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Since its creation in 2001, the Calgary-based CDFAI has set its mission to be a catalyst for innovative Canadian global engagement. In 2010, it opened an Ottawa office to reach out to parliamentarians, senior policy makers and the diplomatic service.

CDFAI produces high quality public policy research related to Canadian international relations. The Institute's research is designed to raise the level of knowledge and appreciation about issues of Canadian defence, development and international aid. This work was recognized by the University of Pennsylvania’s 2012 survey of the go to Think Tanks around the World ranking CDFAI 4th in Canada.

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Article Summaries from the Assistant Editor

Why the ASEAN Summit Matters to Canada
Hugh Stephens posits that for both trade and international security reasons the importance of ASEAN should be made clear to Canada, especially as the regional bloc will continue to gain in importance as Canada seeks to deepen trade relations in the region.

From Irritatingly Inconsequential to Possibly Helpful: the Arab League
Ferry de Kerckhove argues that the Arab League has not lived up to its potential as of late, but this may be changing as the League has the renewed opportunity to be taken seriously on the international stage following the position they took on Libya and now Syria.

Canada’s Challenges in the Arctic Council Chair’s Shoes
Natalia Loukacheva demonstrates that as Canada is set to take the Chair of the Arctic Council it will be faced with many difficult questions and decisions. It is important that Canada be bold in the face of those decisions without letting domestic politics play too much of a role in the direction Canada will take the Arctic Council.

NATO’s Toughest Battle is the Discussion about its Future
Colin Robertson examines the need to take a close look at NATO and determine how it is to remain relevant and effective. The first step NATO should take is tackling the issue of cyber security as this will be a top priority for any important security institution.

The Canadian Mining/Extraction Sector Shouldn’t Foot the Bill for Canada’s Soft Agenda
Sarah Jane Meharg shows that as long as the major stakeholders in the Canadian mining industry cannot agree on how to deal with the environmental problems surrounding the industry new avenues must be explored, including the possible establishment of a fund that will only be used to lessen the environmental impact of the industry.

The Fragility Trap: Implications for the New Deal
David Carment argues that the New Deal for failed and fragile states can go a long way to helping the states most in need of support, but the program’s success is far from guaranteed, and the only way to ensure good policy in fragile states is through monitoring, evaluation and effective resource allocation.

North Korea Awarded for its Nuclear Petulance
Barry Cooper demonstrates that the so called “crazy” foreign policy of North Korea is actually one of restraint: they will not invade South Korea, nor will they use nuclear weapons against Tokyo or Alaska, instead they have walked the dangerous line of never actually doing something, but always appearing that they are capable of anything.

Canada, Terrorism and North Africa
Gavin Cameron examines the challenge the Canadian government faces in developing a policy that reflects and protects Canadian interests in North Africa. This policy must deal with Canada’s past role as victim and aggressor in the region as well as the difficulties weak states face in governing.
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It is beginning to appear as if the government has no idea what to do with the Canadian Army now that Canada has withdrawn from combat in Afghanistan and has a year left in its mission to train Afghan National Security Forces. As of this writing (early March) Army chief Peter Devlin has admitted that at least 22% of the army’s budget is on the chopping block. The Department of National Defence and Defence Minister Peter MacKay claim that army readiness isn’t being impacted by these cuts but no less an authority than former Chief of the Land Staff Andrew Leslie has publically complained that, in fact, core army capabilities are being sacrificed while large areas of the army’s administrative tail have been left untouched.

At the same time the long-awaited purchase of hundreds of medium weight trucks has been delayed yet again and about a hundred refurbished Leopard tanks purchased from Holland at the height of the Canadian deployment in Kandahar province remain under lock and key at a Montreal warehouse.

There is nothing inherently wrong with re-evaluating the central role that the army has played in Canadian defence policy over the past decade. From early 2002 until combat operations ceased in Kandahar province in the fall of 2011 — and except for an “operational pause” between July of 2002 and August of 2003 — the army fought a long and costly war in Afghanistan. The central factor that drove defence preparation, readiness, procurement, and just about everything else over that decade focused on the army to the virtual exclusion of everything else.

Although it may well be simplistic to conclude from looking at a list of new – and in most cases rapidly acquired equipment – that since 2001 army needs were clearly the top priority, new tanks, new artillery, new UAVs, new mine-protected trucks, refurbished Chinook helicopters to fill the gap until brand new Chinooks could be acquired and the conversion of a number of the Griffon helicopters into helicopter gunships are only part of the list. In the meantime the navy languished, the Maritime Helicopter project to replace the pre-historic Sea King ship-board helicopters dragged on, the fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft first promised some ten years ago is still nothing more than a promise and much else has been delayed. The government did move quickly to acquire C-17s – a move the previous Liberals had rejected – but the purchase of new C-130J Hercules aircraft, eventually contracted for by the Tories, had actually been announced by the Liberals. So the air force did acquire some very important assets.

