite the Canadian media to visit Ethiopia and share their findings with the Canadian business community and the public at large.

Birtukan Ayano Dadi is ambassador of Ethiopia. Reach her at (613) 565-6637 ext.28 or info@ethioembassycanada.org.

Slovenia: Globally branded and seeking trade

By Marjan Cencen
Ambassador of Slovenia

Throughout history, Slovenia has been at a crossroads of routes leading from east to west and north to south, with many influences shaping its character. Today, this can be seen in Slovenia's cultural diversity, its adventuresome people, its vibrant economic activity and the valuable contributions of Slovenian scientists to the world. Positive results achieved by Slovenian companies are due to competitive advantages such as the traditional hard-working character of Slovenia's highly educated people, reliability and innovativeness, an internationally oriented economy, high-quality industrial design and well-developed infrastructure.

Slovenian companies that have achieved global success primarily stem from the services sector, including the IT, pharmaceutical and automotive sectors. Slovenia's economy excels at harnessing niche opportunities. Slovenians make Elan skis that are used by numerous skiing champions, the stylishly designed Gorenje appliances, Akrapovič motorcycle exhaust systems and the ultralight Pipistrel aircraft, a copy of which is exhibited at the International Civil Aviation Organization's headquarters in Montreal.

Slovenia and Canada maintain close bilateral ties. We are convinced the new EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement will mark the beginning of an even more dynamic chapter in our relations.

Slovenia's current trade volume of $190 million is below capacity and includes exports of pharmaceuticals, turbines, electrical machinery, furniture, aircraft and aircraft parts.

Our main imports from Canada are airplanes, mechanical devices, nuclear reactors, aluminum and pharmaceuticals.

The ultralight Pipistrel aircraft is made in Slovenia.

Some companies of Slovenian origin operate in Canada, including a subsidiary of Litostroj Power called Litostroj Hydro. Its most successful product in Canada is a turbine called Saxo. Hydro Québec, which is among the largest producers of hydropower in the world, is one of its customers.

Also present in Canada are Elan Sports and Interblock Casino Products Canada, a manufacturer of electronic-controlled slot machines for gambling. In Slovenia, Adria Airways Tehnika is working closely with Canada's Bombardier as the regional maintenance hub for the Canadair regional jet in Europe.

The potential to increase economic co-operation lies particularly in the fields of logistics, transportation, automotive, energy, environmental technologies, food-processing, wood processing, chemicals, biotechnology and nanotechnology. Slovenia is also interested in Canada's experience in public-private partnerships, which are becoming a model for financing projects in Slovenia.

My government is aware of the importance of foreign investments for stronger economic growth in Slovenia and strives to attract it, particularly in the area of high technology and industries with higher added value. Several Slovenian state-owned enterprises are available for privatization and investment opportunities exist in many other sectors, including the tourism, manufacturing, automotive and banking industries.

Slovenia has a liberal foreign investment regime and does not distinguish between foreign and domestic investors. The movement of capital is fully liberalized and in line with EU rules. Companies, established or purchased by foreign nationals in Slovenia, have the same property rights as companies established by Slovenians. That is why they may own real estate without limitation. Since Slovenia's accession to the EU, its citizens and legal entities have been permitted to freely and unconditionally invest in and acquire real estate in Slovenia and since 2010, when Slovenia became an OECD member, the same regime has applied to citizens and legal entities of other OECD countries, including Canada.

In science, Slovenians have always been immensely inquisitive. The world-renowned Jožef Stefan Institute pursues the mission of creating, disseminating and transferring knowledge in the fields of natural, technical and life sciences. It specializes in top-level research and technology development. It co-operates with multiple international research institutions and we are glad that Canadians are among them. The nuclear reactor for research training in Slovenia came from Canada.

Slovenia is a wonderful country to visit, yet it is still undiscovered by Canadians. Vacation opportunities abound: mountaineering, trekking, cycling, swimming, spas, rafting, kayaking, sailing, golf, hunting, fishing and others. Because the country is small, one can also enjoy the Alps, Pannonian Plains and Mediterranean Sea — all in one day. Due to its location, Slovenia offers incredibly varied culinary adventures, including world-class wines from three geographic regions. Two of the wines have been declared among the top-100 in the world and you can try some of them in Canada. All of this, combined with the legendary hospitality of the Slovenian people, will make a visit difficult to resist.

Marjan Cencen is the ambassador of Slovenia. Reach him at vot@gov.si or (613) 565-5781.

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Russian offensive revives painful past for Estonians

FIRST NAME: Gita

LAST NAME: Kalmet

CITIZENSHIP: Estonian

PRESENTED CREDENTIALS AS AMBASSADOR: Aug. 27, 2013

PREVIOUS POSTINGS: France and Netherlands

I joined the Estonian foreign service in 1993, an exciting time for my country. On my first day, as I awaited my first assignment, a colleague suggested I find out how much military equipment the Russians had transported back over the border that month; this was prior to their full military withdrawal in August 2014. I could not have imagined, back then, that 20 years later, I would be reading headlines in Canadian newspapers speculating that the city of Narva, on Estonia's eastern border, could be the Russian Federation's next target. Or worse, that there would be a discussion about how long Estonia could withstand an offensive in the face of real aggression.

None of us wanted to believe we would ever have to worry about the Russian military machine rolling across the border again. Or that journalists would interview Narva's people to gauge their desire to break away from our country. Or that Russia would have positioned massive military forces behind Estonia's eastern border. Or that there would be war in Ukraine — a war that is euphemistically referred to as a conflict; a war that, for many, is thought of as someone else's war. Diplomats do use euphemistic language so as not to offend anyone, but are we not perhaps confusing diplomatic finesse with indifference? We delude ourselves if we believe our own security and safety remain unaffected when cities in Europe are hit by Russian missiles. This is a complete abandonment of international law and the foundations of the peace that has reigned on our continent since 1945. There is no better defence for a small state than the unwavering force of international law and the predictability of the international order. If these are lost, we are all left to fend for ourselves.

In September, author Ernie Regher noted in *Embassy* newspaper that "vulnerability to military attack or interference is much more a product of political weakness than military weakness... Preserving national sovereignty and defending against foreign predators — in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania — dependof much more on the quality of governance there than on military preparedness and defence. The Baltics are basically well-governed spaces that enjoy political stability. Each sustains a strong national consensus in support of independence and the prevailing political order. They score high in global peace and prosperity indexes, and it is the legitimacy of their governments and public institutions that radically reduces their vulnerability to Russian 'help' for their Russian-speaking populations."

I agree with this assessment, but unfortunately, the logic of the academic world does not always apply in real life. A chessmaster's refined strategy is useless if he is hit over the head with a club. Our historical experience will not allow us the luxury of waiting to see what happens. We must prepare. Now.

The unpredictable decision-making of our eastern neighbour and the permanent stationing of significant military forces and unfriendly activity in the closest proximity to the Baltic States require a quick reaction from NATO, which will only be possible with a real military presence on its eastern border. It is crucial for us that the deterrent be strong. You can only convince others of what you are sure of yourself.

The foundation of our defence policy is NATO. A year ago, at the summit in Wales, NATO allies approved the Readiness Action Plan and made a number of

Estonian army scouts from the 1st Battalion practise their defensive manoeuvres during Exercise SIIL/ Steadfast Javelin in May 2015.

NATO

related decisions aimed at enhancing the alliance's military presence on its eastern borders. Throughout recently turbulent times, our allies have ensured their presence in the air, on land and at sea. Solidarity among the NATO countries has shown us that we have valuable and trustworthy allies. Canada is firmly one of them.

Canada has been a principled and staunch ally for Estonia, and its clear stance is widely recognized and greatly appreciated. Canadian fighter jets patrolled our skies last year and a Canadian military ship sailed in the Baltic Sea. It is good to have an unwavering ally.

Estonia knows that defence begins at home. "We are NATO," our president, Toomas Hendrik Ives, is fond of saying in response to impatience with NATO at home. Estonia is one of the members of the alliance that allocates two percent of its GDP to defence spending. I am sure that our country could also find many other places to invest this money, but in addition to having a strong tradition of keeping our promises, Estonians believe that this two percent demonstrates our political will and readiness to contribute to our common defence and security.

The defence forces mobilization exercise that took place in spring 2015 involved thousands of reservists, members of the Defence League, conscripts, members of the Estonian Defence Forces in active service and NATO troops, proving that the Estonian mobilization system works and that Estonians are committed to defending their country.

There's speculation that the city of Narva could be Russia's next target.

In autumn 2015 in Spain, Estonia participated as part of the Baltic Battalion in Trident Juncture, the largest NATO exercise to be held in the past 10 years. Twenty years have now passed since the Estonian Defence Forces took part in their first operation abroad and today, more than 2,500 men and women have participated in operations all over the world. For their nation, many of them have put their lives at risk in various war zones. Estonians know the price of security.

In the summer of 2015, Estonia's ambassadors who are posted around the world, gathered at Tapa military base in Estonia, where our U.S. and British allies are stationed. There, Lt.-Gen. Riho Terras, commander of the Estonian defence forces, spoke about the security situation. When asked how long Estonia could withstand an attack, Terras replied, "as long as necessary." Then, after a long, strained pause, he added emphatically, "and even longer." Only those familiar with the battles in defence of Estonia in 1944 understand what "and even longer" really means. Strangely, this comforted me. Now I know Estonia can withstand aggression as long as necessary, but we need the presence of our allies to ensure that the price of this endurance will not be irreversibly high for our tiny nation. We need the presence of our allies to ensure that no one will ever have the courage to try to make us pay such a price.

Gita Kalmet is Estonia's ambassador to Canada.

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The Japanese government tracks levels of physical activity among its citizens. These students are taking part in a morning exercise routine at their high school in Kobe.

Survival ... of the fittest

As 2016 kicks off, and hordes of us head back to the gym to once again pursue our dreams of fitness excellence, here's a look at 10 of the fittest nations on the planet.

By Wolfgang Depner

Every January, scores of people storm the doors of their local fitness studios. Their will is resolute, their aim simple — to finally get into shape, as they had promised themselves at the stroke of midnight on Jan. 1. Yet weeks later, the resolve behind this tide will have ebbed away, as old habits reassert themselves. Such is the reality of modern life in the early 21st Century, a life defined by long stretches of physical inactivity and the ready availability of food high in calories.

It was not always this way. Not many generations have passed since physical toil and nutritional insecurity defined life across much of the world. Today, a growing percentage of people struggle with being overweight and obese. In fact, the World Health Organization has found that being overweight and obese are linked to more deaths worldwide than being underweight, as most of the global population resides in countries where being too heavy kills more people than being too thin. This list includes all high-income and most middle-income countries. In this context, we have surveyed the 10 "fittest" countries in the developed world, as measured by obesity figures published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The WHO defines being overweight and obese as "an abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health," as measured by the Body Mass Index (BMI), a height-to-weight ratio in which the weight of a person in kilograms is divided by the square of his height in metres. An individual with a BMI that is equal or greater than 25 counts as overweight, a person with a BMI equal or greater than 30 is considered obese.

In 2014, more than 1.9 billion adults qualified as being overweight. Of these, more than 600 million were obese, according to the WHO. Notably, it has found that global obesity rates have more than doubled since 1980. Statistics of this sort have led researchers to speak of an obesity epidemic whose annual financial cost alone has reached $2 trillion, according to a report published by the McKinsey Global Institute in 2014.

Fundamentally, being overweight or obese constitutes an "energy imbalance between calories consumed and calories expended," according to the WHO, which identifies two causes: an "increased intake of energy-dense foods that are high in fat" and an "increase in physical inactivity due to the increasingly sedentary nature of many forms of work, changing modes of transportation and increasing urbanization." New research published in the *Journal of Sports Medicine* has since refined, if not complicated, this calculation by noting that excess carbohydrates and sugars, not physical inactivity, bear responsibility for the surge in obesity. Recent developments have since recognized this new thinking. The Canadian and U.S. governments have proposed new food-labelling measures that would help consumers identify added sugar in food products.

This commentary links obesity to socio-economic conditions and a number of scholars have investigated the societal dimensions of obesity by tracking it against measures such as gross domestic product (GDP), happiness levels and environmental sustainability. Scholars have found an initially positive relationship between rising BMI and economic growth. Research shows people living in poor countries with under-developed economies generally have low BMIs, as their main industries (agriculture, textiles and tourism) require hard, but low-paying forms of physical labour. Examples include countries such as Bangladesh and Burundi.

Not surprisingly, these countries also report relatively low levels of happiness and low life expectancies. In short, some people in those countries may be physically fit, but also may be poor and miserable, condemned to live short lives. It is for this reason that we have excluded developing countries. Their populations

might be lean, but for all the wrong reasons. This means low-income countries can lift themselves out of poverty and unhappiness through economic growth, with long-term health benefits. As Garry Egger, Boyd Swinburn and F.M. Amirul Islam write, "[economic growth] has…undoubtedly been one of the single biggest influences on health improvements throughout human history."

It is for this reason that we have chosen to focus on developed nations. Their economies can free their people from extreme physical toil and provide them the (potential) means to enjoy lives of leisure. But as Egger, Swinburn and Islam note, "by the law of diminishing returns, beyond a point, the benefits from continued economic growth start diminishing and 'costs' start arising." They include obesity and environmental decline. The researchers came to this conclusion as they attempted to find the sweet spot where GDP is sufficiently high, CO2 emissions sustainable and BMI healthy. Unfortunately, they write, "it seems unlikely that any country has, or will ever pass through the theoretical ideal that we have proposed during its development." That said, our list nonetheless shows that some countries are closer to this ideal than others.

1. Japan

Countries that compete to host Olympic Games continually claim the Games will inspire their citizens to get off the couch. This trickle-down theory of fitness argues that the prospect of hosting the games will push current and future generations of athletes to go faster, higher and stronger. Their preparations and subsequent performances will then rub off on the public. Olympic Games certainly provide governments with opportunities to encourage more physical activity, as was the case in Britain, whose government saw the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London as a catalyst to raise low levels of physical activity.

Research published in *The Lancet* in July 2012 led the *Guardian* to call Britain the "third most slothful country in Europe." Not much has changed since then, but the full verdict remains outstanding.

Research published in the aftermath of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* sums it up best: "The 2010 Olympic Games had no measurable impact on objectively measured physical activity or the prevalence of overall sports participation among Canadian children. Much greater cross-government and long-term efforts are needed to create the condition for an Olympic legacy effect on physical activity."

Which brings us to Japan, where the Summer Olympic Games of 1964 inspired the annual Health and Sports Day, a national holiday during which communities across Japan stage mini-Olympics. First held in 1966, the Health and Sports Day is part of a larger agenda to maintain high levels of fitness in an aging society that condemns idleness. Armies of Japanese factory workers continue to perform calisthenics before work. As Laura Spielvogel writes in her analysis of Japan's fitness culture, the "tremendous success of Japan's post-war economy was built on the unflagging efforts of a physically fit workforce." The Japanese government also meticulously tracks levels of physical activity among its citizens as it deals with the challenges of continued economic uncertainty and the greying of society. "Corporate managers and government officials recognize that by maintaining a high standard of health and fitness not only for company employees," Spielvogel writes, "[but] for also for the elderly and their caregiving children, the health of the economy is assured as well," True, this society-wide commitment to physical activity sounds foreign, even invasive, to western ears. Nor is it the sole reason for Japan's low level of obesity of around 3.8 percent. Genetic factors and a fish-based diet that emphasizes portion control also account for it.

Karate training at the beach in Ehime, Japan.

2. South Korea

As mentioned, research identifies a positive relationship between economic growth and body mass index (BMI) that eventually produces diminishing returns. The world's 13th largest economy neatly demonstrates many aspects of this theory, at least when it comes to obesity. In the 1960s, South Korea's GDP ranked alongside the GDP of poorer countries in Asia and Africa. South Korea has subsequently used an export-based strategy — exports currently account for roughly half of its GDP — to develop one of the world's leading economies. In 2014, Korea's total GDP was just under US $1.2 trillion.

While this development has undoubtedly lifted South Koreans out of poverty, it has also "resulted in considerable lifestyle changes, such as increased consumption of western food and sedentary behaviour with less physical activity," a 2014 article published in the *Journal of Epidemiology* notes. One telling change is the popularity of e-sports, namely competitive video gaming. In October 2014, 40,000 South Koreans filled a soccer stadium in Seoul to watch two teams of five players compete for the world championship for League of Legends, a popular video game.

Millions more follow various e-sports leagues, if they are not playing video games themselves. Video game clubs rather than movie theatres have become popular destinations for couples, the *New York Times* reports. Accordingly, researchers have found a growing rate of obesity among South Koreans.

A 2014 study by South Korea's National Health Insurance Service found the number of obese Koreans has gone up to 4.2 per cent in 2012 from 2.5 percent in 2002, with the rate of increase pronounced among men in their 20s and 30s. As of

Korean students take part in the League of Legends world championships.

2013, 32.4 percent of adult South Koreans counted as overweight, an increase of 60 percent. Peer-reviewed academic journals and other sources, including the OECD, confirm these findings. Obesity rates in South Korea may be among the lowest in the OECD, but have been rising steadily. Accordingly, South Korea's government has taken steps to stop this trend. They include, among others, legislation to combat video gaming addiction.

3. Switzerland

The Swiss are getting heavier, but Switzerland still ranks among the most active countries. That is the conclusion from OECD figures published in 2014. They show that approximately nine percent of Swiss people qualify as obese, eight percentage points below the OECD average of 17.9 percent. This relatively low rate is not surprising. OECD figures show the Swiss have 7,142 hours of available leisure per annum. Their high economic productivity — Switzerland's per-capita GDP reached almost US $58,000 in 2014 — gives them the financial resources to enjoy their time away from the office. Switzerland's prosperity also allows the government to generously support measures that ensure and enhance access to various forms of recreation. Consider the numbers: Approximately two out of three Swiss engage in either "active" or "moderately active forms" of exercise, according to a 2010 report by Switzerland's federal office of public health. In its 2014 report, it found that the Swiss preferred sporting activities such as hiking, bicycling, swimming and skiing. The popularity of jogging and weightlifting has also increased. Nearly 25 percent of Swiss people regularly lace up their running shoes and one out of five hits the weights. Overall, the Swiss participate in more than 250 sporting activities. Of notable interest are OECD statistics that show the number of overweight Swiss children is below the OECD average. The International Association for the Study of Obesity reports that 19 percent of boys and 17 percent of girls are overweight or obese in Switzerland, compared with 23 percent of boys and 21 percent of girls in OECD countries. One likely factor behind this figure is Switzerland's education system. It mandates that children receive three hours of compulsory school sports weekly.

No such measure exists in Canada, where only a handful of provinces mandate some level of physical activity among school-aged children. Yet, all of these figures come with caveats. Nearly one third of Swiss people do not engage in any form of physical activity. This has led the government to conclude Switzerland still has a "long way to reach the objective of an 'exercising, physically active population'." These findings also point to various differences in behaviour. Individuals with below-average incomes as well as immigrants are demonstrably less active compared with the rest of the population. Female immigrants appear to be particularly inactive.

Finalists at the end of a walking competition in Lugano, Switzerland.

4. Netherlands

Popular North American culture perceives bicycling as an expensive form of exercise popular among lean, Lycra-wearing members of the elite. The "perpetual insult machine that is Donald Trump" (*Washington Post*) riffed on this view last summer when he mocked U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry after he had broken his leg while cycling near Geneva, where he helped negotiate a deal to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions. "I won't be doing that," Trump said. "And I promise I will never be in a bicycle race."

Cycling's elitist image is not without basis. Cycling is booming among the wealthiest Americans, who cycle for fitness, but also show off their bikes as "road jewelry" as *Business Insider* reports. This status-seeking does not happen in the Netherlands, where cycling is part of everyday culture, rather than an exclusive cult. Personal bicycle ownership is 100

percent among the Dutch, who regard their "bikes as trusty companions in life's adventures," according to the BBC's Anna Holligan. Consider the following numbers. Figures from the European Union show bicycling accounts for 28 percent of all trips in the Netherlands. This rate rises to 70 percent in major cities such as Amsterdam, which consistently ranks among the most bicycle-friendly cities in the world. Holland's flat terrain and dense urban space admittedly encourages cycling as a convenient transportation form.

Such conditions do not exist in most corners of North America, including Canada, where urban sprawl and inadequate infrastructure discourage cycling, with consequences for physical fitness. A 2010 article published in the *American Journal of Public Health* suggests a "significant negative relationship" between self-reported

Bicycle parking lots are busy places in the Netherlands.

obesity and active forms of transportation such as walking and cycling. While the authors temper the significance of their findings, they nonetheless see them "as part of…mounting evidence on the health benefits of active travel." The figures certainly confirm this. Almost 40 percent of Americans qualified as obese in 2011, the highest rate among all OECD countries. In comparison, the Netherlands reported an obesity rate of 11.4 percent.

Granted, the popularity of biking in the Netherlands does not singlehandedly account for this difference. But it is hard to deny its role in light of the following facts: The average American cycles fewer than 50 kilometres a year; the average Dutch citizen more than 860 kilometres, by far the highest rate in the world.

Norwegians are avid cross-country skiers.

5. Norway

If cross-country skiing is Norway's religion, Norwegians experienced a crisis of faith two years ago as the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi raced toward their end. Norwegian skiers had won "just" seven medals in eight cross-country skiing events, two fewer than their Swedish archrivals. Norwegian media used such terms as "catastrophe" and "disaster" to describe this performance and every Norwegian, including Prime Minister Erna Solberg, offered theories, most of which focused on the quality of the wax that either helps skis slide or grip snow.

A late push eventually redeemed the Norwegian cross-country skiers in the eyes of their 5.2 million compatriots as Norway tied Sweden with 11 cross-country medals, claiming victory on the strength of five gold medals versus Sweden's two. Norway's sporting honour was saved and so was its belief in what Norwegians call *friluftsliv*. This concept translates as "open-air living" and represents nothing less a philosophy that encourages people to immerse themselves in nature.

Academics have traced the practice of *friluftsliv* among Norwegians to their self-image as a people with a taste for outdoor activities. This image draws inspiration from a long history of living and surviving in one of the coldest corners of Europe. Archeological digs show humans have skied across modern-day Norway for several millenniums and the solitary harshness of their rugged country has instilled Norwegians with the necessary discipline and physical training to excel in endurance sports such as cross-country skiing and its cousin, biathlon. While eight out of 10 Norwegians live in urban areas, they are never far from the wilderness.