But now the army’s war in Afghanistan is over and the 22% cut in the army budget is surely a sign of things to come. Over the next decade or so it is a good bet that both the regular and reserve army will shrink and that air force and naval needs will come rushing to the fore. In part this will reflect the shifting priorities of the United States – which will think long and hard about committing tens of thousands of troops to land campaigns anywhere in the world in the next decade – and focus more on special forces, cyber defence, naval and unmanned capabilities, and the like.

There are good reasons why Canada should follow suit and de-emphasize land power while building up naval, air, and special operations capabilities. But such crucial decisions should be made as part of a comprehensive examination of what Canada wants to do with its military over the next two decades. So far there is no concrete sign that such an examination is pending.
Why the ASEAN Summit Matters to Canada

Written by: Hugh Stephens  
(National Post, Mar 18)

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will be holding its 22nd Leaders’ Summit in Brunei Darussalam April 24-25. Canada should be paying attention. The outcomes of this meeting, and the directions that it sets for ASEAN’s security and economic agenda, can significantly affect our rediscovered interests in the region.

ASEAN, ten nations in the heart of Asia (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) has been around since 1967, but only in recent years has it become the linchpin of economic growth and trade in the region. With a market of 600 million people, ASEAN covers the spectrum of development from advanced service economies like Singapore, to economies just emerging from decades of mismanagement like Laos and Myanmar, to mixed but growing economies like Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia. Tiny Brunei, with a population of just 400,000, is one of the world’s wealthier states owing to its enormous oil resources. What this grab-bag of economies has in common is a desire to hang together (lest they hang separately) in dealing with their politically and economically powerful neighbours – China, Japan, Korea and India – while at the same time strengthening engagement with the US, their southern neighbours (Australia and New Zealand), Russia, and, yes, even Canada.

Canada has recently focused its efforts at revitalizing links with ASEAN. Although a “Dialogue Partner” since 1977, Canada seemed to lose interest from the 1990s onward, but that is changing. We appointed our first ambassador to ASEAN in 2009, signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 2010 and last year Minister Ed Fast inaugurated a new Canada-ASEAN Business Council, based in Singapore.

The ASEAN Summit will need to deal with two particularly difficult issues: security concerns related to China’s aggressive claims to most of the South China Sea and economic and trade issues, including two regional trade pacts currently under negotiation. China is flexing its muscles to assert its claim to 90 percent of the strategic and resource-rich South China Sea, bolstering its threadbare legal claim by populating and establishing administrative regulations over minuscule islets, and leaning on countries with competing claims to settle with it bilaterally. ASEAN, for its part, wants to deal with China as a bloc and seek multilateral solutions. While Canada has no direct security interests in the South China Sea, the area is a potential international flashpoint with the US refusing to recognize Chinese sovereignty over what it considers to be international waters.

Of more direct interest to Canada are the trade and economic issues centered on ASEAN. The organization is the hub of a number of trade agreements with its neighbours – China, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand and India. These bilateral agreements are now being rolled into one big package known as the RCEP (Regional Cooperative Economic Partnership) Agreement. Building on the agreement it already has with ASEAN, each of the “spoke countries” will have to negotiate agreements with each other. These negotiations between China and Japan, Japan and Korea, India and China etc. will likely prove difficult. That said, the breadth of the RCEP makes it a likely foundation for the ultimate goal of a Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP), although the relatively low quality of the ASEAN agreements on which it is based will limit its impact.

While the RCEP includes all ten ASEAN countries, it excludes economies on this side of the Pacific. That niche is filled by the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the regional trade bloc now under negotiation from which Canada was initially excluded. Both Canada and Mexico have now entered the negotiations joining the US, Peru, Chile, New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Brunei – and possibly Japan in the near future.

The TPP is not only an alternate track to an Asia Pacific trade agreement, but one with a higher degree of discipline in terms of opening markets. The fact that four ASEAN countries are part of the TPP process is a concern to some ASEAN leaders, fearing a split between those members with preferential access to North America and those without. However, the presence of four ASEAN economies within both the TPP and RCEP can serve as a bridge between the two tracks. There has been much discussion about whether these tracks are complementary or competing. For now, they are presumed to lead ultimately to the same trade objective. The good news is that Canada is firmly embedded in the TPP process.

Although seemingly far away, the upcoming ASEAN Summit must be on Canada’s radar.
To the outside world the Arab League had been considered, at best, an irrelevant organization and, at worse, the collective mouthpiece of Arab hostility towards Israel. There is no doubt the issue of Palestine has defined the Arab League from its inception. At the end of the war, as the Western powers were responding to the Zionist plea to allow the creation of a state for the Jews in Palestine, representatives of Egypt, Transjordan (now Jordan), Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Syria met in Alexandria in October 1944 to lay the foundation of the League of Arab States. The underlying motivation, however misguided, was to resolve the problem of European Jewry by inflicting injustice against Palestinian Arabs.

The Arab League was officially formed on March 22, 1945, its Charter espousing the concept of a common Arab homeland. However, in the eyes of their growing membership (22), the main purpose of the League was to strengthen and coordinate the political, cultural, economic, and social programs of its members, as well as mediate disputes among them or between them and third parties. Very little supra-nationality has been achieved by the League given the fundamentally divergent interests between its members, their lack of unity in purpose, and an absence of common values and congruent political systems other than individual, competing dictatorships. It is not surprising that according to the League’s Charter decisions are binding only for those states that have voted for them.

The failure by the international community to create the Palestinian state committed to in 1948 led to the Arab Initiative in 2002 whereby all Arab States would normalize relations with Israel in exchange for a final peace settlement. Former Secretary General Amr Moussa, made the plight of Palestinians the quasi single issue throughout his mandate, and in 2008-2009 he spearheaded the early attempts to have the Palestinian Liberation Organization recognized as an observer state at the United Nations.

The watershed for the League was Libya in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. In March 2011, its members called on the United Nations to impose a no-fly zone over Libya to halt Kaddafí’s attacks on his own people. The subsequent backtracking by Amr Moussa condemning the Western bombing campaign over Libya notwithstanding, for the first time in the League’s history, Arab and Western nations were united on an action taken against one of its member states. After Amr Moussa’s resignation allowed him to run for the presidency of Egypt, the Supreme Command of the Allied Force of Egypt volunteered the candidacy of interim Foreign Minister Nabil Al Araby, a former senior Egyptian diplomat and recognized international arbitrator. While he too played a major role in fostering a more positive attitude towards the idea of Palestine holding an observer status with the UN similar to the position of the Vatican, his full attention has been focused on the Syrian crisis, including the launch of the League’s December 2011 Observer Mission, or Peace initiative, which was subsequently followed by the Kofi Annan and Brahimi joint UN/Arab League missions.

The League’s formal suspension of Syria’s membership in November 2011 was probably the decision that brought the institution beyond its regional expression of Arab nationalistic resistance to Western dominance and carried it into a new realm in the international system. The League is now a player, and could become an important one. And the recent decisions by its Foreign Ministers to allow its members to aid the rebels in Syria – while continuing to call for a political solution – as well as recognizing the Syrian National Coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people within the League with a goal to constitute a transitional government are evidence of its growing role. There is hope that a movement away from the killing fields and towards real negotiation may be ahead with the head of the coalition, Moaz al-Khatib, indicating that a dialogue with the Syrian government was a possibility in tandem with the Syrian Foreign Minister Moallem’s announcement that the regime was ready for talks with the opposition, coupled with renewed diplomatic activity spearheaded by the Russians. No one is holding their breath, though. And all these statements have already been met with skepticism and scorn, but, as Lakhdar Brahimi said recently, “change has to take place unless one wants Syria to become a second Somalia.”
Canada’s Challenges in the Arctic Council Chair’s Shoes

Written by:
Natalia Loukacheva
(iPolitics, Jan 30)

Canada should be pleased with the state of affairs in the Arctic Council that it initiated by the Ottawa Declaration. It was hardly envisaged in 1996, when Canada became the first chair of the Council, that by the time of its second chairmanship in 2013-2015, the Arctic would so radically change. It was unimaginable then that the Council would be the focus of attention of the whole Arctic international community and the globe; that China, India, Singapore and others would be ardently knocking at the Council’s doors to become observers, and that the Council itself, with two pan-Arctic legally binding agreements prepared in 2009-2011 and 2012-13 respectively, and the permanent secretariat established in 2013, would be half-way to becoming not just a “forum,” but a full-fledged and widely respected international organization.

Canada cannot just rest on these laurels with Canadian chairmanship approaching in May. We should prove both our leadership in the Arctic and our capacity for teamwork at this crucial juncture.

Challenges at this venture are many. One key challenge seems to be finding the right balance between maintaining the regional identity of the Council, on the one hand, and wider cooperation with non-regional actors striving for their own piece of the “Arctic cake” and offering so much needed investments at times of economic crisis, on the other. The Council did a good job by working out the criteria for non-Arctic observers, with the main of them being respect for the Arctic states’ sovereignty, sovereign right and jurisdiction in the Arctic. Now the task will be to get down to earth from these generalities and talk to concrete states and individuals, and make some hard choices (e.g., Massive Chinese investments in the Arctic? Awarding the EU with “Arctic” status?).