Cultural norms encourage children to play outdoors even on the coldest days and many adults commute to work on their cross-country skis during the long winter. In doing so, they engage in perhaps the most effective form of aerobic exercise, according to research published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology* in 2013. During the summer, Norwegians hike their countless mountains and nearly seven out of 10 own a bicycle, which they use for trips of varying lengths and purposes. Not surprisingly, Norway's obesity rate hovers around 10 percent. In short,

physical activity plays a central part in the day-to-day lives of Norwegians, first by necessity, now by choice.

6. Denmark

Participation at the amateur level is the name of the game in this Scandinavian country. Two million of its 5.5 million citizens hold membership in one of the country's 14,000 sporting clubs, voluntary organizations of various sizes that offer a range of sporting activities to their members. The origins of these clubs date back to the first half of the 19th Century, when Denmark adopted the German model of the *Turnverein* (gymnastic club). These clubs have subsequently become an important part of Danish society, where they

Running has become the preferred activity among adults in Denmark.

serve as practice grounds for the Danish version of consensual democratic governance that characterizes Scandinavia.

Sporting clubs receive considerable state support through national lottery revenues and municipal taxes, as part of an agenda to ensure broad access to recreation under the motto of Sports for All. One measure of this financial support is Denmark's high number of sporting facilities per capita and most Danes think of access to public sports facilities as a "welfare right." That said, Danish recreational tastes are changing. While popular support for the club system remains high, sports participation has shifted toward commercial sports organizations and other providers. Individual sports have gained in popularity. Denmark has also shifted resources toward elite athletes.

Overall though, the numbers show Danes are among the most active Europeans. Research published by the Danish Institute for Sports Studies in 2013 finds Denmark's participation rate "has been on a constant rise" since 1964. In 2007, 86 percent of children participated in some form of sports or exercise — up from 84 percent — and adult participation has grown significantly since 2007, from 56 percent to 64 percent. Favourite activities among children up to the age of 15 include soccer (46 percent participation rate), swimming (38 percent participation rate) and gymnastics (27 percent participation rate). Notably, most children will engage in these activities through sporting clubs. However, Danish children have become less active.

Among adults, running has become the preferred activity, followed by strength training and walking or hiking. And since these activities are largely self-organized, they will often take place outside the club system, in public spaces or commercial facilities. These developments have raised concerns that socio-economic factors, such as income and education, will create barriers to physical activity. Accordingly, the Danish government has pushed for reforms to improve public facilities, access to recreational programs and physical education.

7. France

In his book, *1000 Years of Annoying The French*, Stephen Clark mines the history between his native England and France with insight and humour to uncover an enduring love-hate relationship that manifests itself in almost every field.

Consider some of the reactions in the English media to new figures from the (WHO) that predict that three in every four men and two in every three women in the England will be overweight. Naturally, some British commentators immediately used the occasion to compare waistlines, only to discover disappointment. "It is very tiresome, but yet again the dastardly French thwart everyone, it seems, by their insistence on keeping slim at all costs," writes *The Independent*'s Rosie Millard. "Even in the future, when Les Rosbifs are predicted to get a tiny bit slimmer, and Les Frogs a tiny bit wider, we still lead them by a lardy country mile in the fat stakes."

Notwithstanding these clichés, Millard's cheeky commentary is more or less correct. Figures from the OECD confirm obesity rates in France are among the lowest, at around 10 percent. The comparable figure for the England is 25 percent. So

Some speculate that the French stay thin because of the health benefits of wine and cheese.

what accounts for this difference, despite French culinary choices that are high in cholesterol and saturated fat? Some theories have credited these choices for keeping the French (relatively) slim by pointing to the positive health effects of cheese and wine. Others have focused on how the French prepare and consume food. Mealtimes are cherished and the quality of food appears accordingly high.

French obesity specialist Jean Marc Catheline told National Public Radio (NPR) that the French obsession with food is exactly what has protected them against obesity. "The French know how to cook and prepare food," he says. "French families have always known what's good for them and what isn't. We are also a country with strong rural traditions and great respect for food from the farm." These aspects of French life have gained increased attention outside of France, including in England, where Millard has this advice for readers. "So, slim down by elevating food. Cook at home and wear chic clothes. Go a little French, in other words." Yet French traditions are changing. As NPR reports, the "un-French habit of eating anywhere,

anytime, seems to be catching on in France" and so are high-calorie processed foods.

8. Sweden

The geography of obesity in the developed world reveals three general patterns. First, it is high in English-speaking countries, as six out of the 10 most obese OECD countries have historical, linguistic and cultural ties to England. Second, it is high in North America, as the United States and Mexico top the OECD's most obese list, with Canada ranking sixth. Third, obesity rates across Europe differ across regions, but are all pointing in the same direction — up.

Consider Northern Europe: Countries in this region, excluding England, generally boast the lowest obesity rates. This group includes Sweden, where the OECD reported an obesity rate of just below 12 percent. But new research points toward a spike in rates. The World Health Organization predicts that more than 25 percent of Swedish men and 22 percent of Swedish women will be obese by 2030. "Even in countries with traditionally lower prevalence of obesity, such as Sweden, obesity rates are predicted to rise sharply," the WHO notes.

So what is going on? Why are Swedes following their slothful European neighours? First, let's consider the good news. Research published in 2012 in the *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* found that about two-thirds of Swedes are physically active for at least a half hour every day, fulfilling the minimum recommended physical activity requirement. But a closer look reveals Sweden's population has become more sedentary. This development is particularly evident among Swedish children, as eight out of 10 fail to meet required levels of physical activity. Simultaneously, this research found that Swedish eating habits have "largely deteriorated" since 1980, but noted some recent improvements.

In short, Swedes are emulating their neighbours in central and southern Europe in exercising less and eating more. Peter Bergsten, a professor of medicine and cellular biology at Uppsala University, also points toward another possible factor in Sweden's growing waistline: immigration. "Migration to the EU and between different countries is also an issue because it is making regional patterns less clear," Swedish media quote Bergsten. "Europe is becoming more homogeneous, with different ethnicities appearing in all countries, and so there are more varied diets appearing in different nations…fewer differences between individual nations." Bergsten noted in his remarks that different ethnicities possess different genetic predispositions toward obesity, but stressed researchers want to avoid fuelling ethnic prejudices."These concepts are a little bit tricky to work with nowadays," he added, "but we want to do more genetic research to work against prejudices and help people to be alleviated of certain problems and generally to be more healthy."

Sweden's obesity rate is just below 12 percent.

9. Italy

Nutritional experts have long praised the Mediterranean diet — rich in olive oil, legumes, vegetables and fibre — as a model worthy of emulation. But recent evidence shows that the financial crisis gripping many countries in the region has altered their dietary habits.

Consider Italy. While it can claim a relatively low obesity rate, the economic turmoil of recent years has forced many families to replace healthy, but expensive, foods with cheaper, less healthy alternatives. Government statistics published in 2012 show that one out of three Italian households has cut food spending in terms of quality, quantity or both. These developments have deepened concerns about the obesity crisis sweeping the European continent, including Italy, where 36 percent of boys and 34 percent of girls qualify as overweight, according to OECD research that looked at the relationship between obesity and the financial crisis.

The Mediterranean diet may account for Italy's generally slim waistlines.

In fact, this research finds that the prevalence of overweight or obese children is worse in Greece, Italy, Slovenia and the United States than in the rest of the OECD. Overall, the OECD concludes that the "economic crisis is likely to have contributed to further growth in obesity." *The New York Times* accordingly concludes that "Europe is discovering what many in the United States have known for a long time: When times are tough, one of the first things to go out the window is health and nutrition" in pointing to the experiences of low-income Americans, who have disproportionate levels of obesity.

So what is to be done? Research published in *The Lancet* argues that governments should do more to encourage preventative measures that focus on such things as diet and exercise. Instead, the opposite might be happening, according to a joint report by the OECD and the European Commission. It has found that governments have cut health-care spending. Between 2009 and 2012, health-care expenditures fell in half of the EU countries and significantly slowed in the rest. On average, health spending decreased by 0.6 percent each, compared with annual growth of 4.7 percent between 2000 and 2009.

10. Austria

Austria's obesity rate of approximately 12 percent puts the alpine republic among the leanest OECD members. But this relatively favourable ranking obscures the declining importance of sports in a country suited for a wide variety of activities, be it skiing during the winter or hiking during the summer. "Lack of exercise is a massive societal problem," laments Hans Holdhaus, the country's leading fitness and sports scientist, in *Der Standard*. As director of the *Institut für medizinische und sportwissenschaftliche Beratung* (IMSB), Holdhaus has the evidence to prove this point.

A study of Austrian children conducted in 1999 revealed that they suffered from notorious weaknesses in co-ordination, general health defects, fear of movement, obesity and postural defects. Despite much talk, not much has changed since then, Holdhaus says. Followup studies found that Austrian children struggle to perform somersaults. To be fair, the Austrian government has recognized the severity of the problem. Gesundheit Österreich, the country's national health planning office, calls the "lack of physical activity one of the greatest health risks of our time," one that will only intensify in the future. Austria has responded to it by launching a number of measures. They include participation in a pilot project in seven cities, including Vienna, which fosters activities such as walking and cycling.

With a 12-percent obesity rate, Austria is one of the leanest OECD members.

Dr. Wolfgang Depner has taught political theory and international politics at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan campus. He currently lives in Victoria.

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The sad fate of the rhino in Africa

By James Parker

An anesthetized female rhino is geo-tagged and ear-notched, while biological measurements are taken, as part of efforts to fight rhinoceros poaching.

JAMES PARKER

Editor's note: James Parker volunteered with Southern African Wildlife College's (SAWC) ranger division from June to September 2015. During his time at Kruger National Park, he worked with rangers-in-training.

The two white rhinos are grazing in the grass, about 50 metres away. They are not really that hard to track, as they leave a distinctive hoof print or "spoor," wherever they go. On the "approachability" scale, the rhino is rather passive compared to most other animals in South Africa's Kruger National Park. As well, and to the benefit of the poachers, it is a full moon — what's known as a "Poacher's Moon" — this evening, making it easier to track the animals in the dark.

The three Mozambican poachers are on tenterhooks though, as they know there are several special ranger-insertion teams in the park at any one time, and, like the poachers, these rangers are expert track-

ers who have dog-tracking and airborne teams to help them. The poachers move slowly and quietly into position, downwind of the rhinoceros. One poacher is armed with a heavy-calibre rifle, another with a saw and third man with a backpack to store the rhinoceros horn.

All of a sudden, and just as the poacher is about to bring up his rifle to the firing position, a horrendous noise splits the night air and a brilliant light shines down on the three poachers from above. A ranger air operations helicopter team has been dispatched to the poachers' location by members of a ground team who have been tracking them on foot, with the help of a dog team.

The war on rhinoceros

There is a war being fought in South Africa, and many other African countries, that has nothing to do with race or land or politics. It is a tough and dirty war, based solely on greed. It is known as the "poaching war." For many thousands of years, Asian societies and others have followed the mystical and ancient beliefs that animal parts have magical and health-redeeming properties. A longer life and stronger libido are only two of many effects they believe come from their ingestion. In traditional Chinese medicine, ground rhinoceros horn is the main ingredient in *An Gong Niu Huang*, which users believe combats gout, rheumatism and various fevers. In powder form, it is dissolved in boiling water and drunk when cool.

Other animal parts remedies include lion-bone wines, pangolin scales and sea turtle oil. In fact, some estimates put the number of animal species being used in this manner worldwide at more than 1,000. Sadly, despite these "cures" being strongly debunked by the scientific community, the demand for these products is as strong as ever.

The result? These products are more valuable than gold. A kilogram of rhino horn, for example, currently sells for at least $65,000, making it more precious than gold at current rates. Whole underground and illegal economies exist to promote and traffic these animal products with alleged healing powers. These illegal activities in South Africa, for example, continue to successfully exist, almost solely due to pervasive corruption at the highest political levels, down to municipal police, the judiciary and private reserve and national park rangers.

Although subsistence poaching is often used as an excuse, it forms only the tiniest percentage of the overall amount. The vast majority of rhinoceros poaching is done to supply the Asian rhinoceros-horn market, with 83 percent of poachers coming from Mozambique, the country that actually shares the boundaries of Kruger National Park and Limpopo National Park with South Africa. In fact, whole villages in Mozambique depend on this illegal activity as their main industry and source of income. There are clear and worn paths crossing over the border, as indicators of how rife this activity is. Only recently have agreements between the two governments been created to allow Kruger Park authorities to pursue Mozambican poachers back into their own country and extradite them.

Until fences are resurrected between the two parks and the South African army's presence is beefed up along the border, the problem of Mozambican poaching will continue unabated. (A 2002 treaty between South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe created the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park. To make it easier for animals to roam across a now-enlarged habitat, some fencing was taken down.)

Human smuggling organizations, drug cartels, village syndicates and rebel soldiers (who lop off horns and tusks and trade them for arms) are the main players involved in rhino-horn poaching and smuggling. Opportunism exists as well, with amateur poachers coming into Kruger National Park during the time of a full moon to try their luck. Professional poachers, meanwhile, track and kill the rhino at any time of day, night or year. It is not hard to pick out a poacher in his village or town. He is the one with the brand new SUV or the fancy home. He can make $20,000 on a single successful hunt.

South Africa is home to an estimated 18,000 white rhinos and between 1,700 and 1,800 black rhinos. The country does not specify how many of those killed last year were white or black. However, black rhinos are so endangered and valuable that a permanent armed watch of rangers is placed on them. The official number of rhinos poached in 2014 in Kruger National

Kruger National Park is in South Africa, but also has borders with Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Park was approximately 880, but unofficial numbers show that figure as well over 1,000. The fact that even a few rhinos survive these atrocious attacks is due to the hard work of dedicated ranger and veterinary staff, as well as volunteers such as myself. New medical methods to keep injured animals alive are evolving all the time and include grafting elephant skin onto the horrendous wounds left behind after the rhino horn is removed. However, with limited resources for such a huge area — Kruger Park is almost 20,000 square kilometres, making it larger than Israel, Wales or the state of Connecticut — the current war is not being won by the good guys.

Kruger National Park has approximately 500 rangers employed in various capacities. They range from air operations, special tactical teams and covert and overt teams to dog-tracking teams, intelligence operations and regular patrols. As well, the South African Army has units permanently placed in Kruger, who work in conjunction with ranger staff. It is an ongoing war and technological research make up an important part of the anti-poaching tool kit. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), ultralight aircraft, GPS tracking, motion sensors, infrared and forensics are a few examples of technology being successfully brought to bear against the poacher. In some private parks and reserves, outside-the-box thinking has owners trying techniques such as injecting poison into rhino horns. Others have been painting horns with permanent dye. The bottom line, however, is that these methods are time-consuming and inefficient. Further, in most cases, poachers do not care if their products are poisoned or painted.

The war on poachers

The most important component of all the anti-poaching resources is the ranger. In South Africa, most rangers now are being trained at the Southern African Wildlife College's (SAWC) ranger division, which

Would-be rangers doing their physical training at the Southern African Wildlife College's ranger division.

JAMES PARKER

is located in Kruger National Park. As well, many African countries are sending their personnel to SAWC's ranger division or asking the division to send personnel to train and select their rangers.

Formerly a private company called "African Ranger Training Services," owned by Ruben and Marianne de Kock, the business was purchased by and absorbed into SAWC three years ago and is now managed as an academic entity by the de Kocks. Approximately 900 ranger trainees and returning rangers from South Africa's many national and private parks and reserves are processed through the ranger division every year on a number of different courses. These include basic ranger training, patrol leader, man tracking, advanced tactical training, reaction-force training and special operations. On the basic course, over several months, students learn about forensics, man tracking, small-arms, air operations, conservation, flora and fauna, animal tracking and dog handling. All of this is offered in a paramilitary format and local and South African students do not pay fees or tuition.

As one can see, fighting this war requires extensive resources. And, at this time, despite the manpower and the measures being applied, the war is being lost. Watching and participating in the training, I experienced a sense of urgency in the instruction and the training of the student rangers. They are up at 5:30 a.m. doing physical training (PT) while singing their wonderful African songs, which are, perhaps, slightly less wonderful at that hour when one's tent is nearby. They are still working at the end of the day, often well into the evening. A normal day in the camp, which is constructed similarly to one in which they would live, will consist of physical training, several periods of lecture-format classroom instruction, real-world training in the bush, including tracking and animal identification, parade-square drill, as well as short periods for meals, which are taken at an outdoor galley. The ranger training camp itself is one-and-a-half kilometres away from the main campus and is thus surrounded by electric wire, as we are in Kruger Park. Almost daily, on trips back and forth between the two campuses, I would see elephants, giraffes, zebras and warthogs grazing and moving about. It was like being on my own safari.

The trainees and returning rangers live in communal tents, eat outside in a traditional, oval-shaped dining area and do their laundry in outdoor tubs. Even some of the showers are outdoors. This style of living prepares the trainees for life on this terrain, where they will spend much of their time serving as qualified rangers in a park. Some patrols, especially when on a chase, can be a month in length. For this tough, dangerous and dirty job, rangers earn approximately $400 a month.

Trainee rangers crowd around a Kruger Park helicopter while the pilot instructs them about how to load and unload.

On patrol

His UHF radio crackles at 3 a.m., so the section ranger knows it is something important — and likely not good. A report from patrolling rangers comes over the airwaves to the section ranger telling him of a poacher incursion into their section of the park. He gets dressed and goes to his office, where he radios air operations. He gives the standby aircrew the co-ordinates provided to him by the tracking ranger team and asks that they pick him up on the way. He knows there will be a tracking dog team on board, as well.

Next, he goes to the arms lockup, taking his 7.62-calibre R2 rifle and grabs his "go bag," which contains freshly charged radio batteries, ammunition, a first-aid kit, snacks and the paperwork necessary for the operation. He goes outside

Women and men alike are training for this job.

JAMES PARKER



The anesthetized rhino has to be rolled onto her chest so she does not suffocate. Others, whose horns get poached, aren't so lucky.

to where the standby ranger team has its quarters and warns them of possible pending action. By the time he has completed his preparation, the helicopter is hovering overhead. It lands on the marked grass pad and the section ranger climbs on board. The pilot, using his night vision goggles, flies only a few hundred feet above the grassland known as the veld. The airborne team reaches the coordinates of the awaiting team, where the helicopter lands and quickly picks up the section ranger, the dog and its handler. It lifts off again, staying in touch with the team through UHF radio, and is vectored toward the poachers, approximately two kilometres away.

Tension is high as the ground teams move toward the poachers and the endangered rhinoceros. After only minutes of searching, the pilot spots the three poachers and although they try to escape, he pins them with the aircraft's powerful spotlight. He directs the ground teams to the poachers, who, this time at least, drop their weapons and raise their hands.

Too often, poachers fight back against the rangers, and these firefights kill rangers and poachers alike. With rangers having only the legal authority to fire back in self-defence, they are at an extreme disadvantage. It is a dangerous occupation for poachers as well, with Reuters news service suggesting approximately 500 Mozambicans have been killed in this fighting since 2005. The ratcheting-up of tensions is due to the incredible value now placed on rhinoceros horn. This is exceptionally sad, as we know the horns are made of the protein called keratin, also found in fingernails and hair, which scientific research has found to be medicinally ineffective.

The week I left, at the end of August, four rhinos were killed and poached and there were 42 park incursions from suspected poachers. This impacts us all. There are humanitarian, moral, financial and ecological implications as a result of poaching. To see a rhino still alive and suffering horrendous pain from having its horn and much of its face removed by poachers is a sight never to be forgotten.

Writer Jim Parker at the Care For Wild Africa rhinoceros sanctuary.

JAMES PARKER

What can Canadians do?

Why should we in Canada and North America be concerned about South Africa's disappearing rhinoceros? Because they, like all creatures, are part of the biosphere that supports life on Earth. Poaching, overfishing, clear-cutting, strip mining and polluting are all detriments to the biosphere. In other words, our own greed is killing us.

Since 1976, a trade ban on rhino horns under the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has been in effect, passed by most countries in the United Nations. However, non-signatory nations still trade horns and some signatory nations continue the illegal trade. "Demand has been steadily increasing in recent decades," according to the *International Business Times*, and "the market has exploded to satisfy insatiable demand in parts of Asia, especially in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Japan and China."

And if one adds elephant ivory to the equation, the United States is the second

Rangers have to be well armed to protect themselves against wildlife and poachers.

largest importer of this illegal substance in the world, after China. In September 2015, the two countries agreed to phase out import and manufacture of ivory. The U.S. allows the use of ivory that existed before the global ban in 1989, which is a distinction often difficult to determine. According to a 2014 report quoted in *National Geographic*, if the ivory trade continues unabated — more than 100,000 African elephants were killed between 2011 and 2014 — some researchers predict that in one or two decades, the African elephant will be extinct in the wild.

A *Journal of Ecology* study by Joris P. G. M. Cromsigt and Mariska te Beest highlights some of the indirect, yet important, effects the rhino-poaching crisis will have on the African landscape. "Not only is rhino poaching threatening the species' conservation status," they write, "but also the potentially key role of this apex consumer for savanna ecosystem dynamics and functioning." And this is just one species in a specific location. Up to four rhinos daily are being poached in Kruger Park alone or four to eight percent of the population yearly. The impact on the African continent will be horrendous if this treatment of the animals continues unchecked. These statistics don't take into account lost tourism dollars and impacts on other industries.

What to do? Volunteers are welcome in many parks, reserves and sanctuaries. For example, I have been volunteering for the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC), for the past few months and while there, I visited the nearby "Care For Wild Africa," a wonderful rhinoceros sanctuary. When I visited, it was maxed out, caring for 25 baby and young orphan rhinoceros. Students from Britain and Australia were on site to help Petronel Nieuwoudt run the sanctuary.

If you cannot find yourself heading to Africa to help, there are many charities, although one should be cautious and circumspect in choosing which to support. "Rhino Man" is one I can personally endorse as I met founder Matt Lindenberg at SAWC. The money raised by this group goes directly to the education and training of rangers at SAWC. Even stating your support of anti-poaching by signing petitions on social media can help the cause. Discussion forums, talking with friends, taking part in rallies and not purchasing items from countries that allow the use of rhino horns and elephant tusks are several ways one can help.

James Parker is a retired member of the Canadian Forces. He served in Sudan and Afghanistan. The focus of his second book, titled *I Am Ranger*, is on the anti-poaching war in Kruger National Park in South Africa. He lives in Victoria, B.C.

JAMES PARKER

UN PHOTO

The pervasive prejudice against females

From birth, and even before, to death, gender inequality exists, in various ways, across the globe. Genital mutilation, forced child marriage, discrimination on the job — this special report enumerates and analyzes gender injustice.

By Alana Livesey

In September 2015, leaders from around the world gathered in New York City for the UN General Assembly and adopted the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Seventeen goals were agreed upon as part of the new framework, which lasts until 2030, including a goal on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. It's a good thing, as much remains to be done on this pressing issue.

Although progress has been made toward gender equality over the past few decades, women and girls still face multiple barriers throughout their lifetimes. Deep-rooted social norms affect all aspects of society, resulting in visible and invisible forms of unequal power relations between men and women, as well as girls and boys. Gender roles based on stereotypical traits and ideas of what it means to be a man or a woman influence people's attitudes and behaviour. This, in turn, leads to certain groups being valued less, and discriminated against, simply because of their sex, age, sexual orientation, race, disability, ability, location or religion.

Social norms and practices that favour patriarchy have resulted in generations of global gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls. This article will highlight just some of the challenges and barriers experienced by thousands of women and girls every day. Analyzing gender inequality from a life-cycle approach will highlight examples of unequal power relations and discrimination experienced by females at various stages of their lives. Clear examples from around the world offer insights into the approaches being used to tackle these important issues.

Women and girls are not homogenous groups of individuals. As such, examples of gender inequality vary throughout societies and countries, and are experienced differently by different groups. This does not change the fact, however, that millions of women and girls are being held back from achieving their full potential simply because of their sex or where they were born.

The world's 'missing' girls

"I felt we could keep it only if it was a male and kill it if it was a female child. I just strangled it soon after it was born. I would kill it and bury it. Since we were not having any male children, I killed eight girl children." — A woman living in India

In many countries, girls are discriminated against even before they are born. The prevailing tendency toward son preference has resulted in "gendercide," in which the UN estimates that as many as 200 million girls are "missing" around the world.

Examining the sex ratio at birth (SRB) is one way of measuring the prevalence and breadth of son preference within countries. While the worldwide SRB average is biologically skewed in favour of males — approximately 105 males are born for every 100 females — it is largely due to males experiencing higher rates of mortality at all ages after birth in comparison to women.

Several countries have a skewed sex ratio at birth that far exceeds the worldwide average. According to the UNDP (United Nation's Development Program), this trend is most evident in Asia, especially in China (where 116 males are born for every 100 females, nationally), India (111 males), Vietnam (110 males), and Eastern Europe, including Azerbaijan (115 males), Armenia (114 males) and Georgia (111 males). SRB ratios also vary significantly within countries, as there are likely higher rates of son preference in rural areas, and SRB becomes even more severe when the birth order increases and more children are born into the family. In countries that exhibit high levels of son preference, the SRB is often inconsistent with the worldwide average, and always unfavourable toward females.

In many countries, girls are discriminated against before they are born, due to a prevailing tendency to prefer male offspring.

Families who engage in female infanticide and preconceived sex-specific abortions in favour of boys do so often because of the patriarchal desire for male heirs, the devaluing of girls across all levels of society and the financial burden that girls will bring to their parents. As one young man in Serbia stated: "The firstborn must be male. After that it's all the same." Deep-rooted social norms perpetuate the notion that having a girl will result in a lower return on investment to the household and family, unlike boys, who can carry on the family name, provide physical labour to their rural households, contribute economically to the family's well-being and support their parents in old age. Government policies also influence a country's SRB by forcing families to limit the number of children they have, such as was previously the case with China's one-child policy.

A distorted SRB caused by son preference has huge implications for society, including the perpetuation of gender inequality, the devaluation of girls and harmful intergenerational cycles of gender injustice. As one 15-year-old girl from South Africa asserts, "They all think that girls are supposed to be their doormat. I think boys must be taught to look at girls as people." The practice [of killing girl fetuses and babies] is changing' demographic compositions, leading to bride kidnapping and trafficking, forced and early child marriage and disgruntled bachelors. A skewed SRB impacts eco-

UN PHOTO

nomic and social development and has long-term implications for countries.

South Korea's new policy

Some countries have tried to regulate their SRB and eliminate the practice of son prevalence by rewriting policy, raising awareness and changing deep-rooted attitudes and harmful practices. A multisectoral approach is required to change harmful social norms that perpetuate son preference. For instance, the South Korean government implemented several strategies to tackle son preference and skewed SRB rates, including revoking its one-child policy and establishing a ministry of gender equality. It further launched an awareness-raising campaign called Love Your Daughter to promote gender equality and the value of girls within society. These efforts have helped to regulate South Korea's SRB over the years, and the country now has a more balanced national rate of 107 boys for every 100 girls.

A staggering 45 percent of all children under the age of five worldwide do not have a birth certificate, a right that gives them access to education, health care, social and economic opportunities. This woman is holding a substitute birth certificate she received in Côte d'Ivoire.

UN PHOTO

Registration: A birth right

"Who am I? Where did I come from? What's my nationality? All I know is that my name is Murni, but I don't have proof for that." — A child in Indonesia

Birth registration is a universal right that all girls and boys have, as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Having a birth certificate is required for almost every aspect of life, and opens endless doors of opportunity for children. A birth certificate is required for a child to register and attend school, it can help prevent early and forced child marriage by proving a girl's age, it entitles a child to health benefits and it provides other social and economic opportunities. It is a powerful tool for achieving equity and gender equality.

Despite the importance of officially registering a newborn, UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) estimates that roughly 290 million children — 45 percent of all children under the age of five worldwide — do not have a birth certificate. While girls and boys are both at risk of not having proof of birth registration, boys overall are more likely than girls to have a birth certificate. Families with limited knowledge of, or access to, birth registration services, are less likely to register their children. Poverty and corruption can further impede a child from obtaining a birth certificate.

During a recent visit to Senegal, I had the good fortune of speaking with families living in the slums of Dakar. When asked why the dozen or so children living in the house were not in school, the community leader replied by saying that it was because only a few of the children had birth certificates, which are required for school enrolment. Those without certificates, nearly all of the girls in the house, were unable to go to school and were forced to stay at home and support the family with household duties. Despite birth registration being free and a universal right in Senegal and other countries, the family that I spoke with explained that corrupt officials seeking bribes, combined with household poverty, have prohibited them from formally registering their children.

Progress in Brazil

Brazil has taken great steps to increase national birth registration rates, from 64 percent in 2000 to 93 percent in 2011. In 1997, legal reforms guaranteed the right to free birth registration for all citizens. In 2002, birth registration was integrated into the health systems, and the ministry of health began providing a financial incentive to all maternity hospitals with an advanced birth registration post on their premises to allow for new parents to register their baby's birth before returning home. In

2003, awareness-raising campaigns helped to promote birth registration, including the First National Birth Registration Mobilization Day, which led to a permanent national movement. In 2007, civil registration services in hospitals moved online, sending information instantly and directly to a national database system. The government is still working to achieve universal birth registration in Brazil, especially in the northern states, however the country has made great progress in one decade.

Female genital mutilation

"[My Grandma] caught hold of me and gripped my upper body… Two other women held my legs apart. The man, who was probably an itinerant traditional circumciser from the blacksmith clan, picked up a pair of scissors… Then the scissors went down between my legs and the man cut off my inner labia and clitoris. I heard it, like a butcher snipping the fat off a piece of meat. A piercing pain shot up between my legs, indescribable, and I howled. Then came the sewing: the long, blunt needle clumsily pushed into my bleeding outer labia, my loud and anguished protests…"
— Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a former refugee from Somalia, activist, politician and author of *Infidel*.

Torture. Child abuse. Gender-based violence. These are all words used to describe the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). According to UNICEF, girls as young as five years old are victims of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines the practice as "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons." In several countries, UNICEF calculates that more than 90 percent of women and girls have undergone FGM/C: 98 percent in Somalia, 96 percent in Guinea, 93 percent in Djibouti and 91 percent in Egypt. The procedure is often done in a girl's home or somewhere in her community, rather than at a hospital or clinic with skilled health practitioners. For instance, UNICEF data reveal that in Yemen, 97 percent of girls who underwent FGM/C had the procedure done at home, and three-quarters of these girls were cut using a blade or razor.

Why are girls around the world experiencing unnecessary mutilation and cutting? Social conventions, traditional practices, family pressure — often from the mothers — and religious requirements are all explanations for why FGM/C continues to flourish in many countries, especially in Africa and the Middle East. Parents believe they are protecting their daughters and preparing them for marriage, as often times, girls are not seen as worthy of marriage if they have not been cut or sewn for their future husbands. According to Human Rights Watch, in Tanzania, a girl who has not undergone FGM/C "may be socially ostracized and referred to as 'rubbish' or 'useless.'"

IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES, UNICEF CALCULATES THAT MORE THAN 90 PERCENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS HAVE UNDERGONE FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/ CUTTING...

Millions of girls and young women are at risk of being cut every year; many die from infection or bleeding, while others suffer permanent damage, such as infertility or difficulties with childbirth. The practice also takes place in Europe and North America among diaspora populations. In 2013, UNHCR calculated that more than 25,000 women and girls from FGM/C-practising countries sought asylum in Europe, mostly settling in Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Italy, France, the U.K. and Belgium, among other countries.

Senegal's story

In Senegal, civil society organizations have been working with communities to develop community-led social change initiatives to tackle harmful practices, including FGM/C. Through this process, communities develop their own solutions, based on new knowledge and skills acquired to collectively address a challenge in the community. Abandoning FGM/C was not the original intention of the organizations leading these initiatives. However, after learning about the harm brought by this practice, community members decided they were obliged to abandon them. As FGM/C is often performed in relation to preparing girls for marriage, if one community decides to abandon the practice, other groups with whom the community intermarries must also abandon it. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF estimate that more than 4,500 communities in Senegal and neighbouring countries, including Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Guinea and Somalia, have abandoned the traditional practice of FGM/C.

Accessing education

"There are still biased attitudes towards girls' education and some parents still believe that girls' education has no value, and they cannot succeed even when educated." A father in Ethiopia

Every child has the right to an education, yet according to Plan International, there are 75 million school-aged girls around the world not in school. One of the main explanations is that many families are stricken by poverty and cannot afford to pay school fees. While primary education is, or should be, free in the majority of countries, there are unforeseen costs that parents are unable to cover, including entrance fees, uniforms and exam fees. If there are financial limitations, families are more likely to pull their daughters out of school to perform household chores and caregiving responsibilities for young and old family members. If forced to choose, many families will choose their son's education over their daughter's. "Girls' edu-

Every child has the right to an education, yet according to Plan International, there are 75 million girls around the world who are not in school.

UN PHOTO

cation was not a priority for most people. Most people married off their young girls to escape from high levels of poverty," said Ayesha, a 14-year-old girl from South Sudan.

Some girls also suffer from sexual and physical abuse from students or teachers, forcing them to drop out for safety purposes, or in some cases because they have become pregnant and are banned from attending school. Child marriage also forces girls out of school, as once they become a wife, they are no longer seen as a child, and must perform the duties of a wife. A head teacher at a secondary school in Tanzania asserted that "when we find a pregnant pupil in school, we call a school board meeting where we agree to expel the pupil."

Inadequate sanitation facilities and same-sex school latrines can also result in girls being victimized and harassed by boys, either physically or sexually. Such conditions can also force girls to drop out of school once they begin menstruating. Further explanations for the high number of out-of-school children include the proximity of their home to school. In remote areas, some students must walk for hours each way in order to access the school. Poor quality education puts further limitations on a child's ability to learn, including the quality of teachers, teacher-student ratios, and gender discrimination in textbooks that perpetuate harmful gender norms and roles.

The 75 million school-aged girls out of school will be unable to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to protect themselves, they will have limited employment opportunities in the future, and they will be more vulnerable to child marriage, early pregnancy and other harmful practices. Education is often a tipping point in young people's lives, helping to launch them into new, exciting and prosperous futures. As one young girl from Zambia states, "Without education I would be

nowhere... education gave me confidence and made me a more responsible person."

Nigeria's positive steps

In Northern Nigeria, UNICEF's Girls' Education Project mobilizes religious leaders to advocate for girls' education. Religious leaders inform community members that it is a religious duty to educate all children as outlined in the Koran and other religious texts, and they ask community members: "How can a society ensure there are sufficient female doctors and teachers to service the needs of its women if its daughters do not go to school?" Involving religious leaders has enhanced support from other community members in favour of girls' education, and has been successful in changing harmful social norms that impede girls' opportunities.

Forced child matrimony

"When I was young, about seven or eight years old, my mother said I could not go to school because I had to go with her to the rice fields. One day I got a notebook and went to the school anyway. My mother came and dragged me from the classroom and took me back to the fields. Then one night when I was 14, a man came into my bed. I asked him who he was and he said he was going to be my husband. My mother had agreed I would marry him." — 17-year-old girl from Laos

One in three girls in the developing world will be married by her 18th birthday, according to UNFPA; one in nine girls by her 15th birthday. Despite child marriage being illegal by international human rights law, and many national laws governing countries, child marriage continues to take place around the world on a vast scale. Weak legislation, such as the lowering of the legal age to marry below 18 years (international law's standard), or making the legal age to marry lower for girls than boys, is one factor that can lead to child marriage. Astonishingly, UN data reveal that there are 43 countries and territories with a lower legal age of marriage for girls than boys, with the majority below the global norm of 18. Although as one child bride from Bangladesh points out: "What if there is [a] law? We do not see the laws working. [Until] now I have not seen the police arrest anyone because of child marriage. So, people are not scared of the law."

Poverty is another factor that leads to child marriage: according to the UNFPA, girls from the poorest 20 percent of households are more than three times more likely to marry before they are 18 than girls from wealthy households. Parents are eager to marry off their daughters before the dowry price becomes too high, or as girls become older. Girls living in rural areas are twice as likely to be married by the age of 18 than girls living in urban centres. Lastly, UNFPA confirms that girls out of school or with no education are three times more likely to marry before 18 than those with a secondary education or higher.

ONE IN THREE GIRLS IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD WILL BE MARRIED BY HER 18TH BIRTHDAY, ACCORDING TO UNFPA; ONE IN NINE GIRLS BY HER 15TH BIRTHDAY.

While boys can also be victims of child marriage, the practice most often affects girls, and can have devastating consequences on their health and well-being. In addition to violating human rights law and global UN conventions, child marriage forces girls out of school and contributes to large dropout rates. As one child bride in Tanzania states: "I did not go to school as my father saw it as no use to take a girl to school, so after FGM, I was married off. My father had taken dowry, thus forcing me to get married at the age of 12 years." A women's focus group in Pakistan claimed: "In our community, we don't allow a girl to continue her education when she is married because of her responsibilities. She doesn't have any spare time to continue her education. Her in-laws and home should be her priority."

Most significantly, child marriage leads to early pregnancy and health risks for girls. Every year, UNFPA data reveal that more than 13 million girls aged 15-19 in developing countries give birth while married. At the same time, complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of mortality for girls aged 15 to 19 in developing countries. Other health risk factors for young mothers include obstetric fistula, a damaging childbirth injury that leaves mothers unable to control their urine and/or fecal matter, causing pain, infections and social stigma that can ostracize women from communities.

Bangladesh's child marriage-free zones

Child Marriage Free-Zones are being established across Bangladesh to tackle child marriage. Local governments, facilitated by Plan International Bangladesh and other NGOs, have made formal declarations for 22 out of the 35 zones throughout the country to be free of child marriage. This child-centred community development program is focusing on strengthening institutional mechanisms, investing in national- and local-level advocacy, building the capacity of girls and boys to say no to child marriage, raising awareness within the community and promoting partnership between community-based organizations and youth to work together.

School-related violence

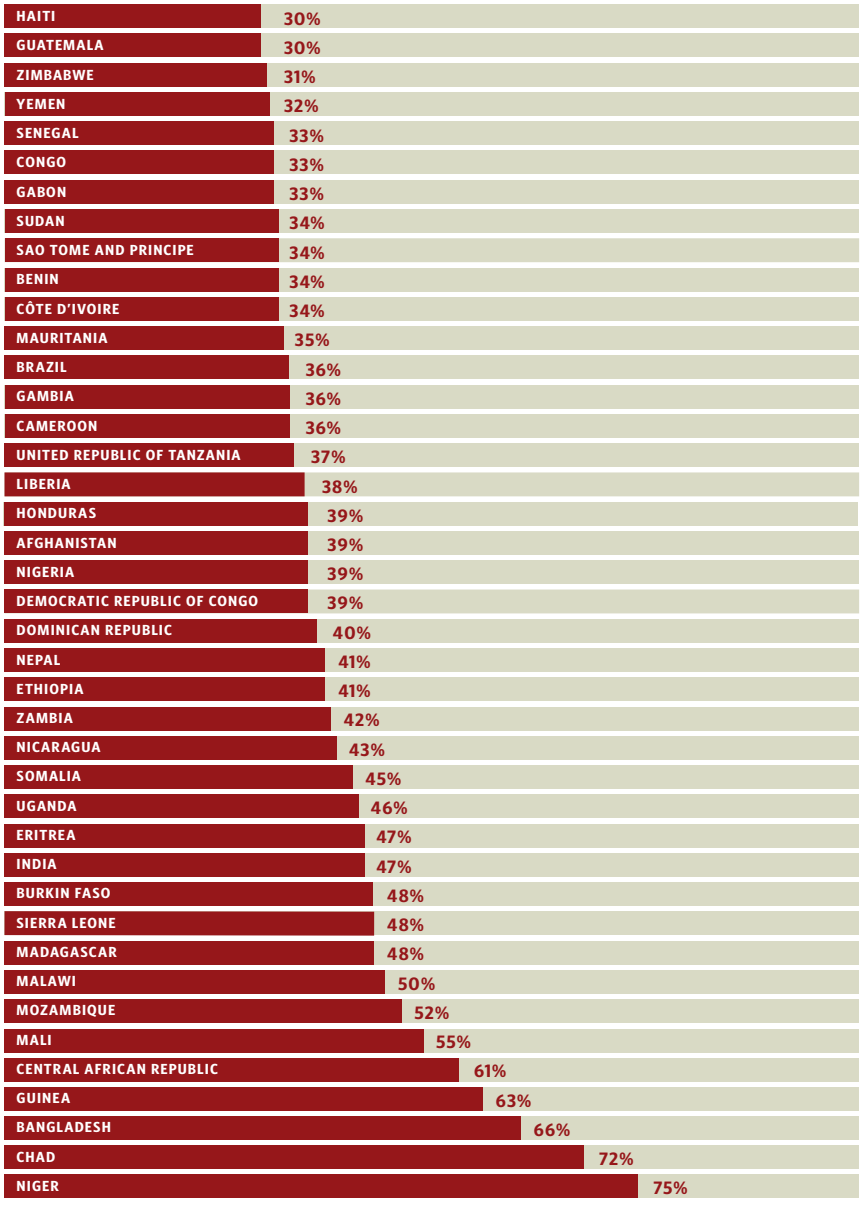
"Our teachers should be there to teach us and not to touch us." — 15-year-old girl from Uganda

Globally, between 500 million and 1.5 billion children experience violence every year, with many of these incidents taking place within schools. The WHO further estimates that 150 million girls and 73 million boys have experienced sexual violence worldwide.

These acts of violence can be described

Forced marriage around the world

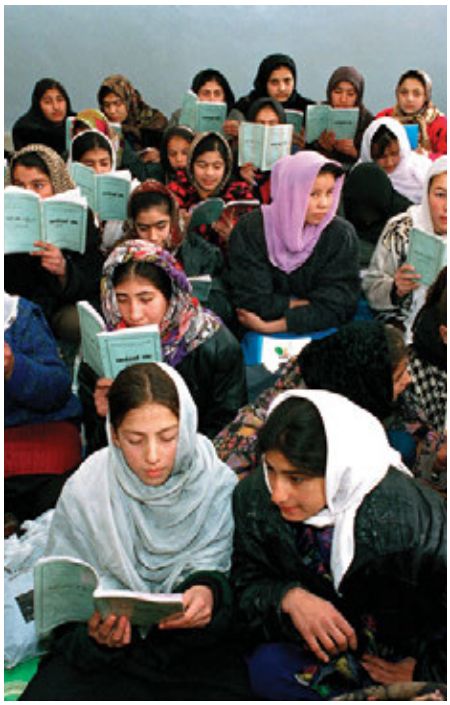
41 COUNTRIES WITH 30 PERCENT OR MORE OF WOMEN 20-24 YEARS OLD WHO MARRIED OR ENTERED INTO UNION BY AGE 18, 2000-2011



Source: UNFPA database using household surveys (DHS and MICS) completed during the period 2000-2011.

as "school-related gender-based violence" (SRGBV). Plan International defines SRGBV as "acts of sexual, physical or psychological violence inflicted on children in and around schools because of stereotypes and roles or norms attributed to or expected of them because of their sex or gendered identity. It also refers to the differences between girls' and boys' experience of and vulnerabilities to violence." While girls and boys are victims of SRGBV, they experience different types of violence at different levels. For instance, boys are more likely to be victims of physical abuse or corporal punishment in school, while girls are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse.

Weak institutional frameworks, inadequate child protection mechanisms, as well as poor governance and monitoring are explanations for the prevalence of such violence. Unequal power relations and exploitation of children by teachers can also explain SRGBV. For instance, sex for grades is quite common, whereby male teachers exploit female students and coerce them into having sexual relations with them for grades or in order to waive school fees. As one 15-year-old girl raped by her teacher in Zambia explains: "I have been very much disturbed; emotionally disturbed and very much stressed. I am trying very hard to forget how it happened, but I am failing. I can't just forget it; it's like it's just about to happen again, like it's just happened. I remember every detail."



Between 500 million and 1.5 billion children experience violence every year, many of the incidents taking place in schools.

Gender inequality, combined with other intersectional elements of discrimination, further perpetuates such violence. For instance, girls and boys of a certain sexual orientation, religion, race or disability might be at greater risk of SRGBV. With the increase in the use of technology, SRGBV is also occurring virtually, with more children and youth becoming victims of cyber-bullying. As a 17-year-old boy in Brazil claims: "You cannot go home from the internet ... It is like being haunted." Youth have also taken their own lives as a way of escaping cyber-bullying and the psychological violence that they endure.

The implications of SRGBV are vast, including increased dropout rates, lower academic achievement, reduced economic

UN PHOTO

opportunities, increased health risks, suicide and intergenerational cycles of violence. Physical, psychological, and sexual violence are extremely harmful to the well-being of children, causing both short- and long-term implications. As one primary school student in Togo explains: "If the teacher hits me, everything immediately goes from my head. Even if I had lots of ideas before, the moment he hits me, I lose everything — I can't think." In addition, a 12-year-old girl from Spain asserts: "If they hit me, I learn to hit."

Promoting safe schools in Pakistan, Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia

Tackling SRGBV requires multi-level approaches. One example is Plan International's Promoting Equality and Safety in Schools (PEASS) program, which addresses SRGBV in Pakistan, Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia. The program, which works with governments, communities and individuals, aims to promote gender equality and non-violence in curricula and teaching practice; engage youth, communities and teachers in creating solutions together; advocate for policies that prevent SRGBV and protect girls in schools; and strengthen links between schools, homes and services. The program will increase the capacity of 2,500 teachers. It will work directly with nearly 150,000 adolescent girls and boys and advocate for five government ministries and 280 schools to recognize and endorse the Gender Responsive School model.

Another example is UNICEF's Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) model that is being rolled out in multiple countries. UNICEF defines the CFS model as follows: "Schools should operate in the best interests of the child. Educational environments must be safe, healthy and protective, endowed with trained teachers, adequate resources and appropriate physical, emotional and social conditions for learning. Within them, children's rights must be protected and their voices must be heard. Learning environments must be a haven for children to learn and grow, with innate respect for their identities and varied needs. The CFS model promotes inclusiveness, gender-sensitivity, tolerance, dignity and personal empowerment."

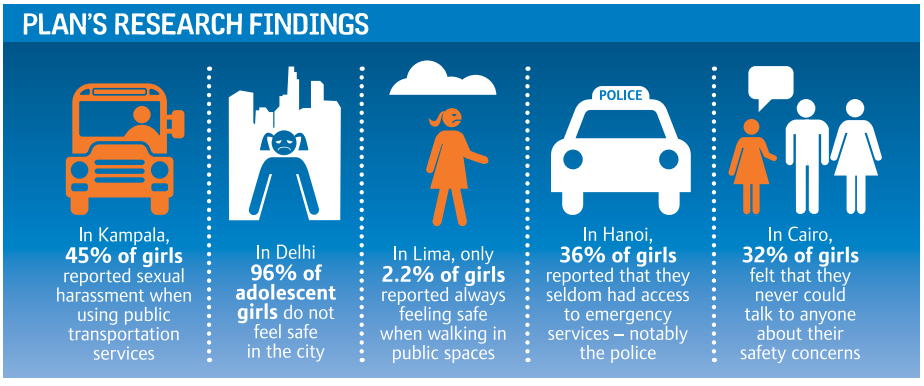
Safe cities for females

"No one cares about us." —Adolescent girl living in Cairo

In December 2012, a 23-year-old woman was gang-raped and murdered on a bus in Delhi, India. Incidents like this happen regularly in urban centres, yet there are few programs addressing the problem, and there is limited research on how to make cities safer, especially for adolescent girls. For instance, many urban safety and crime prevention initiatives target young men, and many women's safety initiatives focus only on adult women — often in the domestic sphere.

For the first time in history, there are more people living in cities than in rural areas. UN-HABITAT estimates that each month, five million people are added to the cities of the developing world, and by 2030, approximately 1.5 billion girls will live in urban areas. Girls in cities contend with the duality of increased risks and increased opportunities. On the one hand, girls face sexual harassment, exploitation and insecurity as they navigate the urban environment, while, on the other hand,

There is limited research and there are few programs on how to make cities safer for women and girls, especially adolescent girls.



PLAN INTERNATIONAL TARIQ AND STAN THEKAEKARA \ PLAN INTERNATIONAL

they are more likely to be educated and politically active and less likely to be married at an early age.

Research conducted by Plan International and partners revealed that adolescent girls seldom feel safe in cities. They experience physical and sexual violence and are often excluded from decision-making processes that impact their safety.

In Delhi, India, 96 percent of adolescent girls involved in the study said they do not feel safe in the city. These girls asserted: "The absence of lights in parks and other public places is a big problem. We feel unsafe while going to school as we have to leave early and [have] no company of other girls. At that hour, the roads are empty."

Only two percent of adolescent girls in Lima, Peru, reported always feeling safe when walking in public spaces. "In public spaces and in the street, the city is very dangerous," said an adolescent girl from Lima. "There are gangs, robberies, assaults; you can be kidnapped, followed, sexually harassed [and] raped. Walking in the streets is dangerous, especially in desolate areas; it is more dangerous at night when there is low light."

In Kampala, Uganda, 45 percent of adolescent girls reported sexual harassment when using public transportation in the city. One young girl stated: "You tell a bodaboda driver to take you to Kawempe and he takes you somewhere else and he rapes you."

More than one-third of adolescent girls in Hanoi, Vietnam, reported seldom having access to emergency services — notably the police. An adolescent girl from Hanoi said: "The roads are dark and large. If we call for help, no one can help us."

In Cairo, Egypt, one-third of adolescent girls felt they could never talk to anyone about their safety concerns in the city. One girl said: "I want to give my opinion to make changes in the future."

Explanations for these alarming figures include poor urban infrastructure, inadequate policies and limited city services. Gender inequality as well as harmful social norms and practices result in girls not being seen as valuable members of society or as equal citizens. Levels of physical and sexual violence against girls are seen as "normal," meaning that girls rarely speak out about such injustices and when they do, their voices are ignored.

Adolescent girls' safety program in Delhi, Cairo, Hanoi, Kampala and Lima

The innovative and ground-breaking Because I am a Girl Urban Program was developed by Plan International, Women in Cities International and UN-HABITAT. It aims to build safe, accountable and inclusive cities with, and for, adolescent girls (ages 13-18). The program is being carried out in five cities around the world: Delhi, Cairo, Hanoi, Kampala and Lima. The three outcomes of the program for girls include an increase in their safety and access to public spaces, an increase in their active and meaningful participation in urban development and governance and an increase in their autonomous mobility in the city.

IN DELHI, INDIA, 96 PERCENT OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS INVOLVED IN [PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S] STUDY SAID THEY DO NOT FEEL SAFE IN THE CITY.

The program works across three levels of change to create sustainable solutions for girls, including working with governments and institutions to make laws and policies gender-sensitive, child-friendly and inclusive; working with families and communities to create a supportive social environment that promotes children's rights and the participation of all girls and boys; and working with girls and boys to be active citizens and agents of change by building capacities, strengthening assets and creating opportunities for meaningful participation. The program is working directly with 15,000 adolescent girls, 9,000 government stakeholders and transportation staff and 750,000 community members to make cities safer and more inclusive for girls and communities as a whole.

UN officials in Timor-Leste conduct an interview with a domestic abuse victim.

Intimate partner violence

"The reality is many of us have been sexually and/or physically abused as children or as adults, as were our mothers and grandmothers — in some ways the abuse has become normalized, pervasive and constant." — First Nations woman living in Winnipeg

Globally, according to the WHO, one in

PLAN INTERNATIONAL TARIQ AND STAN THEKAEKARA \ UN PHOTO

This woman is a victim of an acid attack in Cambodia.

three women will experience physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner, or sexual violence from a non-partner in their lifetime. While men are also victims of intimate partner violence, the level of violence against women is far higher and often more severe.

Women often have less decision-making power within and outside the household due to unequal power relations between women and men, girls and boys. Women have limited ability to control household resources or decisions, and the men are often perceived to have the upper hand, largely as a result of earning more income for the household. Substance abuse and violent tendencies can also explain such high levels of domestic violence. A shift in power between household members can also lead to disruptions and an increase in violence. In addition, limited knowledge about what constitutes violence can lead to further violence. As one woman in Burkina Faso claims: "We don't know our rights. We don't know laws very well. Not beating your wife — is that in the laws?"

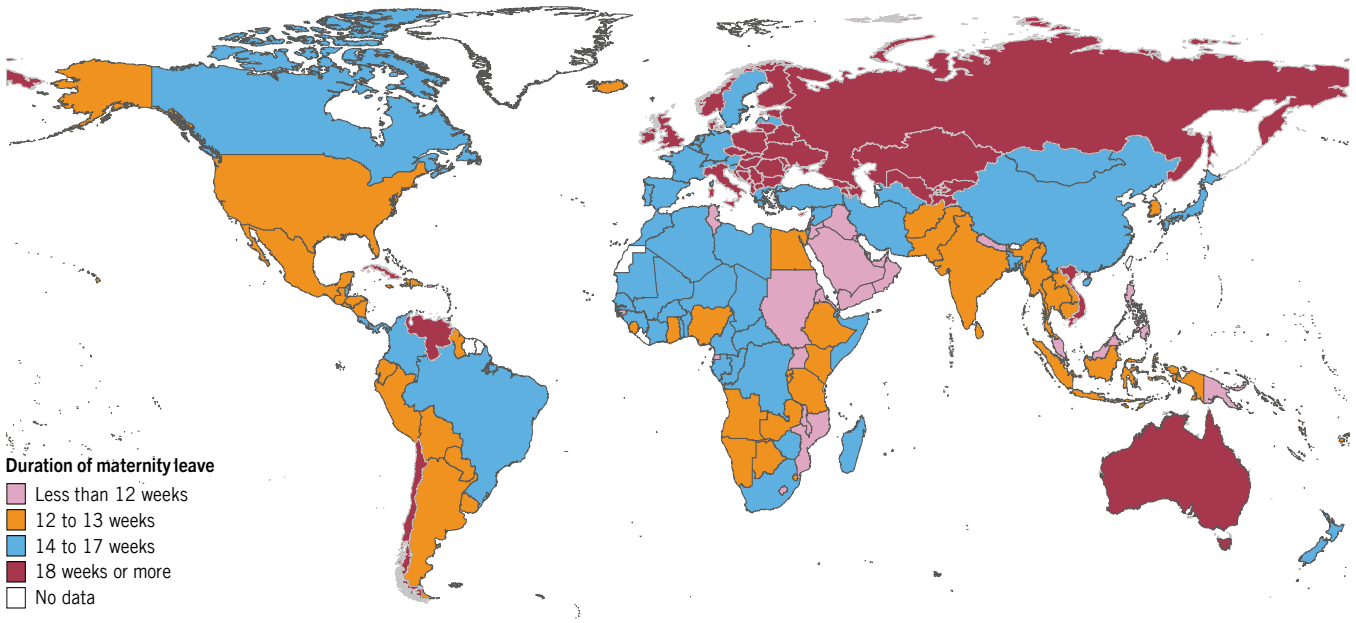
Victims of domestic violence suffer from physical and psychological trauma. Some cases even result in death. Based on research by the WHO, more than one third of all murders of women are committed by intimate partners. Victims are also more vulnerable to health issues. For instance, the WHO states that women who have been physically or sexually abused by their partners are 16 percent more likely to have a baby below healthy weight, more than twice as likely to have an abortion, twice as likely to experience depression and, in some areas, 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV.

According to Statistics Canada, every five days, on average, a female is killed by her intimate partner in Canada. Certain groups of women are more vulnerable. For instance, young women are two to three times more likely than older women to report having experienced intimate-partner violence over the past year, and they are 10 times more likely than young men to experience dating violence. Women with disabilities are more likely to have experienced spousal violence. In addition, aboriginal women are three times more likely than non-aboriginal women to report being a victim of a violent crime in Canada, and they are four times more likely to be murdered.

India's Bell Bajao! Campaign

The Ring the Bell campaign, launched in India in 2008 (known locally as *Bell Bajao!*), encourages men and boys to take a stand against domestic violence. The campaign developed a series of award-winning public service announcement videos showing men and boys taking a stand and ringing a neighbour's doorbell to inter-

Statutory duration of maternity leave, 2013 (185 countries and territories)



Source: ILO Working Conditions Laws Database – Maternity Protection. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/travdatabase [25 Mar. 2014].

rupt domestic violence. Inspired by true stories, these short videos went viral and have been viewed by more than 130 million people. The Ring the Bell campaign is now a global initiative calling on one million men to take concrete action to end violence against women.

Economic empowerment

"[Women] are discriminated against in salary even though they both do the same work; for example, at the local plastics factory, a woman gets 900 NIS ($247) a month and a man gets 1,800 NIS ($495)." — A young woman living in the West Bank and Gaza

There are several barriers that women face in achieving economic empowerment, including limitations in accessing safe employment opportunities, as well as barriers once they join the workforce.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), nearly half of the world's employed populations are working in conditions with limited access to decent work, with women constituting the majority of this workforce. This is most prevalent in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, where women are more likely than men to work in the informal sector, and nearly half of the world's working women are employed in low-paid and undervalued jobs.

Women are often employed in the informal sector due to limitations in accessing formal employment. Housekeeping and caregiving duties often limit a woman's time to seek outside work. World Bank research reveals that women devote one to three hours more than men to housework, two to 10 times the amount of time a day to caregiving and one to four hours less to involvement in market activities. Unpaid household and caregiving work is undervalued and often not measured in monetary terms.

In 1995, the UNDP calculated the monetary value of the unpaid working industry, together with the underpayment of women's work, which equated to US $16 trillion. US $11 trillion of this was the "non-monetized, invisible contribution of women." According to a more recent study by UN Women, if women's wages were raised to the same level as men's, the GDP would be nine percent higher in the U.S., and 13 percent higher in the EU.

Further challenges occur once women are employed in either the formal or informal sectors. The gender wage gap exists globally. Based on research conducted by the ILO in 83 developing and developed countries, it was found that women are paid 10-30 percent less than their male colleagues. Statistics Canada data from 2011 outline that the gender wage gap in Ontario is 26 percent, meaning that for every dollar a male employee earns, a female employee earns 74 cents. In addition, women are also less likely to hold leadership and senior management positions in organizations or act as board members.

A further impediment to women's economic empowerment is inadequate parental leave, as well as affordable and accessible daycare. The ILO estimates the majority of female workers around the world — approximately 830 million women — don't have adequate maternity protection. More than three-quarters of those workers are in Africa and Asia.

In some countries, national legislation provides excellent parental leave, including in Scandinavian countries such as Finland, Norway and Denmark. In other countries, including the U.S. and throughout the Middle East, paid parental leave is either not mandated by the government, or, if it exists at all, is extremely limited.

Without equal and inclusive parental leave policies that promote equal opportunities for mothers and fathers, including for parents who adopt children and same-sex couples, women's opportunities will be stifled and the gender gap in the labour force will persist.

A further barrier to women's economic empowerment can be found in inadequate and discriminatory land rights, inheritance, marriage and divorce laws. According to the World Bank, in 16 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, more than half of female widows do not inherit any assets from their spouses; in 14 of these countries, assets were inherited by the husband's children and family members. As one young woman in Afghanistan claims: "When you die, your property is distributed by your relatives, and does not go to your wife or daughter. If you have a son, all property will belong to the son."

Iceland's parental leave

In 2000, Iceland dramatically changed its parental leave scheme, extending the total leave period to nine months. Three months are allocated to the mother and three months to the father. This is non-transferable. The remaining three months can be divided between the parents as needed, and full-time working parents receive 80 percent of their former salary during parental leave. The policy has been extremely successful, with 90 percent of fathers using their parental leave and taking, on average, 101 days, with women using 181 days on average.

India's trade union for self-employed females

In terms of enhancing women's economic empowerment in the informal sector, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India provides a good example. Established in 1972, SEWA is the country's largest trade union, consisting of poor and self-employed female workers in the informal sector throughout the country. In 2013, SEWA's membership exceeded 1.9 million women. SEWA improves women's working conditions, incomes and social security through initiatives on micro-finance via the SEWA Bank, capacity building and training and its policy work on labour issues, including lobbying for health insurance, maternity benefits and pensions. SEWA members have reported an increase in earnings and savings, improved working conditions, as well as enhanced self-esteem, empowerment and improved bargaining power within and outside of their households.

STEREOTYPICAL GENDER ROLES TEND TO PIGEONHOLE WOMEN AS BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING THE HOUSEHOLD, WITH MEN SEEN AS BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR ASPECTS OUTSIDE OF ITS WALLS.

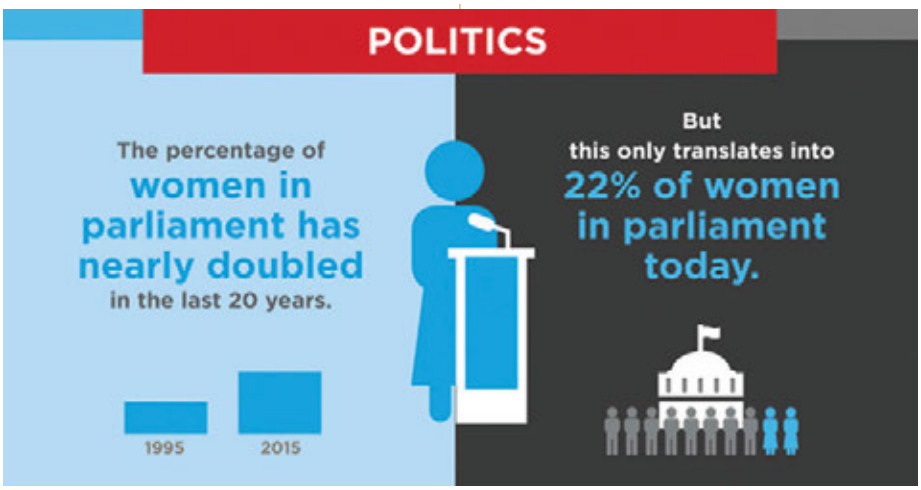
JAMES POBORSA

Political participation

"I believe that women's participation is fundamental to democracy and essential to the achievement of sustainable development and peace… Countries with more women in parliament tend to have more equitable laws and social programs and budgets that benefit women and children and families." — Michelle Bachelet, Chilean politician and former executive director of UN Women

Political participation and the representation of women in government are important in ensuring that women's and girls' rights and interests are being properly addressed. Yet, women around the world have limited access to political participation. Globally, only 22 percent of all national parliamentarians are female, and UN Women data reveal that only 11 heads of state and 13 heads of government are female. The minimum international benchmark for women's political participation is at least 30-percent representation, although dozens of countries fall short of this goal.

Stereotypical gender roles tend to pigeonhole women as being responsible for managing the household, with men seen as being responsible for aspects outside of its walls. This arrangement is different across various countries, though for the most part, women's household du-



ties limit their opportunities for getting involved in politics. Women either feel unqualified or fundamentally outside of their realm.

Opportunities must be created to promote women's involvement and participation in decision-making processes across all levels of government. The number of female candidates must be increased to ensure a balanced representation, and women should be present in all political fields, not just those aligned with women's interests or stereotypically female-related. Support must also be provided to women in terms of training and mentorship to ensure that the quality of their candidacy is top-notch. This is not to say that men cannot be champions of gender equality and equal laws for all citizens. Many are. Yet, with women's political representation dramatically lagging behind that of men, governments must promote equal opportunity for men and women to be involved in politics and to be active and valued citizens in their countries.

Rwanda stands out

Rwanda is an exception, and has the highest number of female parliamentarians in the world: Nearly 64 percent of seats in the lower house and 38 percent of seats in the upper house are occupied by women. This can largely be attributed to strong institutional mechanisms, a strong women's rights movement, changes in gender roles after the 1994 genocide and the commitment of the Rwandan ruling party to gender parity and women's issues.

In terms of strong institutional frameworks, the new constitution, which was developed and adopted in the early 2000s, toward the end of the post-genocide transitional period, incorporates a quota system granting women a minimum of 30 percent of positions in all decision-making entities. In addition, grassroots administrative units, known as women's councils, were developed for women only and represent women's concerns.

Rwanda also has a strong women's rights movement that has paved the way for a shift in gender roles and norms throughout society. The Rwandan genocide, which led to hundreds of thousands of deaths, also changed the demographic makeup of the country, resulting in women and girls making up 70 percent of the population immediately after the genocide. Women were forced to take on roles of household heads, wage earners and community leaders and started assuming non-traditional roles in society and acquiring new skills.

Toward gender equality

Though widespread discrimination against girls and women continues to exist at unacceptable rates, this need not be a reality. It is possible to stop this vicious cycle of inequality and work together to tackle its root causes, thereby changing harmful social norms and practices and shifting unequal power relations between women and men, girls and boys. We need to shatter the glass ceiling that limits women and girls from thriving in their societies, and must equal the playing field to ensure that all girls and boys, women and men, have the same opportunities to flourish. We need to start listening to what this 19-year-old girl from India is truthfully telling us: "When you go to school and do well, the world forgets what you cannot do and starts seeing what you can [do]."

Alana Livesey is a gender equality specialist and is currently the program manager for Plan International's *Because I am a Girl Urban Program.*

Vladimir Putin and the decline of the West

By Richard Cohen

Pro-Putin nationalists march in Moscow in front of the Bolshoi Theatre.

"America's retreat from the world is no longer abstract — it has delivered Syria… to Moscow and Iran's mullahs, probably for generations. The strategic defeat is only exceeded by the moral defeat." — National Post, Oct. 5, 2015

The world is changing quickly and not in our favour. The strategic balance has been moving steadily away from the liberal democratic West, where we believed it was firmly and permanently planted since the end of the Cold War. We have become soft in an age in which hardness rules.

Shifts in the balance of power are natural occurrences. But the current dramatic erosion of western power has been accelerated by a striking lack of leadership and moral courage.

Western leadership adrift

The United States became the unquestioned leader of the Free World after the Second World War. In the post-war period, the NATO Alliance owed its success to the political leadership and the military strength of the United States. American armed force stood between an often belligerent Soviet Union and the militarily feeble democracies of Western Europe.

But things have changed. The demise of the Soviet Union, the eastward march of new democratic states and the steady enlargement of NATO and the European Union created a sense of comfort and complacency in Europe and its trans-Atlantic allies. Europeans felt secure and in little need of traditional military forces. Defence budgets were cut and armies reduced. At the same time, the American people had become tired of shouldering the West's defence burden.

The U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are widely regarded in the West as failures. Complacency was complemented by a sense that we cannot influence events in far distant places, nor should we. This further eroded the ambition and the will of the Americans to lead, and of their closest allies to follow.

The return of hard power: China and Russia

The Obama administration was elected in 2008 by an electorate weary of the burden of international leadership. President Barack Obama promised the United States and the world a new era of reasonableness and compromise with even the most

WIKI

extreme and unreasonable adversaries. So great was the hope and the expectation that the president, hardly into his first term, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009.

But diplomacy without a strong underpinning of military power does not work in a world of rising strategic rivalry. China's growing economic and military power, coupled with its sense of historical humiliation, much like Russia's, has led to a new and aggressive approach to its neighbours and a determination to end the "hegemony" of the United States.

MANY ORDINARY RUSSIANS, FED BY GOVERNMENT-DOMINATED MEDIA AND ENCOURAGED BY A RESURRECTED NATIONALIST STATE CHURCH, ENTHUSIASTICALLY SUPPORTED PUTIN'S STRONG LEADERSHIP.

But China is probably a longer-term threat, a vast ocean away.

Much nearer to home, the clear and present danger is a resurgent and aggressive Russia. Years of high oil and gas prices, combined with a steady stream of western technology and investment, have created a huge reserve of cash that has fuelled a renewed sense of power and prestige.

The rise of Putin

The great changes of the early 1990s, following the demise of the Soviet Union, brought a host of political, moral and economic benefits to nearly all the nations of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Except for Russia. Russia lost its empire, and with it, much of its national pride.

Some members of the Russian elite welcomed the prospect of a new and prosperous future as a Western-style democracy. But the great majority of politicians and military and security leaders, as well as many ordinary Russians, were left with a deep resentment over their new status as a third-rate power. This was compounded by what many Russians saw as the condescending attitude of a victorious West, determined to push its ideas and its alliances further and further east.

In the year 2000, Vladimir Putin became president of Russia. Almost overnight he swept away the "modernizers" and moved quickly to bring power back to the centre. He crushed the more independent-minded republic governors and those newly rich oligarchs who dared to oppose him. He also brutally ended the rebellion in Chechnya.

When Putin came to power in 2000, he swept away the "modernizers" and moved quickly to bring power back to the centre. He crushed the more independent-minded republic governors and the newly rich oligarchs who dared to oppose him.

Many ordinary Russians, fed by government-dominated media and encouraged by a resurrected nationalist state church, enthusiastically supported Putin's strong leadership. A young and dynamic leader was, at last, bringing an end to years of deprivation, humiliation and drift.

In the meantime, the United States and Europe were preoccupied elsewhere. Russia had almost disappeared from the international strategic calculus. The war on terror and asymmetric warfare, first in Iraq, and then in Afghanistan, were the order of the day. Russian annexation of parts of Georgia in the summer of 2008 shook this mood of detachment, but only temporarily.

During this period, Russia's new oil and gas wealth was increasingly funnelled into rebuilding its demoralized military. New and more efficient units were being created and a massive investment in modern armaments was under way that was largely ignored by western politicians, the mainstream media and the public.

Syria: an unlikely battleground

Obama and his inner circle clung tenaciously to the belief that "unreasonable" leaders could be coaxed into sensible compromise in the cause of a peaceful and harmonious world. The violent and depressing results of the Arab Spring and the outbreak of civil war in Syria should have shattered that illusion.

Despite President Bashar al-Assad's ongoing slaughter of thousands of his own citizens, the United States and its European allies were loath to arm and train opposition forces. The chaos in Libya following the overthrow of President Moammar Gadhafi and the fear of becoming entangled in another Middle East war, especially with an opponent backed by Iran and Russia, was enough to deter Obama from active intervention on the side of the "moderate" rebels, when it might have counted most.

The U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, pictured here, are widely regarded in the West as failures.

The Obama administration tried to camouflage its lack of resolve in Syria by a proclamation of "red lines," which could only be crossed by Assad at the peril of direct U.S. and allied military intervention. The clearest red line of all was a prohibition on the use of chemical weapons against opposition forces.

On Aug. 21, 2013, a sarin gas attack by the Syrian government on the Damascus suburb of Ghouta killed hundreds of innocent people. The world waited for a strong U.S. response. U.S. aircraft were ready to destroy Assad's military infrastructure. But days of prevarication and indecision followed. In the face of veiled Russian and Iranian threats and loud domestic and international opposition, Obama and the tireless Secretary of State John Kerry agreed to a Russian proposal that Assad dismantle his aging chemical weapons stockpile; in return the U.S. called off military strikes.

The sense of disbelief and disappointment amongst the U.S.'s Arab allies, and many others around the world, was palpable.

At a stroke, Obama signalled that he was not prepared to use his overwhelming military might, even in the face of open aggression against friends and allies. It was a clear signal to Putin that his Georgian adventure could be repeated with little risk of a firm U.S. response.

The action soon moves closer to home

The hesitant U.S. and European reaction to the Russian annexation of Crimea and its thinly disguised military intervention in Eastern Ukraine in 2014 proved that Putin was right. He was pushing against an open door.

Deprived of strong U.S. leadership, German and French leaders pleaded with Putin for an agreement that clearly implied an acceptance of the new status quo, including the annexation of Crimea.

It was abundantly clear that Putin was not impressed by strong NATO declarations, token military exercises, puny and fragile sanctions and "non-lethal" support to the Ukrainian army. As a result, there is almost no chance that the Ukrainian government will ever regain real sovereignty over the eastern part of its country, let alone Crimea. The Minsk agreements between the Europeans and the Russians bear a striking resemblance to Munich 1938.

The next disaster: the Islamic State

The rise of the Islamic State, first in Iraq and then in Syria, filled a vacuum created by the premature withdrawal of American forces from Iraq. U.S.-trained-and-equipped Iraqi troops crumbled in the face of a small but determined enemy.

Ironically, this situation was seized upon as an opportunity for Obama to regain credibility after his failure to deter and then to react to Russian aggression in Europe. Bombing what seemed to be a ragtag force with no aircraft and no effective air defence was a relatively risk-free operation designed to show the world that the U.S. and its allies, including Canada, were no pushovers.

Unfortunately, Putin arrived, unexpected, in Syria, too. Having been surprised and outmanoeuvred by the Islamic State, the United States and its allies were again caught off guard by Russia's latest strategic chess move.

Although the end result of Russian intervention in Syria is far from decided, at a stroke, Putin secured Russia's only Mediterranean naval base, rescued a murderous ally and established for itself a decisive role in the region in alliance with Syria, Iran, Hezbollah and with Iraq, a supposedly close U.S. ally.

The U.S., along with its regional partners Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, scrambled to reach an accommodation with Russia in Syria. And Iran, soon to be relieved of the burden of international sanctions negotiated away by the ever-hopeful Kerry, has openly joined the ground war.

Canada's opportunity

Despite a strong economy, vast natural resources and a high opinion of our own international importance, Canada has played an almost unnoticed role in these events. Like our European friends, we waited for an American lead. But that lead has largely gone. And countries such as Britain, Germany and France are not prepared, and probably not able, to step into the breach.

The Conservative government's condemnations of Putin, Assad and the Is-

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SGT. 1ST CLASS DAVID WHEELER

Russian annexation of parts of Georgia in the summer of 2008 only temporarily attracted world attention.

lamic State provided short-lived hope that Canada might set an example to the West by announcing a strengthening of our armed forces due to the growing threat. Instead, we talked the talk without walking the walk. And, we continued to cut defence spending and military readiness.

It is a standing joke that despite our strong rhetoric, Canada spends only one percent of its GDP on defence, half the very modest NATO goal of two percent, which itself is probably far from enough in this new strategic environment.

During the autumn election campaign, defence issues and the deteriorating world security situation were hardly mentioned. Certainly no political party was prepared to propose an increase in defence spending, even if its members believed it was necessary, which they probably didn't.

Symbolic of our lack of long-term strategic vision and political courage was the Harper government's reluctance, amidst the howls of opposition, to move forward on the F-35 program. The F-35, despite its teething troubles, will be the West's only aircraft that can defeat Russian and Chinese fifth-generation stealth fighters.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised that the new Liberal government will not buy the F-35, despite saying earlier that he favoured a "fair and open competition." Trudeau has also announced that Canada will end its small, but symbolically important, contribution to the air campaign in Iraq and Syria. The intention, announced in the Liberal government's first speech from the throne, to create a "leaner" military was a pretty clear indication that defence spending will be further reduced, in order to fund higher priority election promises. These are not encouraging signs of a far-sighted and robust foreign and defence policy.

Of course, Canada cannot play a leadership role in confronting the growing danger to the West. But our government could set an example that even the Americans might notice. First, however, we need to be open and honest with the Canadian people about the dangers of the deteriorating international security situation and the reasons we need to substantially strengthen our armed forces.

Reversing the slide

It may not be too late to reverse the West's decline. Our massive economic strength, mobilized behind a strong military buildup, would soon outpace the Russians and, as it did at the end of the Cold War, probably wreck their already fragile economy. It would also serve as a salutary notice to the Chinese.

At the end of the day, events will almost certainly force the United States, Canada and the West to dramatically strengthen their defence capabilities. NATO's recent Exercise Trident Juncture, its largest sea, land and air manoeuvres in a decade, is a good start. But restoring deep and credible military capability in a fast-moving world can be a painfully slow process and events will certainly occur more quickly than we can react. For that reason, the time to start is now.

Western nations have the technological, industrial and the economic capacity to deter or defeat Putin and his friends. But we need clear-eyed and determined leaders to mobilize public opinion and to reverse our dangerous decline before it's too late.

If we don't move quickly, we risk losing many of the benefits we've gained since the time of the Cold War. More ominously, as demonstrated by the recent downing of a Russian aircraft on the Syrian border, we could be caught, dangerously unprepared, for a real shooting war with a resurgent and self-confident enemy.

Richard Cohen is president of RSC Strategic Connections and a senior associate with Hill+Knowlton Strategies. He was a senior adviser to defence minister Peter MacKay and he was a career soldier in the Canadian and British armed forces.

YANA AMELINA

In the dark: Africa's energy shortfall

By Robert I. Rotberg

Pitch blackness is Africa at night. From the space station, from satellites, from high-flying aircraft, even on Google projections, compared to the rest of the globe, much of sub-Saharan Africa is dark from sunset — devoid of those cumulated glowing pinpoints that illuminate the other continents. Students in much of sub-Saharan Africa study using kerosene lamps, the glow from a fire, flashlights or, nowadays, the sparkle of their hard-to-charge cellphones. Electrical power is expensive, but, most of all, it is shockingly scarce, thus seriously inhibiting the development of nearly all of sub-Saharan Africa — hampering mining and manufacturing, and making the enjoyment of modern life as we know it that much more difficult.

Today South Africa provides access to electricity to 75 percent of its people and Nigeria to 47 percent. But Ethiopia and Kenya can offer power only to 15 percent of their inhabitants, Mozambique 12 percent, and Rwanda five percent. Much lower figures in those same countries (and many others) apply to citizens living outside of cities.

Only 25 percent of sub-Saharan Africans and even fewer rural dwellers have regular access to electric power.

Max power: One light bulb

Only 25 percent of sub-Saharan Africans and even fewer rural dwellers have regular access to electric power. (About 83 percent of its people therefore still rely on solid biomass energy sources for cooking and winter heating.) According to the World Bank, African power consumption, at 124 kilowatt hours (kwh) per capita per year and falling, is only a 10th of that found elsewhere in the developing world, barely enough to power one 100-watt lightbulb per person for three hours a day. What's more, only 40 percent of sub-Saharan Africa will be able to provide power to all its citizens by 2050, long after Asia and Latin America will have fully served their inhabitants with electricity.

Spain's generating capacity could power all of the 49 nations of sub-Saharan Africa. A mid-sized Canadian city, say Kitchener-Waterloo, can today supply enough electricity to power Nigeria. Given such major weaknesses in power availability in sub-Saharan Africa, it is no wonder that surging industrial and consumer demand is met in many African countries by scarcity and long pauses.

However much electricity large, modern and successful South Africa uses each year, it is far less than its citizens and its mines and corporations demand. South Africa experiences frequent outages. Nearby countries, where electrical power is much less available, have even less electricity to power what industry they might have, and to satisfy citizens. Mozambique, with a big aluminum smelter, subsists on only hundreds of kilowatt hours per year. Rwanda and Ethiopia use even less. Such low yearly per-capita consumption numbers are an indication of how far much of sub-Saharan Africa must grow in terms of energy generation before it can provide the kinds of uplifted social standards that are common elsewhere across the globe.

On a per-capita basis, sub-Saharan Africa relies on less than a third of the electricity available to South Asians. (Long ago, in 1980, the two regions had equal power resources.) Sub-Saharan Africans enjoy 90 percent less power availability than South Americans. A cause of this disparity between continents is that installed capacity for electricity in sub-Saharan Africa (especially in South Africa and Nigeria, among its wealthiest countries) has increased over the last half century much more slowly than it has in the rest of the world. In fact, generating capacities have trailed economic and demographic growth rates by about two percent a year. As Nigeria, Tanzania, the Democratic Re-

US AID

public of Congo and many other African countries experience enormous population booms throughout the rest of this century, so they will increasingly have too little power to serve their new peoples, urban and rural, unless drastic improvements are made quickly.

Without the ready availability of inexpensive electrical power (Africa's is costly), industrialization is almost impossible. So are many agro-processing alternatives, enlarged schooling facilities, improved earnings from tourism, the operation of call centres and other overseas back-office arrangements, steady and secure policing possibilities and significant educational and medical progress. Our ancestors made do without so great a dependence on electrical energy, but to advance in the modern world, Africa needs regular access to power. Flipping a light switch or being able to count on fuel for stoves and refrigerators is fundamental.

Investors want reliable generating capacity. Industry demands steady sources of electricity beyond its own generators. Hospitals crave reliable sources of power. Households seek the same. But in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa, "load-shedding," a euphemism for engineered blackouts, is more the norm. Zimbabwe, run by long-time authoritarian President Robert Mugabe, now provides only about six hours of power a day to residents and businesses in Harare, the capital.

The hope of hydro

Fortunately, there is hope on the hitherto dark horizon. In very recent years, Mozambique has begun to exploit large deposits of coal and Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania and Mozambique (among others) have found large supplies of natural gas off their coasts. Ethiopia thinks it might have gas under the Ogaden Desert. Rwanda is drilling under Lake Kivu for methane to supply generating facilities. Kenya is harnessing geothermal vents along the Great Rift Valley. All of these fossil fuel and other energy sources can power new generating plants.

But, providing that climate change perturbations and El Niño influences do not devastate rainfall patterns over Africa too dramatically, hydropower is much more likely to permit sub-Saharan Africa to light up its nights and drive its industries sometime after about 2020. Dams on the Congo, Nile and Zambezi rivers already supply what they can to neighbouring countries, but this year, turbines at the mighty Kariba Dam on the Zambezi turn less often because of water shortages, thus affecting Zambians and Zimbabweans. Ghanaians long ago learned not to rely on power from the water-starved Volta Dam.

A new generation of Chinese-constructed dams is soon expected, however, to provide abundant generated electricity to relieve Africans of their light-starved state. Given the huge numbers of people being born and about to be born through the sub-continent, only such new sources of power will enable sub-Saharan Africans to advance toward the global state of relative abundance. The largest of all the new facilities is the Grand Renaissance Dam, athwart the Blue Nile River as it rushes out of Ethiopia's towering highlands toward Sudan, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea. It is meant to generate a princely 6,000 megawatts, more than double the output of the Aswan Dam in Egypt and about one-fourth the output of the Three Gorges Dam across the Yangtze River in China. Ethiopia will be able to export power from its dam north to Cairo and south, once electrical grid connections are established, to Cape Town.

AFRICA NEEDS REGULAR ACCESS TO POWER. FLIPPING A LIGHT SWITCH OR BEING ABLE TO COUNT ON FUEL FOR STOVES AND REFRIGERATORS IS FUNDAMENTAL. MUCH OF AFRICA GOES WITHOUT.

Downstream, Sudan is building its own new dams, supplementing the output of existing installations along the cataracts of the Nile River. The biggest, at Merowe, will deliver 1,250 megawatts. Much farther south, the Democratic Republic of Congo is contemplating enlarging the existing Inga Dam, which already generates (in good water times) about 1,175 megawatts a year from waters of the mighty Congo River. There are new dams on the Kafue and Zambezi rivers and dozens more on smaller rivers in such places as Gabon and Uganda. These are but a sample of the 300 or so projects under way to provide hydropower for Africans.

Despite abundant sunshine (possibly as much as 300 days of available sun each year), there are very few large-scale solar facilities, as yet, in Africa. The largest one to date is in western South Africa, but its utility is hindered by the lack of available transmission lines to South Africa's cities. Many individual businesses, game parks and residences now rely on solar power, and innovative entrepreneurs, local and foreign, have introduced individual solar packs and small lights to students and others in rural Africa. A young entrepreneur in Kenya has distributed customized solar panels to the Maasai and other indigenous peoples who hitherto have been compelled to live off (and far away from) the grid. Solar-driven charging stations for cellphones, an essential, are also appearing in many villages. But, so far, solar has not been a major player in the struggle to light up the sub-continent.

Electric power is corruption power

Nor is wind power much of a contributor to available generating capacity. South Africa, has a medium-sized western experimental facility functioning well, but the shortage of transmission lines means such power cannot be used fully. Kenya and the Gambia are also experimenting with harvesting energy from wind.

The ultimate answer to energy sufficiency and efficiency in Africa is better planning, better management and healthy reinvestment in new equipment. Properly maintaining existing and newly constructed dams and new or older thermal stations should be a major concern. But, the sustainable answer to ameliorating Africa's energy shortfalls is good governance — that is, closer attention on the part of elected officials to the medium- and long-term needs of their constituents. Now, given the political corruption infecting much of sub-Saharan Africa, there is too much attention to short-term priorities — to making the kinds of decisions that benefit persons in office, not their successors.

Africa's energy deficit is intimately related now to failures to pay full regard to such national, rather than parochial, concerns. In terms of delivering the services that citizens want, foremost is abundant, readily available, reliable and inexpensive electric power. That is what Africa desperately requires before it can serve its citizens fully and embrace their present and future needs for progress.

Robert I. Rotberg is a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center; senior fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation; president emeritus of the World Peace Foundation and founding director of Harvard's Kennedy School program on intrastate conflict.

Hungary faces its demons head-on

By Kathy Clark

Hungary assumed chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in March 2015, for the second time in the history of the intergovernmental organization.

"IHRA is a mirror which allows us to be confronted with our history, with our past," said Hungarian Ambassador Bálint Ódor at a concert hosted by his embassy in June. "This is true for all countries participating and especially for those chairing the organization. This mirror helped Hungary look back to what role the Hungarian administration played during the tragedy of the Holocaust.

"The tragedy of the Holocaust remains a national trauma for Hungary. Every third victim in Auschwitz was a Hungarian Jew. Close to half a million Hungarian Jews died there. About 560,000 Hungarian Jews and thousands of Hungarian Roma were murdered during the Holocaust. This is one of the most shameful episodes of Hungarian history. Within a few weeks of the Nazi German occupation of Hungary, Jews were herded into ghettos with systematic cruelty and deported to Auschwitz with the collaboration of the Hungarian state's administrative bodies."

The ambassador's words were appreciated by the Hungarian Holocaust survivors who attended the concert. They had rarely had the opportunity to hear such a clear acknowledgment from a high-level government official of Hungary's collaboration as an ally of Nazi Germany.

Recognizing that the Holocaust "challenged the foundations of civilization," the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance was established in 1998, with a view to peacefully combatting the ongoing scourge of genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia in many parts of the world. IHRA is an intergovernmental body through which political and social leaders can give their support to Holocaust education, remembrance and research, nationally and internationally. Its member countries share a firm commitment to the mandates of its founding document: the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust. To promote remembrance,

A Holocaust Shoe Memorial along the Danube in Budapest, Hungary.

CEBETE (ANDREA PUGGIONI)

member countries pledge to strengthen their efforts to educate and encourage the study of the Holocaust in all its dimensions, to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and to honour those who stood against it.

IHRA has 31 member countries, 10 observer countries and seven permanent international partners. Each year, a different member country takes responsibility for its chairmanship. The country holding the chairmanship appoints a chair who is responsible for the activities of the alliance. Responsibilities include organizing and financing the plenary meetings that take place during the year of its chairmanship.

In 2002, once it recovered from the grip of Communist rule, Hungary joined the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. But two years before that, it introduced a Holocaust Remembrance Day in public schools. In 2006, Hungary assumed its first chairmanship of IHRA.

"THE TRAGEDY OF THE HOLOCAUST REMAINS A NATIONAL TRAUMA FOR HUNGARY. EVERY THIRD VICTIM IN AUSCHWITZ WAS A HUNGARIAN JEW. CLOSE TO HALF A MILLION HUNGARIAN JEWS DIED THERE."

In March 2015, when Hungary assumed chairmanship for the second time, Ambassador Szabolcs Takács, its chairman for the year, described his vision. "During our chairmanship, special focus will be placed on cultural events in order to address people through the language of culture and raise awareness about the principles of the Stockholm Declaration."

Since member countries of IHRA are encouraged to develop multilateral partnerships and to share best practices and because of the large number of Hungarians in Canada, several activities were held across Canada during Hungary's chairmanship year, in keeping with its main goals: to promote and intensify Holocaust remembrance and education; to make IHRA, its activities and educational services more widely known within the member countries and the rest of the world; to recognize the heroes who saved Jewish lives in Hungary during the Holocaust and to increase awareness that the Roma were also victims.

The strong Hungarian presence in Canada (there were more than 316,000 Canadians of Hungarian origin living in Canada in 2011) is largely due to an influx of Hungarian settlers in the last decades of the 19th Century, and the close to 40,000 refugees who fled to Canada in 1956 and 1957 during and after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution against the USSR. Many of these settlers, refugees and their descendants have made considerable contributions to Canada's cultural landscape. Amongst them are renowned musicians, architects, film directors, doctors, scientists and lawyers.

The Hungarian embassy in Canada has played an active role in promoting the IHRA goals. In Ottawa, Ambassador Ódor has hosted a number of events at his residence, featuring speeches, discussions and musical performances. Many representatives of Canadian society attended these functions, including Jewish and Hungarian community members, religious leaders of various faiths and a variety of artists, academics, jurists, journalists and business leaders.

Ódor hosted a major commemorative concert titled Remembering Through Music at the Canadian Museum of History in June. More than 500 people, including ambassadors, church leaders, politicians and representatives of numerous ethnic groups attended the concert and heard some of Hungary's foremost Klezmer and Jewish folk musicians. Ódor reminded the audience that music is a universal language that speaks to the hearts of all people and is therefore an appropriate medium for uniting such a multicultural group.

In November 2015, the embassy in Ottawa and consulate general in Toronto participated actively in Holocaust Education Week events organized by their local Jewish communities.

Meanwhile, the exhibition Synagogues in East-Central Europe is an ongoing display in various venues across the country. The 20-panel exhibition is a joint project

Hungarian Jews on the ramp at the death camp Birkenau in Poland during German occupation in 1944.

YAD VASHEM

of the government of Hungary and the Hungarian Jewish Cultural Association. It commemorates the 70th anniversary of the deportation of Hungarian Jews to Nazi death camps. It depicts synagogues from 1782-1944 that were destroyed during the Second World War and coincides with the government of Hungary's current rescue program of four endangered synagogues.

The screening of the film *Carl Lutz — the Forgotten Hero* combined with the exhibition Carl Lutz and the Legendary Glass House in Budapest, hosted by the Hungarian and Swiss embassies in October, was another occasion for remembrance, this time a remembrance of the heroism of a man who had the courage to stand up for the humanity of the Jewish people and undermine and defy the Nazis. Carl Lutz saved the lives of more than 60,000 Hungarian Jews.

"Today's event," Ódor told the audience at the screening, "is one of many that we organize during the Hungarian IHRA presidency, by presenting great human characters that stood out in an era when many were numb to humanity."

Zsuzsanna Toronyi, director of the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, presented public lectures in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal and the embassy screened the documentary, *There Was Once…*, a film by Gabor Kalman about the city of Kalocsa and its Jewish population during the Holocaust. A panel discussion commemorating the genocide of the Roma during the war years, as well as their current challenges, is to be another focal point in the early months of 2016.

Szabolcs Takacs, state secretary of European Union Affairs and the current chair of IHRA, was scheduled to deliver a keynote speech at an IHRA conference in Toronto's Simon Wiesenthal Holocaust Centre in January, followed by consultations with leaders in Ottawa.

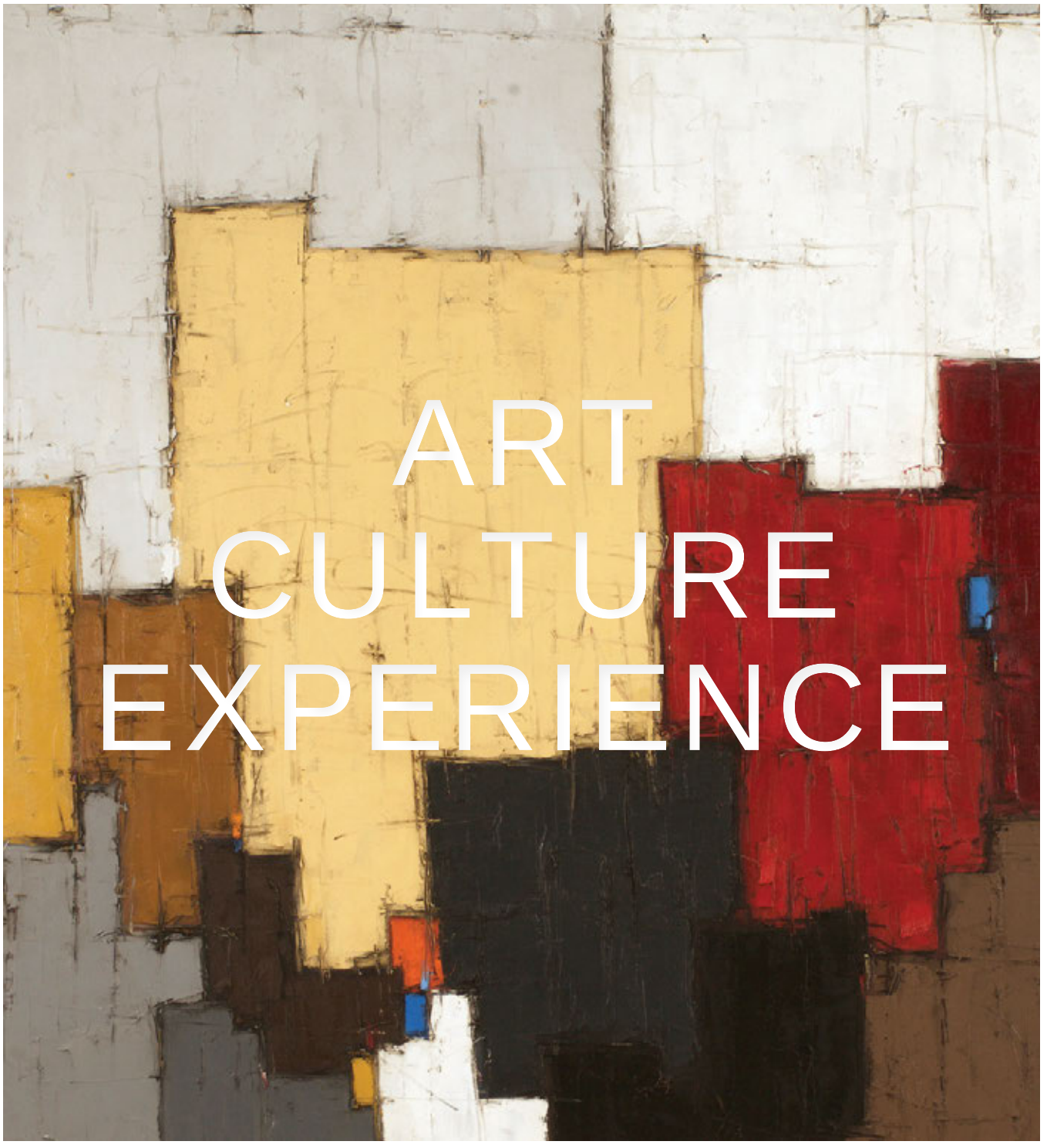
In March 2016, IHRA's chairmanship will be handed over to Romania.

The attention given in Canada to Hungary's admission of its complicity in the murder of great numbers of its Jewish and Roma citizens during the Second World War and the recent attempts to make reparations and curb ongoing anti-Semitism, inspired Peter Munk, a Hungarian immigrant, to accept Ódor's invitation to the Remembering through Music concert. There, he delivered a moving speech in which he said "I, for one, was embarrassed and ashamed of being a Hungarian. I am now proud of being able to help you and recognize that what you do today just may be that one necessary step to make sure that this will never happen again."

Hungarian immigrant Peter Munk, who founded Barrick Gold Corp., spoke at the Remembering through Music concert in Ottawa, saying he used to be embarrassed to be Hungarian.

Kathy Clark is a Hungarian-born Canadian author whose two novels for young adults are based on events that took place during WWII in Nazi-occupied Hungary.

SAM GARCIA



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A search for the middle ground

George Fetherling

In 1962, George Woodcock, the Vancouver literary and social critic, published what turned out to be his most famous book, one that has stayed in print ever since. He called it *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*. He always described himself as a "philosophical anarchist," a phrase coined in reaction to that stereotype of 19th-Century political cartooning — the black-bearded bomb-throwing anarchist, probably Jewish and certainly foreign, lurking in the urban shadows.

But by using the word "libertarian" in his subtitle, Woodcock was able to further emphasize the serious and pacifist nature of his book, for in those days "anarchist" and "libertarian" were not necessarily contradictory terms. Although even many educated people still clung to the ridiculous generalization that all anarchists were (and are) violent by nature, "libertarian" was another matter. To the politically educated, it simply meant self-determination, freedom from bureaucracy, the right to live as you please so long as you don't hurt anyone else. It called to mind, well, Thomas Jefferson (OK, not the slave-owning side of Jefferson, but the other part).

Since the 1970s, however, these two words, "anarchism" and "libertarianism," have split apart. Adherents of the one -ism almost always seem to antagonize those of the other, though in many or most ways, the two groups have more in common than either will admit. This is the takeaway from *The Libertarian Mind: A Manifesto of Freedom* (Simon & Schuster Canada, $34) by David Boaz, a prolific writer on the subject. Without even including the A word in his index, Boaz cannot help but find obvious similarities between the two outlooks. There are naturally some cranks in both camps, but speaking generally, libertarians and anarchists not only favour the smallest practical amount of government, but are also skeptical of military intervention and wish to end imprisonment for most non-violent crimes. They want to advance racial and sexual equality and improve health care.

Author David Boaz notes that in the immediate aftermath of 2008, one saw identical banners, with identical mottoes, at Tea Party event and Occupy Wall Street events, such as the one pictured here.

U.S. libertarian-fiscal conservatives widespread

Boaz writes: "In studies I have co-authored on 'the Libertarian vote' [here he refers not to the –ism, but to the political party of the same name, about which more later on] we have found that some two to four percent of Americans say that they're libertarian when asked. But 15 to 20 percent — 30 million to 40 million Americans — hold libertarian views on a range of questions." He cites a Gallup poll that asked Americans whether they would define themselves as fiscally conservative and socially liberal and found "that 44 percent of respondents — 100 million Americans — accept the label." In the immediate aftermath of 2008, he notes, one saw identical banners, with identical mottoes, at Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street events. But he also confesses that "the libertarian vision may sound otherworldly, like a doctrine for a universe of angels that never was and never will be." Which is precisely what has long been said about anarchism as well.

The Tea Party's piggy bank

The Libertarian Mind comes out of Boaz's work at the Cato Institute, the libertarian think-tank based in Washington, D.C., an organization funded largely by the notorious Koch brothers, Charles and David, whose super-PACs are the Tea Party movement's biggest piggy bank. This fact alone, of course, is enough to provoke grimaces and worse from Americans who think of themselves as progressives and therefore see the Kochs as distorters or perverters of democracy. Boaz shrewdly

DAVID SHANKBONE

forgets to mention the Kochs in his book. Instead he states merely that libertarians "believe that the most important political value is liberty, not democracy." He cites, a bit lamely, I find, the example of India, "the world's largest democracy, yet its commitment to free speech and pluralism is weak and its citizens have been enmeshed in a web of protectionist regulations — happily reduced in recent years — that limited their liberty at every turn."

Later, he writes: "In modern American political discourse, we want to assign everyone a place along a spectrum labelled left to right, liberal to conservative. So is libertarianism left or right?" Most people, except those who renounce labels or hide from them, would say that libertarians are on the right, just as anarchists are on the left. Perhaps the real question is how the two can have so many ideas in common while being at odds with each other. How indeed. Two of the finest men I've ever had the pleasure to know were Neil Reynolds and the aforementioned George Woodcock. The former was once the leader of the Libertarian Party of Canada (and the publisher of this magazine); Woodcock was the 20th Century's best-known writer on anarchism. They never met, but admired each other by long distance.

Forerunners

The bulk of Boaz's book is a discourse on what Americans call liberty and others call freedom. It's a thoroughly American work, but makes occasional mentions of other nationalities. For example, Boaz cites a passage, often quoted by anarchists as well, in the *Tao Te Ching* from China in the 6th Century BCE: "Without law or compulsion, men would dwell in harmony." But his nods to other cultures are few and fleeting, as the libertarian movement in the U.S. speaks only in an American accent while anarchism is polyphonic.

It may well be true, as Boaz says, that "early America's libertarianism came from England and Scotland," but it did so by way of many different figures. He chooses to mention only one by name: Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). She was the mate of the English proto-anarchist thinker William Godwin and the mother of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (who wrote *Frankenstein* and was the wife of Percy Bysshe Shelley, the poet, who died fighting to free Greece from the Turks). Since the 1970s, there has been a great revival of interest in the story of Wollstonecraft senior, an indication that American libertarians retain a strong focus on congressional politics, while anarchists, on this continent and elsewhere, have shifted from the question of state authority to such issues as climate change and feminism.

One example of this trend in anti-authoritarian thinking is *Romantic Outlaws: The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft and Her Daughter Mary Shelley* by Charlotte Gordon (Penguin Random House, $35), the latest of many modern studies of these two women and their ideas. Similarly, Janet Biehl's *Ecology or Catastrophe: The Life of Murray Bookchin* (Oxford University Press, $34.95) illustrates how Bookchin applied his own brand of anarchist thought to questions of sustainability, decades before such discussions became common.

Mary Wollstonecraft, painted by John Opie

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

If anarchism and libertarianism are somehow connected at the core, why are they so different? The answer isn't a simple left-right split, but rather a question of the starkly different ways each came into being as a social movement. The Russian nobleman and scientist Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), whose biographer was George Woodcock, was the person who made anarchism a genuine -ism. That is to say, he made it into a coherent philosophy that could be applied like a grid to study any issue. Russia was always a breeding ground for anarchists because the place was so susceptible to rule by despots. Generally, though, as Woodcock liked to point out, anarchism flourished, if that's the word, in countries that were hot, predominantly Roman Catholic and ruled by

monarchs or generals — in some cases, all of the above. One couldn't be an old-style anarchist unless one had harsh authorities against whom to rebel.

Couple's botched assassination attempt

In Europe for a few years in the late 19th Century and first decade of the 20th, there were, in fact, cartoon anarchists throwing bombs at people — giving the movement a bad name that would never be completely erased. In the U.S., by contrast, most acts of what anarchists called "propaganda by the deed" (what we would call primitive domestic terrorism) arose from industrialization. One of the most infamous involved the agitator, speaker and women's rights advocate Emma Goldman (1869–1940) and her comrade and sometimes lover, Alexander (Sasha) Berkman (1870–1931). There are numerous biographies of Goldman, including a concise recent one by Vivian Gornick — *Emma Goldman: Revolution As a Way of Life* (Yale University Press, US$16.95 paper.) It is part of Yale's "Jewish Lives" series, which explores the careers of prominent Jews not generally known foremost for their place in Jewish religion and culture (for example, Groucho Marx or George Gershwin).

Paul Avrich, an important academic historian of anarchism, was hard at work on a dual biography of Goldman and Berkman when ill health caused him to ask his daughter, Karin, to take over the project. The result, *Sasha and Emma* (Harvard University Press, US$35), describes Berkman's unsuccessful attempt to rub out the Pittsburgh steel magnate Henry Clay Frick in his office in 1892 as Goldman stood by: a protest against Frick's use of Pinkertons to murder striking workers. The attempt became something of an opéra bouffe, for Berkman, who, although armed with a pistol and knife, proved an almost comically inept assassin. He was sentenced to 24 years in prison, where he was shunned by many of the other working-class inmates as a nuisance, a busybody and a bumbler who only made matters worse. While in custody, Berkman and a few others managed to publish an in-house radical newsletter that has now been gathered together for the first time as *Prison Blossoms: Anarchist Voices from the American Past* (Harvard, $26.95). Berkman and Goldman were later imprisoned for opposing U.S. entry into the Great War, and after the Armistice were deported to Russia by the young J. Edgar Hoover. To her credit, Goldman instantly saw the dystopian horror of the new Soviet Union and wrote books about it. Kicked out of two countries, she spent most of her last days in Canadian exile, dying in Toronto.

Political cousins

That Frick's shooting was not necessarily characteristic of radical violence at the time is seen by comparing the event with, say, the once-famous march of Coxey's Army the following year. The U.S. was in a deep recession and, as Benjamin F. Alexander explains in *Coxey's Army: Popular Protest in the Gilded Age* (Johns Hopkins University Press, US$19.95 paper), a harmless agitator named Jacob Coxey led a peaceful march from rural Ohio to Washington, D.C., demanding that the government spend its way out of the trouble by investing in infrastructure projects. Sound familiar? It raised quite a fuss at the time.

Of course protest, whether peaceful or violent, has often sizzled on the margins of democratic politics and sometimes burst into flames. For the past several years, there has been a wave of proud retrospection about the American civil rights move-

Henry Clay Frick

ment of the early 1960s. At present, we are beginning to see studies of American "revolutionary" groups of the later 1960s and 1970s, a generation before the idea of terrorism took on an international connotation. Bryan Burrough's book *Days of Rage: America's Radical Underground, the FBI, and the Forgotten Age of Revolutionary Violence* (Penguin Random House, $34.95) recalls a time that now seems safely obsolete, though I was jarred by his description of one particular event: the accidental blowing up of a Greenwich Village townhouse on West 11th Street, where members of the Weather Underground (aka the Weathermen) were trying to build a bomb. I used to live just up the street.

By what logic does this return me to the question of libertarianism? Well, I just want to make one clear distinction between libertarianism and the Libertarian Party and another one between the American and the Canadian parties. In the U.S., electoral libertarianism, while hardly a force in political life, certainly has a presence. The party was founded in 1971 and, at the time I'm writing this, has 152 people in office in 33 states, all of them in municipal, county or state jobs, including 37 in Pennsylvania (a Libertarian hotbed, evi-

A 1901 police mug shot of Emma Goldman, the anarchist and women's rights advocate

Russian nobleman and scientist Peter Kropotkin in 1864

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A new book titled ***The Rebel of Rangoon***, talks more about a disparate batch of underground grunts who tried to keep hope alive in Myanmar than it talks about democratic angel Aung San Suu Kyi.

dently) and 17 in California. By contrast, the Libertarian Party of Canada, founded in 1973, ran eight federal candidates in 2002 who drew a combined total of 1,949 votes. But in our federal election last October, the party fielded 67 candidates in seven provinces. One Alberta hopeful, one who perhaps fitted the American mould a little more closely than most, encouraged donors in his riding by enrolling them in a lottery. The lucky winner, the day after the election, was to be given a $1,200 rifle. The *Globe and Mail* reported that the man "checked with Elections Canada […] and was told it had never been done before, but it did not run afoul of any election rules."

And briefly…

Most people who closely followed events in Myanmar since the already repressive regime cancelled elections in 1988 hoped that the junta would eventually fall. Many imagined that, in the usual manner of these things, a new generation of youngish colonels would organize a coup against the elderly generals and supplant them. Instead, the geriatric generals, who had held control since 1962, sort of gave themselves up without actually going away. They promised to restore at least somewhat-free elections. But the title of Delphine Schrank's book, *The Rebel of Rangoon* (Public Affairs, US$26.99) isn't about the democratic angel Aung San Suu Kyi. Rather, "the rebel" is a sort of generic pseudonym for a disparate batch of underground grunts who struggled to keep hope alive. Schrank, who reported from Myanmar for the *Washington Post*, writes densely and with passion and depicts the story she has to tell in a fragmentary way, "because the actions of its protagonists are fragmentary." The result is that the prose isn't always as clear as it should be. Rosalind Russell, who covered much of the same territory for the *Independent* in Britain, tells the story more accessibly in *Burma's Spring: Real Lives in Turbulent Times* (Thistle, US$19.95 paper).

Eduardo del Buey, who now lives in Washington, D.C., is a former career Canadian diplomat who served in half a dozen widely scattered overseas missions, working as a communications director and official spokesman. His book, *Spokespersonry* (Friesen Press, $16.95 paper) distils a career's worth of knowledge about how to prevent the wrong message getting out — or how to repair the damage if it gets out anyway. He includes numerous case studies. The book comes on the heels of a somewhat similar book of his, aimed more at the corporate rather than the diplomatic world: *Guerrilla Communications* (Friesen, $29.95).

George Fetherling is a novelist and cultural commentator.

HTOO TAY ZAR

Filipino food: A historical odyssey

Photos by Larry Dickenson

Margaret Dickenson

Shrimp and sweet potato fritters

The Philippines, an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands east of Vietnam, boasts the longest discontinuous coastline in the world. Its topography features mountains, plains, coral reefs and a vast number of lakes, rivers, streams and springs, while its tropical climate includes rainy and dry seasons. With 100-plus ethnic groups, the gastronomy of this nation is unique and complex, unlike any other in Southeast Asia. It not only encompasses food from land and sea, but also dishes and culinary techniques introduced throughout history from China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Spain, Mexico and the U.S.

Over the centuries, the profile of Filipino cuisine has evolved from its initial very basic roots to a diverse cuisine, thanks, in part to its history. However, Ambassador Petronila Garcia confirms that "foreign influences, although certainly major, have not been directly adopted, but rather have been "indigenized" to suit Filipino palates and ingredients.

Originally, Filipino dishes were boiled, steamed and roasted. Locally raised pigs, chickens, water buffaloes, fish and seafood were the primary ingredients. But, the number of ingredients expanded dramatically when, in 3200 BC, Austronesians from Taiwan and southern China's Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau settled in what is now the Philippines and introduced rice cultivation and other agricultural practices.

By the 10th Century, the Philippines began direct trade with Hokkien China, trading such items as spices and sea cucumber in exchange for silk, porcelain, ceramics and such staple foods as soy sauce, bean sprouts, tofu and fish sauce (patis). In addition, stir-frying and preparations of soup bases, *siopoo* (steamed filled buns) and *simomai* (dumplings) were introduced.

Perhaps more significantly, as a result of trade with neighbouring Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam, other foods and cooking techniques took hold, many of which are still used today. These include *bagoong* (shrimp paste), *puso* (rice wrapped and cooked in a triangular packet made of woven coconut leaves), *randang* (curry-like beef stew cooked in spiced coconut milk until almost dry and the beef is tender), *kare-kare* (oxtail with vegetables cooked in peanut sauce) and coconut milk-infused dishes such as *laing* (pork or shrimp cooked with dried taro leaves and coconut milk) and *ginataag menok* (chicken sautéed in garlic, onion and ginger, then stewed in coconut milk). Since these particular neighbours were also trading with countries to the north and west of them, elements from Indian and Arabic cuisine (e.g., *kurmah, satti, biryani*) began to make their way into Filipino gastronomy.

It is worth noting that many of the influences mentioned in the pre-Spanish periods have only been seriously explored in more recent years. The written history of Filipino food culture really began in earnest in 1521 with the arrival of Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan's expedition for Spain. The expedition's chronicler, Antonio Pigafetta, took notes on a dinner served to him and his crew on Limasawa Island: "pork in its sauce served on porcelain platters… roasted fish with freshly gathered ginger and rice, turtle eggs, chicken and peacocks."

300 years of Spanish rule

Although Magellan was killed in an inter-tribal skirmish, the expedition did return to Spain. A second Spanish expedition in 1561 only succeeded in naming the country "Las Islas Filipinas" — after the Spanish king, Felipe — but a third expedition in 1571 did establish colonies in Cebu and Manila, and Spain ruled the country for more than 300 years until 1898 when a successful revolution resulted in the Philippines' independence.

There's no question the Spanish brought new ingredients, in particular, olive oil, saffron, paprika, ham, cured sausages and cheese, and thus, new flavours. New cooking styles and dishes from different regions of Spain appeared, notably *callos*, an ox tripe and shank stew; *gambas*, shrimp in spicy tomato sauce, and *paella*. These dishes remain popular today and the Spanish also brought other European cuisines. *Rellenong manok* is deboned whole chicken stuffed with ground pork, whole sausages and hard-cooked eggs. Filipinos applied the same technique to *bangos*, a silvery milkfish.

During that period, the Spanish also introduced ingredients from old Spanish colonies and the Americas — tomatoes, corn, potatoes, chili peppers and avocados. New techniques included sautéing other ingredients with garlic and onion, a method that remains prevalent in Filipino cuisine today.

With the Philippines being ruled by Spain, but administered through Mexico, Mexican specialties became, and continue to be, part of the Filipino culinary profile, often with names remaining the same, though the ingredients and cooking techniques were altered. For example, Filipino *tamales* wrapped in banana leaves are made with rice, not corn; *balbaco* is boiled beef shanks, not slow-roasted meat cooked in a pit; and *pipian*, chicken and greens cooked with rice, uses peanuts, not pumpkin seeds.

American favourites arrive

The independence of the Philippines and the establishment of the First People's Republic was rather brief as the U.S. — with its military power and modern technology — gained control of the archipelago for the next half century, until 1946, with only a brief interruption due to Japanese occupation between 1942 and 1945. American rule added sandwiches, salads, hamburgers, fried chicken, steaks, cakes, pies and Spam, "plus milk chocolate," adds Ambassador Garcia. It also brought the innovations of pressure cooking and freezing.

The Americans, the Spaniards and others brought their traditions, however, there have always been several other culinary influences in the Philippines, due to the many local languages and the complex geographic location of the islands. It has only been relatively recently through migration, increased domestic tourism and mass media that Filipinos have begun discovering foods and specialties of the different islands and regions within their own country. Today, many of these dishes are being prepared beyond their original communities and becoming part of the national cuisine (this includes dishes such as *sisig*, originally a Pampanga dish of boiled and then broiled finely chopped pig cheeks; *Ilonggo inasal*, a grilled chicken marinated in annatto oil from Western Visavas, and, *pinakbet*, a mixed vegetable stew from the far northern island of Luzon).

Purple heirloom rice from the mountains is the only rice exported from the Philippines, exclusively to Canada.

Other defining ingredients

So what else defines Filipino cuisine? Unlike the subtle delivery of flavours in most other Asian cuisines, the complex, bold and deep flavour of Filipino dishes — regardless of the region — is principally achieved through the use of souring agents and by combining sour and salty, as well as sour or salty with sweet, to convey a tanginess and a counterbalance. Indeed, very sour, unripe mangoes are paired with salt of *bagoong*, a shrimp paste; sweet brioche-like rolls or rice cakes are topped with grated salty cheese; *champorado*, a sweet cocoa rice porridge, is served with *tuyo*, salted, sun-dried fish; and *dinuguan*, a savoury pig's blood and innards stew, comes to the table with *puto*, sweet, steamed rice cakes.

Suka, the primary souring agent, is a vinegar made from the juice of pressed sugarcane or the sap of the nipa palm grown in brackish water or the sap of coconut or sugar palms. It is an indispensable ingredient in the Filipino kitchen. Sour fruits, such as tamarind, *calamansi*, a local lime; *kamias*, small green acidic fruit; unripe mangoes, pineapple, guavas and native tomatoes, plus various types of leaves are also used.

Even prior to the arrival of the Spanish, early Filipinos used the technique of immersing food in vinegar and salt to keep it from spoiling. Three important cooking techniques employ sourness as a basic flavour. *Paksiw* is a way of cooking fish in vinegar and water, with salt, peppercorns, garlic, ginger and chives, to give the fish a distinctive taste, but this technique can also be applied to chicken and meat. *Kinilaw* involves marinating fresh seafood, meat or vegetables in vinegar or the juice of sour fruit, then removing the food from the marinade and adding other ingredients to enhance the flavour and texture. *Sinigang* involves cooking meat or seafood in a sour soup known as *sabaw*, with different combinations of sour fruits and leaves to attain the desired level of sourness, which ranges from subtle to mouth-puckering. This dish rates as the one most representative of Filipino taste. In *adobo*, the most celebrated, world-famous Filipino dish, vinegar stands out as the critical ingredient when meat, seafood or vegetables are marinated in vinegar and garlic, then sautéed in oil and finally simmered in the original marinade with water, soy sauce or coconut milk and various seasonings, among them bay leaf, black peppercorns and chilies. In addition, vinegar functions as a dip for snacks and appetizers (see recipe below for an example).

White rice is a must with virtually every meal. While most often steamed, leftovers fried with garlic are served for breakfast, along with eggs and sausages or cured meat. Rice flour is used to make cakes, sweets, other pastries and noodles. *Pancit* — noodles made from rice, mung beans, wheat and eggs — is a staple, second to rice, with every town, province or region having its own version differing by noodle, sauce, garnish and cooking technique. As an aside, Eric Tamayo, minister and consul general at the embassy, pointed out that a purple heirloom rice from the mountains is the only rice exported from his country and only to Canada.

Fish — specifically tilapia, milkfish, grouper, tuna, swordfish and seafood, from shrimp, clams, mussels, crabs and

oysters to squid — plays a major role in Filipino cuisine. Fish salted, smoked, sun-dried, pan-fried or deep-fried and served with rice and vegetables for a simple meal, is the most common among a multitude of other more elaborate fish dishes including *escabeche*, which is sweet and sour; *relleno*, in which the fish is deboned and stuffed; and *kinilaw*, the Philippines' answer to ceviche.

Filipinos are fans of pork and have the "snout-to-tail" commitment, in which every part of the animal — cheeks, snout, ears, organs, knuckles and blood — is consumed in some practical way. It could be to make head cheese or *dinuguan*, the thick brown pork blood stew sometimes deceptively referred to as "chocolate meat" particularly by parents. *Lechon de leche*, spit-roasted piglet stuffed with fragrant tamarind leaves or lemon grass, ranks among the most festive foods.

While most dishes incorporate garlic and onions, some also ingeniously combine the abundant tropical fruits — from coconuts and bananas to papayas and pineapples — and such vegetables as Chinese and Napa cabbage, eggplant and yard-long beans, with pork, chicken and seafood to create a myriad of tasty dishes.

Unlike Thai cuisine, Filipino dishes are not characteristically hot, other than particular ones, such as the wonderfully delicious Bicol Express, a pork belly and coconut stew laced with shrimp paste, chilies, garlic, ginger and onion. Ambassador Garcia explained that this dish, created in Bicol, can be so hot that a "phew" might follow the first bite, sounding like the whistle of the bullet train travelling between Manila and Bicol.

Desserts strongly feature Spanish recipes often rich in egg yolks, including *leche flan*, which is a mild custard. Many, such as *maja blanca*, a white coconut custard, substitute milk or cream with island ingredients such as coconut milk and cashew nuts for almonds. Local desserts highlight coconut, other tropical fruits, shaved ice combinations and rice-based sweets, while American favourites include cakes and pies.

At meals, all dishes typically arrive at once and are shared by everyone at the table. Small bowls of condiments, dips and sauces enable guests to enhance their food according to their taste. Today, a fork and spoon have replaced (for the most part) the tradition of eating with one's hands.

Enjoy my interpretation of what I regard as an intriguing Filipino appetizer, served, of course, with a vinegar based sauce — it's a delightful example of *tamis* (sweet) and *asim* (sour). Bon Appétit! Kain Na!

Shrimp & Sweet Potato Fritters
Makes 4 servings

5 oz (150 g) fresh or frozen shrimp (count: 30-40)
3 ½ oz (100 g) sweet potato, peeled and cut into fine julienne strips/strings
2 tsp (10 mL) peeled, slivered and chopped fresh gingerroot
3/4 tsp (4 mL) finely minced fresh garlic
Pinch salt and crushed black peppercorns
2 tbsp (30 mL) egg white
1 1/3 tbsp (20 mL) cornstarch
1 tbsp (15 mL) cold water

Spicy Garlic Vinegar Sauce
3/4 cup (180 mL) white vinegar
1 ½ tsp (8 mL) finely minced fresh garlic
½ tsp (3 mL) granulated sugar
1/3 tsp (2 mL) sriracha

1. To make the Spicy Garlic Vinegar Sauce, whisk together vinegar, garlic (1½ tsp or 8 mL), sugar and sriracha. Set aside.
2. Peel shrimp, leaving tails attached, if possible. (This is optional. If the tails aren't delicate, remove them.) Cut each shrimp lengthwise in half. (Note: The tails will remain attached to only one of the halves.)
3. Place shrimp, sweet potatoes, gingerroot and garlic in a bowl, season with salt and crushed black peppercorns and toss. Add egg white and toss again.
4. In a small bowl, combine cornstarch and water to form a smooth mixture. Drizzle over shrimp mixture and toss.
5. In an 8-inch (20-cm) diameter skillet, heat oil (with a depth of 1 1/4 inches or 3 cm) to 350 °F (180 °C).
6. Before frying, divide the shrimp mixture into 8 portions, distributing the shrimp and sweet potato strips equally.
7. Working with one portion at a time, add it to the skillet to form (more or less) a round fritter (diameter: about 3 inches or 7.5 cm). Cook fritter until golden brown (about 45 seconds). Using 2 pancake flippers, turn fritter over and cook the second side for about another 45 seconds before transferring to a paper towel-lined tray to drain.
8. Repeat process to make 7 more fritters.
9. For 4 individual servings, offer 2 fritters per person. Pass Spicy Garlic Vinegar Sauce at the table. (Note: This appetizer is best eaten with a fork and knife.) Serve as quickly as possible after cooking. Don't wait more than 40 minutes.

Margaret Dickenson is a cookbook author, TV host, menu/recipe developer, protocol, business and etiquette instructor. (www.margaretstable.ca)

Bubbles from the New World

Pieter Van den Weghe

Sparkling wine is an incredible and splendid kind of drink. Not only is it delicious, and versatile for food pairings, it transcends being a wine to become an icon of culture. Its mere mention evokes images of everything from proper celebrations to a heady life on Easy Street.

All that said, it's also serious and big business. The Champagne region has long defended its reputation as the first and finest expression of sparkling wine. Its Comité Interprofessionnel du vin de Champagne spends millions in legal battles to ensure the name Champagne is never used improperly, whether for a wine or any other product. Even the term "Champagne Method," which describes the technique originally developed in Champagne, was outlawed in Europe 20 years ago (it's been replaced by "Traditional Method").

But, thankfully, the prestige and joy of Champagne has inspired many producers to follow in its footsteps. While some of the resulting wines come from Europe (Franciacorta from Italy's Lombardy region, Spanish Cava and Crémant from France's Loire), there are now many examples of distinctive and brilliant sparkling wines from the New World, made with the same meticulous techniques originally developed in Champagne.

Starting things off is one of Canada's best sparkling wines, the Gold Label Brut from British Columbia's Blue Mountain Vineyards. Built on acreage acquired in 1971 by founder Ian Mavety, the winery first grew grapes for other wineries before starting to produce its own wines in the early 1990s. Over two decades, its focus has been to produce estate-only wines using sustainable practices that showcase the climate and conditions of the Okanagan Valley. So confident are they in their identity, they've eschewed, and even criticized, the VQA system to which the majority of Canadian wineries belong. Today, two generations of Mavetys make sure the winery's viticulture and winemaking practices are carried on, and the non-vintage traditional method Gold Label Brut is the result. This wine, made from mostly Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes with a small amount of Pinot Gris, is consistently impressive. Its bright fresh character is highlighted with generous notes of tree fruit, citrus and stoney minerality. Two years of bottle aging "sur-lie" — a process whereby finished wine is allowed to sit in its lees, the sediment that settles to the bottom of the carboy, in order to extract flavours — has provided a yeasty and toasty element. It's sold at Vintages for $28.95.

For a New World sparkling wine from a little further afield, the Jansz Premium Cuvée fits the bill. Established in the late 1990s by the Hill Smith family, owners of Yalumba Family Vigneron, Jansz makes excellent examples of the quality sparkling wines made possible in the cool climate of Tasmania, an isolated island state off Australia's south coast. Composed of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, this tasty wine shows rich flavours of lemon and stone fruit, nut, fresh acidity and a creamy texture. Find it at Vintages for $26.95.

My final New World sparkling recommendation has a distinctive pedigree. Schramsberg Vineyards began with the purchase in 1862 of a large piece of mountainside land in California's Napa Valley by German immigrant Jacob Schram. After Schram built the winery into a success, it went through a variety of owners until it was purchased by Jack and Jamie Davies in 1965. Since then, the Davies family has made Schramsberg one of the flagships of premium American sparkling wine. Every U.S. president has served Schramsberg sparkling wine at state functions since Richard Nixon toasted China's premier Zhou Enlai in 1972. Its 2012 Rosé Brut, available in six-bottle cases from The Vine Agency for $65.95 per bottle, is complex and delicious. Composed of three quarters Pinot Noir and one quarter Chardonnay, this wine shows tremendous character and will wow sparkling wine fans.

Pieter Van den Weghe is general manager and director of wine at Beckta.

MARILYN WILSON

"The Delegation of the European Union to Canada has been using Mrs Marilyn Wilson's services to find suitable accommodation for its officials. Mrs Wilson, who had been recommended to our office by the German Embassy, always provides outstanding service and manages to find very suitable accommodation for our officials sometimes under difficult circumstances and short deadlines.

Mrs Wilson's expertise in the real estate market is well known within the diplomatic community and we would not hesitate to recommend her to anyone.

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China's residence: Sharing a culture with Canada

Photos by Dyanne Wilson

Before the Chinese government bought this Rockcliffe Park residence for its ambassadors to live in, they lived in the sprawling embassy on St. Patrick Street.

Margo Roston

If you ask Ambassador Luo Zhaohui about his spacious Rockcliffe residence, he'll tell you with a big smile that it has all the elements of good feng shui, the Chinese philosophical system for harmonizing with the surrounding environment.

His house is sort of halfway up a hill, between water — the backyard swimming pool and McKay Lake — and plenty of green trees.

"Besides," he says, "it's comfortable, bright and in a nice neighbourhood."

The more than 5,000-square-foot two-storey home on Cloverdale Road is decorated to take advantage of its façade, which runs from east to west and faces south. The towering glass windows, positioned in the centre of the house, rise up two storeys. Built by a local family in

The grand reception room features simple furniture and huge windows that show off the fine art.

Chinese Ambassador Luo Zhaohui and his wife, Jiang Yili.

The dining room features a round table with 16 chairs. It can easily be converted to a banquet hall for sizable buffet dinners.

The bright white marbled front hall greets visitors on entry.

1995, it was purchased by the Chinese government in 2001 as a home for its ambassadors. Until then, the diplomats lived in the St. Patrick Street embassy, a former convent.

The house is simply furnished and takes advantage of the light to show off Chinese works of art. From the bright white marbled front hall, with its distinctive and colourful Chinese ceiling fixture, you enter straight into the grand reception room. White walls and white furniture play off the towering windows and the view of the backyard patio, garden, swimming pool and attractive pool house.

Near the entrance is a piano, waiting for its moment to entertain at a concert, sometimes accompanied by traditional Chinese instruments. Ivy grows up the walls at the entrance end of the room and two large blue Chinese vases mark the garden side.

The artworks are a particular joy for Luo and he shows off the two traditional-style Chinese paintings that dominate the room. One is a landscape called Jinggang Mountains Zhushachong Lookout, "a part political, part traditional piece," he says. Broad brush strokes create the mountain scene, revered as the birthplace of the

Chinese Red Army, the predecessor of the People's Liberation Army. The area is known as "the cradle of the Chinese Revolution."

On the opposite wall is a charming portrayal of ancient Chinese horsemen playing polo.

The reception room opens onto a small dining room with a round table, perfect for small dinners. Jiang Yili, the ambassador's wife and a former consul at the Chinese embassy in Washington, says the couple entertains once or twice a week, turning out sumptuous meals from two kitchens.

A modern kitchen is attached to a bright family room facing the garden, which Jiang admits is her favourite place in the house, a place for the family, including their teenage daughter, to relax. This kitchen is used mainly for desserts and tea, while across the hall and down a set of stairs, there is a smaller, simpler kitchen where the food is prepared. Commanding that space is a young chef from China, a recent arrival in Canada from the kitchen of the prestigious Grand Hotel Beijing.

"We always serve Chinese food to company," Jiang says, "and we change the menu regularly so that people who have been here before don't eat the same thing."

"We serve the best Chinese food in Ottawa," Luo adds.

Known for reaching out to the community, the couple was preparing to host a fundraising dinner for the Rockcliffe Park Foundation. In the past, ambassadors have opened the house for a garden party to benefit the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra.

Lining the walls of the long hall leading from the reception room to the banquet hall is a wonderful collection of historical photographs showing the development of the two tiny houses and garden belonging to the Order of Our Lady of Charity in the 19th Century, which grew and grew on the banks of the Rideau River into the large, 400-room convent at 515 St. Patrick St., now the home of the Chinese embassy. The building has a large staff and every day they gather for lunch, prepared by another talented chef from China. When there is a big reception at the residence, the couple can call upon the staff at the embassy to help the three staff members who serve at the house.

The large banquet hall, which also opens out onto the patio, features a round table with 16 chairs covered in scarlet red brocade. The room can be easily converted into a space suitable for sizable buffet dinners. Four colourful paintings representing "spring scenery, Chinese wisteria, harvest season and longevity," are the works of famous painter Lou Shibai. They are among the couple's favourite items in the house. Also on their list are several delicate jade sculptures, a large ceramic horse painted in the style of the Tang dynasty and the most treasured piece of all, a large calligraphic poem written by contemporary calligrapher Sheng Pen, who wrote it specially for the embassy when he visited Canada in 2000.

Less formal are the ambassador's study and a staff bedroom on the main floor. Upstairs, there are three other bedrooms.

The ambassador, who held the same position in Pakistan, is proud of his country's cultural heritage and is an enthusiastic teacher of its history. The first words he most commonly says to his guests are, "Have you been to China?" If the answer is "no," there will be many wonderful things to be learned during a visit to his home away from home.

Margo Roston is *Diplomat's* culture editor.

New arrivals

Tariq Azim Khan
High Commissioner for Pakistan

Ambassador Khan holds a bachelor of science, a post-graduate diploma in industrial administration and a master's of business administration.

After graduating, he worked as a consultant with Industrial Society U.K. and as a director for his family-owned telecommunications business before serving as a media adviser for the Pakistani high commissioner in London, beginning in 2000. Three years later, he was elected to Pakistan's Senate and served two terms between 2003 and 2012. He was chairman of the Senate's standing committee for planning and development, a member of the committee on foreign affairs and a member of the committee on information. He also served as minister of state for overseas Pakistanis from 2004 to 2006 and minister of state for information and broadcasting from 2006 to 2007.

Khan is married to Adline Azim Khan and has two sons. He speaks Urdu and Punjabi fluently.

Marcela Lopez Bravo
Ambassador of Peru

Ambassador Lopez Bravo is a career diplomat who is making a return to Canada after having served here as first secretary in 1982.

Lopez Bravo joined the diplomatic service in 1972 as a third secretary. She has held several positions at Brazil's foreign ministry headquarters over the years, and several postings abroad as well. Her first posting came as third secretary in charge of consular affairs in Brazil after which she came to Canada as first secretary until 1986 when she became first secretary at the embassy in Cuba.

In 1992, she became minister-counsellor at the embassy in Honduras and a year later, held the same position at the embassy in Venezuela. In 1999, she was minister of the embassy in Italy, with cross-accreditation as assistant permanent representative for International Organizations based in Rome. In 2007, she became ambassador to Korea.

Lopez Bravo is married with two sons.

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Mathieu Antoine Bernard Schuster
First secretary

Guyana
Marsha Andrea Caddett
Counsellor

India
Sanjay Banga
Attaché
Anupama Deolal
Attaché

Iraq
Yasmin Y. M. H. Al-Sabaa
Second secretary

Libya
Salah Nagib R. Bogrin
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Netherlands
Arie Cornelis Plieger
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Portugal
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Romania
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Counsellor

Russia
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Attaché
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Blacks in Canada: A complicated history

By Anthony Wilson-Smith

As we mark Black History Month in Canada in February, it's worth reflecting on the legacy of our country's black community and the prejudice its members have faced. On the plus side, Canada — even before it formally became a country — took progressive steps to end discrimination ahead of some other countries.

In 1793, Upper Canada (Ontario) passed an anti-slavery measure (although it stopped short of a ban, instead instituting a gradual prohibition). From 1815 to 1860, Canada welcomed thousands of blacks who fled slavery in the United States to come via the Underground Railroad. In 1946, fans of the Montreal Royals baseball team warmly received Jackie Robinson. The following year, he would break the colour barrier as the first black to play in the major leagues.

On the other hand, when black Loyalists joined their white counterparts in Canada after the American Revolution, they were welcomed much less warmly. Bitterness by whites over competing for jobs with blacks (who were paid less for the same work) led to Canada's first race riot in Nova Scotia in 1784. Some black Loyalists were so frustrated they moved to Africa in 1792.

The slights continued into the 20th Century. In 1962, Halifax decided to demolish its historic black neighbourhood, Africville, and threatened property-owning blacks with eviction if they refused to sell their properties. At the other end of the country, Hogan's Alley in Vancouver suffered a similar fate in 1967, when the western half of a community largely populated by blacks was levelled to allow new construction.

Those episodes are striking when measured against the long history and achievements of the country's black community. The first black person in what would become Canada is believed to have been Mathieu Da Costa, hired as an interpreter for Samuel de Champlain in 1608. Since then, even while battling discrimination, black Canadians have made important contributions to national life. Among them:

Former slave Richard Pierpoint petitioned the government to create an all-black regiment in the War of 1812. He succeeded — and served, despite being in his 60s.

Mary Ann Shadd began publishing the *Provincial Freeman* in 1853, becoming North America's first black female newspaper publisher. Several years earlier, she had established an integrated school near what is now Windsor, Ont. She lost funding after a public dispute in which she disagreed with segregation.

William Neilson Hall became the first black to win a Victoria Cross, awarded for his heroism in what was then Calcutta during the 1857 Indian mutiny.

Rosemary Brown became Canada's first black woman elected to a provincial legislature (in 1972). Lincoln Alexander, elected in 1968, was our first black member of Parliament; and Michaëlle Jean became our first black governor general in 2005.

Another pioneer is Viola Desmond, who, in 1946, challenged racial segregation at a film theatre in New Glasgow, N.S. She refused to leave a whites-only section and was subsequently found guilty of a tax violation used as a tool to enforce segregation.

After the incident, she said: "I didn't realize a thing like this could happen in Nova Scotia — or in any other part of Canada." She was convicted of the offence, and only pardoned in 2010, decades after her death. The Nova Scotia government apologized for the conviction and acknowledged discrimination as the driving factor.

In the most recent census in 2011, 945,665 Canadians identified themselves as black, a sharp increase over the previous decade. As we salute Canada's diverse, growing black community, our organization, Historica Canada, has produced a *Heritage Minute* telling Desmond's story. Other *Minutes* tell the stories of Pierpoint, Jackie Robinson and the Underground Railroad (www.historicacanada.ca). Today, some blacks still cite instances of continuing challenges because of their colour. The community's achievements — and ongoing challenges — provide lessons with which all Canadians should be familiar.

Anthony Wilson-Smith is president of Historica Canada.

Annual Dinner raises $93,000 for survival of threatened salmon

By Donna Jacobs Photos by Lois Siegel

For the international touch, it was Iceland and Ireland all the way at Ottawa's 19th Atlantic Salmon Federation Annual Fall Run Dinner last autumn at the Museum of History in Gatineau. Iceland is known internationally for its dedication to saving the threatened wild Atlantic salmon species.

Iceland's ambassador to Canada, Sturla Sigurjónsson, who attended with his wife, Elín Jónsdóttir, donated Icelandic water, chocolates, place settings and tourism information in support of the Icelandic-themed dinner. The embassy co-ordinated the arrival from Iceland of speaker Orri Vigfússon, who travels the world in search of practical solutions to save wild Atlantic salmon.

Irish Ambassador John Bassett and his wife, Patricia, donated a dinner for 12, which drew vigorous bidding and raised $3,500 for research to support the salmon species, which is under grave threat to its survival in many rivers, including those in Ireland, Europe, Canada and the U.S.

Among the items that charitable Stuntman Stu auctioned off during his very lively live auction were Canadian fishing trips, a week's stay in a Paris apartment and game tickets to the Ottawa Senator's VIP section. A silent auction featured items ranging from wines, jewelry and fishing gear to restaurant vouchers. The dinner, attended by 220 guests, raised $93,000 in support of the Atlantic Salmon Federation and its ambitious scientific research.

Elín Jónsdóttir and her husband, Icelandic Ambassador Sturla Sigurjónsson.

Ottawa's Dan Greenberg, director of the Atlantic Salmon Federation

Gail Einarson-McCleery, honorary consul of Iceland in Toronto, left, and Embassy of Iceland Attaché Ólöf Sigvaldadóttir, greet guests in traditional dress.

Irish Ambassador Raymond Bassett, left, Icelander Orri Vigfússon, founder and chairman of the North Atlantic Salmon Fund, and Patricia Bassett, wife of the Irish Ambassador


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1. Koviljka Špirić, ambassador of Bosnia-Herzegovina, hosted a reception at her embassy. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 2. Slovak Ambassador Andrej Droba, artist Dominik Sokolowski, gallery director Edith Betkowski, Polish Ambassador Marcin Bosacki and Serbian Ambassador Mihailo Papazoglu at a vernissage at Alpha Art Gallery co-hosted with the Embassy of Poland. (Photo: Lois Siegel) 3. The High Commission of Trinidad and Tobago and the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Ottawa hosted a cultural show, featuring dancer Cammie Smith from the Mason Hall Village Council Folk Performers of Tobago. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 4. The Ottawa Diplomatic Association hosted its third annual Fly Day, offering flights over Ottawa. Here, Venera Issekenova, assistant to the ambassador of Kazakhstan, steps off the plane. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 5. Slovak Ambassador Andrej Droba and his wife, Daniela Drobova, hosted a Taste of Slovakia event at their embassy. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 6. Saudi Arabian Ambassador Naif Bandir A. Alsudairy hosted a national day reception at the embassy. (Photo: Ülle Baum)


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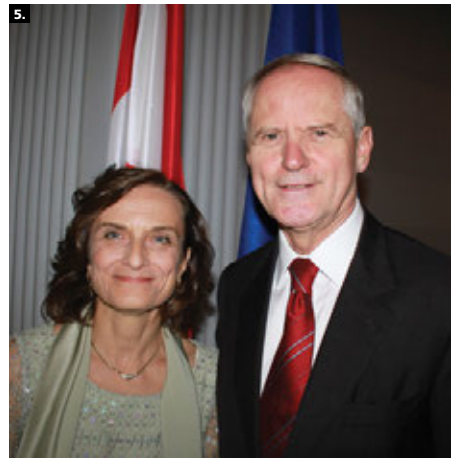
1. Georgian Ambassador Alexander Latsabidze, right, hosted a classical piano recital by renowned Georgian musician Edisher Savitski, left, as well as an exhibition titled Three Types of Georgian Scripts at the University of Ottawa's Tabaret Hall. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 2. To mark the 205th anniversary of Mexico's independence, Ambassador Francisco Suarez Davila and his wife, Diana Mogollon de Suarez, hosted a reception at the NAC's rooftop terrace. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 3. On the occasion of their national day, Spanish Ambassador Carlos Gomez-Mugica and his wife, Maria de la Rica Aranguren, hosted a reception at the embassy. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 4. To mark the 70th national day of Vietnam, Ambassador To Anh Dung and his wife, Tran Phi Nga, hosted a reception at the Westin Hotel. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 5. In celebration of Austria's national day, Ambassador Arno Reidel and his wife, Loretta Loria, hosted a concert of Viennese classical and operatic music at Tabaret Hall. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 6. To mark Korea's national day and Armed Forces Day, Ambassador DaeShik Jo and his wife, Eunyoung Park, hosted a reception at their residence. (Photo: Ülle Baum)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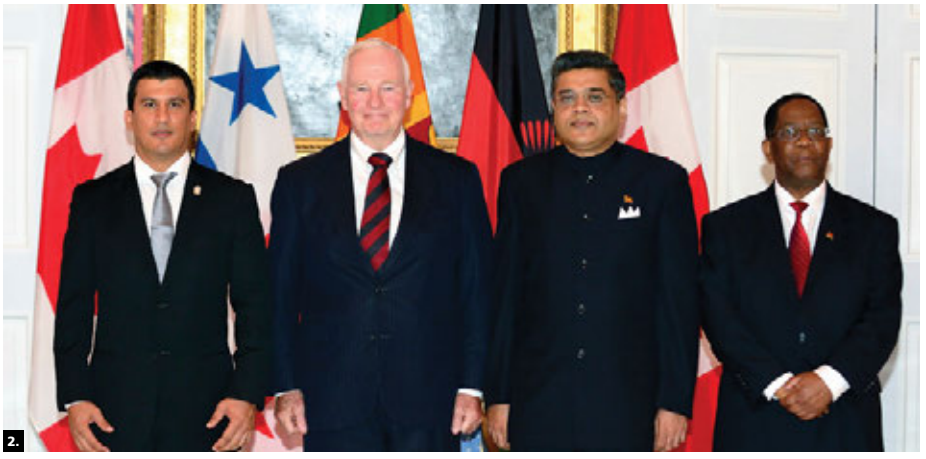
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1. To mark the 194th anniversary of the independence of Central American countries, Honduran Ambassador Sofia Lastenia Cerrato Rodriguez, right, Costa Rican Ambassador Roberto Dormond Cantu, left, hosted a reception at the Horticultural Building at Lansdowne Park, along with Salvadoran Ambassador Oscar Mauricio Duarte Granados and Guatemalan Ambassador Rita Claverie Diaz de Sciolli. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 2. Gov. Gen. David Johnston received credentials from Panamanian Ambassador Alberto Arosemena Medina, Sri Lankan High Commissioner Ahmed Aflel Jawad and Malawian Ambassador Necton Darlington Mhura. (Photo: Sgt. Ronald Duchesne) 3. From left, Etsuko Monji, wife of the Japanese ambassador, Costa Rican Ambassador Roberto Carlos Dormond Cantu, Canadian Film Institute director Tom McSorley and Japanese Ambassador Kenjiro Monji at the Canadian Film Institute's 80th anniversary celebration at City Hall. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 4. To mark the 70th anniversary of the independence of Indonesia, Ambassador Teuku Faizasyah and his wife, Andris Faizasyah, hosted a reception at their residence. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 5. Ja'afar M. Balarabe, minister and chargé d'affaires of the Nigerian High Commission, and his wife, Nafisah Balarabe, hosted a national day reception at the Château Laurier. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 6. The International Women's Club of Ottawa held its annual September tea at Orleans United Church. From left, Neelam Prakash (India), IWCO president Lia Mazzolin and Penny Tucker (New Zealand). (Photo: Helen Souter) 7. Hungarian Ambassador Bálint Ódor, right, hosted a reception at his residence in honour of the 59th Anniversary of Hungarian Revolution in October 1956. (Photo: Ülle Baum)

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1. Barbados High Commissioner Yvonne Walkes hosted a tea party fundraiser for the The Errol Borrow Memorial Trust of Canada at her residence. From left, Esther Charles, Walkes, Eunice Charles and fashion designer Sara Charles Waterman. (Photo: Ülle Baum) 2. The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO), in collaboration with the National Arts Centre, presented Taiwan's famous Sword of Wisdom U-Theatre. From left, Simon Sung, executive director of information division at TECO; former MP David Kilgour; performer Li Sha Niu; music director Chih-Chun Huang; Frank Lin, acting representative at TECO, and Senator Thanh Hai Ngo. (Photo: Sam Garcia) 3. Carla Gómez de Barrientos (Venezuela embassy), Juliana McDonald, Venezuelan Ambassador Wilmer Omar Barrientos Fernandez, organizer Lilia Faulkner and Marta Borkowska (Polish embassy) at the Latin American Art Exhibition 2015. (Photo: Lois Siegel). NOTE: Diplomat miscredited a photo of a Netherlands event in the October issue. The photo was taken by Ülle Baum.

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Celebration time

A listing of the national and independence days marked by countries

January		
1	Cuba	Liberation Day
1	Haiti	Independence Day
1	Sudan	National Day
4	Myanmar	Independence Day
24	Maldives	National Day
26	Australia	Australia Day
31	Nauru	National Day
February		
4	Sri Lanka	National Day
6	New Zealand	National Day
7	Grenada	Independence Day
11	Iran	National Day
15	Serbia	National Day
16	Lithuania	Independence Day
17	Kosovo	Independence Day
18	Gambia	Independence Day
22	Saint Lucia	Independence Day
23	Brunei Darussalam	National Day
23	Guyana	Republic Day
24	Estonia	Independence Day
25	Kuwait	National Day
27	Dominican Republic	Independence Day
March		
3	Bulgaria	National Day
6	Ghana	National Day
12	Mauritius	National Day
17	Ireland	St. Patrick's Day
20	Tunisia	Proclamation of Independence
23	Pakistan	Pakistan Day
25	Greece	Independence Day
26	Bangladesh	National Day
April		
4	Senegal	Independence Day
12	Israel	National Day
16	Denmark	Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II
17	Syria	National Day
18	Zimbabwe	Independence Day
19	Holy See	Election Day of Pope
26	Tanzania	Union Day
27	Sierra Leone	Republic Day
27	South Africa	Freedom Day
27	Togo	National Day
30	Netherlands	Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Beatrix

Kazakhstan: Eyes on Astana

The Kazmunaigas building is home to Kazakhstan's oil and gas ministry.

By Ülle Baum

Each year on July 6, Kazakhstan proudly celebrates Capital City Day, honouring its capital, Astana, with a week of cultural festivities. The activities highlight Kazakh culture, history and the city's central position in the nation's life. Astana has grown from a small provincial city to an influential player on the world stage and a symbol of a sovereign Kazakhstan.

Last year, Kazakhs celebrated the 550th anniversary of statehood. Since its founding 18 years ago, however, the Kazakh capital has turned into a major tourist attraction. Nearly 650,000 tourists visited the city in 2014. Each year, more and more people from around the world come to experience this hidden pearl of the Eurasian steppe and discover the futuristic capital of the ninth biggest country in the world.

Astana was selected to be the capital city of Kazakhstan in 1997, when it was officially moved from Almaty in the south to this more strategic location in the central north of the country. The move was not easy. Many in Kazakhstan had to be convinced the decision was the correct one. And yet today's Astana is a delight. It represents a vision of a new Kazakhstan, architectural modernity and progress. It was built on the historic northern route of the famous Silk Road, which connected East and West, bringing silk, tea, spices and all manner of treasure from Asia to Russia and Europe. The ancient Silk Road was established in 200 BC and many old Silk

Two hundred delegates from around the world meet every three years the Palace of Peace and Harmony's circular top chamber, where a flock of painted doves flutters below a stained-glass ceiling.

A Kazakh native holds his eagle at Zheruik, an ethno-village.

Horse meat and mutton are the basis for most of Kazakhstan's national dishes. They are served here with baursaki bread (puffy fried dough) and shorpa (a white meat broth).

Road trade routes are still in use today. Astana is truly a bridge between worlds.

Just imagine a startling, gleaming new city rising in the middle of grasslands. For 1,200 kilometres, very little surrounds the city, showing that thinking big and having the courage to follow your dreams is important for the future of a nation. The city's modern look represents the dynamically developing country.

A metabolic city

Astana is the first capital built in the 21st Century and was planned as a national centre. There are many planned cities in the world, including Washington, D.C., Putrajaya in Malaysia, Brasilia in Brazil and Canberra in Australia. Fifty architects and urban planners took part in the international competition for the master plan and design of the city. On Oct. 6, 1998, Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa was awarded first prize. Kurokawa's work is the embodiment of "metabolism and symbiosis." His plan for Astana called for the symbiosis of the built and natural environments. He proposed that the new city's plan be innovative, but rooted in Kazakh heritage and culture. He termed the result "Metabolic City," by which he meant that Astana is a city of growth and change. Since then, the new capital has undergone very rapid growth. (Abstract symbolism is also one of the characteristics of Astana's development.)

Nursultan Nazarbayev, the first and current president of the Republic of Kazakhstan, has acted as the city's unofficial chief architect, taking an active part in this ambitious project since the very beginning, and involving himself in all aspects of its planning. Prize-winning British architect Norman Foster is one of many foreigners who helped shape the grandiose city, where various building styles have been harmoniously combined.

The iconic Astana pyramid, the Palace of Peace and Harmony, was designed by British architects Foster and Partners. This extraordinary building can withstand expansion and contraction due to temperature variations of more than 80 degrees — from -40 to +40 Celsius. The building can expand up to 30 centimetres. The construction is steel frame for the pyramid and concrete for the lower levels. The glass pyramid was built to host the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions (Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Daoism and other faiths) first held in September 2003.

Two hundred delegates from around the world meet every three years in a cir-

Kazakhstan's National Museum is full of treasures, including the jewels of ancient Kazakhs.

cular top chamber, where a flock of doves flutters below a stained-glass ceiling. The stained glass apex was created by British artist Brian Clark. Clark's artwork in white, vivid blue and gold colours is 900 square metres in area. The Fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions took place this year in June. This 77-metre-high venue was built in 2004 and also includes a 1,500-seat opera house, a national museum of culture and a research centre for the country's 140 ethnic groups.

The world's largest tent

The Khan Shatyr, the world's largest tent, is another extraordinary building designed by Foster and Partners. It was completed in 2010. Its Entertainment Centre was originally built to provide the city with a range of cultural, leisure and shopping facilities, including restaurants, cinemas, an indoor beach and large water park, all sheltered within a comfortable microclimate year-round, despite the city's extremes of temperature. The building's tented structure reflects Kazakh history and represents post-modern interpretation of a yurt, a traditional Kazakh nomadic dwelling. The view of the finished building only hints at the range of the challenges faced during the construction of such a unique project.

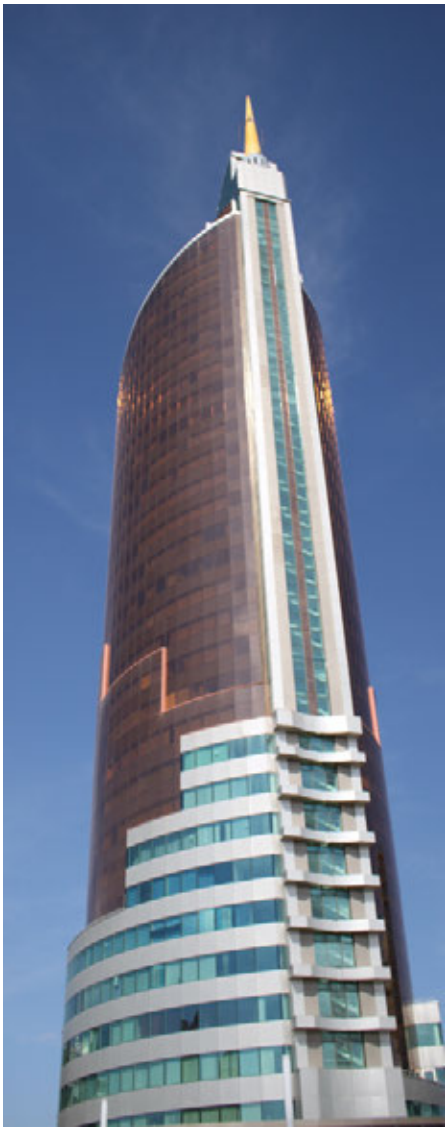
The new Astana Opera House is the world's third-largest and the pride of the country. The first stone was laid in 2010 and the building was completed in short order by 2013. It was built by the Swiss Mabetex Group, headed by Behgjet Pacolli, who worked with a team of the best architects from around the world. The design of the building is a mix of Greco-Roman classicism and Baroque, with Kazakh national motifs included in the architecture in a fascinating balance of styles.

The majestic front design of the opera house brings to mind the famous Pantheon and the Bolshoi Theatre. A team of acoustics experts from Italy and Germany worked on the sound qualities of the building. The main lobby, foyer, auditoriums and main stage of the theatre reflect the style of high classicism. The auditorium is designed for 1,250 people in a 19th-Century-style setting.

The theatre also has a chamber music hall that can accommodate 250 people and rehearsal rooms. *Birzhan-Sara*, an opera based on a classic Kazakh love story and written by Kazakh composer Mukan Tolebayev, was performed at the grand opening of the theatre in June 2013.

Around Astana, a man-made forestry ring grows, and the city boasts many parks. Kazakh culture and customs are presented at Zheruik, the open public ethno-village, in a welcoming atmosphere with cultural performances featuring traditional costumes. The yurts are decorated with original national handicrafts and local artists create unique colourful pieces of art before visitors' eyes. Everything you touch here brings you closer to this ancient culture's roots.

There is much to discover in Astana. Between the Ak Orda Presidential Palace, the Bayterek Tower, the brand new 74,000-square-metre National Museum with all its jewels from ancestors of the Kazakh people, and the National Art Gallery of Astana, there is a rich cultural mosaic in the city. The elegant Bayterek Tower stands at the centre of Astana's main boulevard and is framed by twin green-gold cones. The tower holds an observation deck 97 metres high. From that deck, there's a panoramic view of the city.



The building that houses the transportation and communications ministry has been nicknamed "the lighter."

Per-capita GDP multiplies by 20

Kazakhstan achieved impressive economic growth after it gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The country's per-capita GDP has grown by a factor close to 20 since 1991 and has reached $14,000 per capita. Total foreign investment attracted during the past nine years has been almost $1 billion. Today, Kazakhstan is the world's largest uranium producer and among the fastest-growing economies in the world. In the summer of 2015, Kazakhstan was bidding to host the 2020 Winter Olympics in Almaty. "By bidding for the Winter Games, we showed the world the amazing progress that Kazakhstan has made since its independence," said Andrey Kryukov, vice-chairman of Almaty's bid team. "This alone is a major victory for our country."

Astana is hosting EXPO-2017 and will celebrate its 20th anniversary at the same time. The theme will be "Energy for the Future" and will showcase alternative energy options. Many countries have already confirmed participation, including Germany, Lithuania, France, Switzerland, Israel, India, Russia, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom and Georgia. Eleven international organizations, including the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), have also confirmed their participation. By the end of 2016, organizers hope to have confirmations from 100 countries.

A woman at the Zheruik, an ethno-village in Astana, plays a traditional stringed instrument known as a dombra.

All eyes are on Astana as the city gets ready for this important international event and reinforces Kazakhstan's role as a nation taking its place in the global community. This big, rapidly modernizing and resource-rich economy has been listed as one of the rising new economic powerhouses in the world.

Today, Astana is the centre of the most significant political, economic, social and cultural events in Kazakhstan. Its gleaming face is Kazakhstan's gateway to the world.

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The Arctic fox is a circumpolar resident who lives on lemmings, voles, small birds and leftovers from polar-bear kills. Arctic foxes weigh between three and eight kilograms and a female may give birth to as many as 14 pups. They have an acute sense of hearing, which allows them to detect their prey moving under the snow. Their fur changes colour from a beautiful white in winter to a mottled grey and brown in the summer. I spent an hour with this sleepy fellow who was waking up to a frosty sunrise on the west coast of Hudson Bay, Manitoba. He had spent the night rolled up in a ball with his thick bushy tail wrapped around him like a blanket. The temperatures had dropped to -20C the night before but his tail will keep him warm in temperatures as low as -50C.

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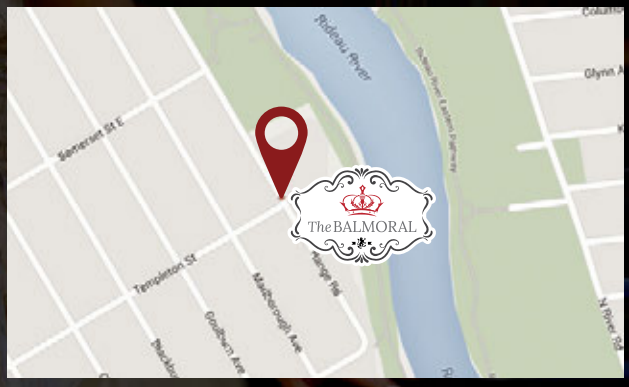

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