Another challenge is to define the future scope of the Council’s work. One uneasy question would be deciding whether what the Arctic Council is now doing – protection of the environment and sustainable development – is enough for today’s realities? If not, then what is next? Waiving the exclusion of military security from the Council’s declaration? Bringing the meetings of chiefs of defence of all 8 Arctic nations, so ingeniously initiated by Ottawa in 2012 in Goose Bay, under the aegis of the Council? The establishment of the Arctic Business Forum? Arctic Shipping Committee? International Arctic Law?

With the Arctic being the hot topic of domestic politics – the 2012 appointment of an Inuk cabinet minister, Leona Aglukkaq, the concurrent minister for the Arctic Council affairs was yet another reminder – Canada’s chairmanship will be influenced by domestic political calculations far more than in any other Arctic state. However, putting forward a domestic agenda too aggressively on the Council’s plate may not be welcomed by other partners who hold more regional policy concerns in their mind. Given these predicaments will Canada show both the leadership and the diplomatic skill?

In the foreign policy domain Ottawa will have to show that it can think out of the box and act decisively when facing uneasy options. For example, objectively, not only the United States, but also Russia which is by far the largest Arctic state, is Canada’s most natural partner in the Arctic. However, building bridges with Moscow can lay a shade on the Canadian alliance with the U.S., whose “reset” of relations with Moscow seems to be dying under growing contradictions because of strategic missile defence, Georgia, and now “the Magnitsky law” adopted by the Senate to replace the outdated but notorious “Jackson-Vanik law.”

Furthermore, will Canada withstand the pressure from NATO who, predictably, would continue to press for more say in Arctic affairs? Another important challenge will be bringing the factor of indigenous peoples’ interest into the big inter-state politics of the Arctic.

In a way, Canada will have to prove by deed again that it can be a real leader in the Arctic. If successful, all of these challenges could turn into real opportunities for the current government and our chairmanship in the Arctic Council.
NATO’s Toughest Battle is the Discussion about its Future

Written by: Colin Robertson
(Globe and Mail, Feb 20)

When NATO’s defence ministers meet in Brussels beginning Thursday, they will talk about the endgames in Afghanistan and Mali, and defence spending. Canada should use the occasion to press for an honest discussion on NATO resourcing and encourage the alliance to focus on the emerging challenge of cyber-security.

Most of the allies, including Canada, have served notice that they will be gone sooner than later from both Afghanistan and Mali, leaving only a residual force in both places. For now, there is no enthusiasm within the alliance for out-of-area operations and, with reduced spending, there is even less capacity to act.

In 2006, the allies committed to defence spending of a minimum 2 per cent of gross domestic product. In 2012, only four of the 28 member nations met the target.

In addition to the division it creates between member countries, the effect of these disparities is threefold writes Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen: First, an ever greater military reliance on the United States; second, growing asymmetries in capability among European Allies; and, third, a defence gap that will compromise the alliance’s ability in international crisis.

The U.S. has carried the load in the alliance and sequester and cuts will further reduce American capacity. It expects more from the partner nations, with former defense secretary Robert Gates warning that future U.S. leadership, “for whom the Cold War was not the formative experience that it was for me - may not consider the return on America’s investment in NATO worth the cost.” This warning deserves a frank discussion. As a start, NATO should probably revise its commitment figure to reflect fiscal realities – probably closer to the 1.5 per cent of GDP that Canada and most other members currently spend on defence. Then look hard at how the money is spent.

One-fifth of alliance defence spending is supposed to go towards new equipment, crucial for NATO modernization efforts. This makes sense, yet only five allies met the target. NATO needs to look at procurement and discuss best practices so we can spend our money with effect. Nobody, except perhaps the French, do it well.

Part of the problem, as we witness in Canada over the F-35 debacle, is the inability to accurately predict costs or meet a schedule.

Business leader Tom Jenkins recently presented a series of recommendations that should feed into discussion of an industrial defence strategy that also includes concepts like buying off-the-shelf and performance incentives (and penalties).

In a look at the wider world, another report, Strategic Outlook for Canada: 2013, authored by Ferry de Kerckhove and George Petrolekas, enumerates a baker’s dozen threats, including nuclear proliferation from North Korea and Iran, turmoil in Syria and the Middle East, al-Qaeda and China’s disputes with its neighbours. There are also threats closer to home: The continental drug trade, Haiti “the perennial rock of Sisyphus” and “a new, very cold war, in cyberspace.” The cyber-threat deserves immediate attention.

U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano observed last week that not a day goes by without intrusions on the US defense and financial establishment. This likely holds true for us as well. Most of it originates from three countries: China, Russia and Iran.

In one of the first actions of his second term, President Barack Obama signed an Executive Order directing U.S. government agencies to prepare cyber security standards for the nation’s rail, road, air and energy grids.

The order should stimulate Canadian cyber-preparedness. Our continental grid system is so integrated and vital to our economic well-being that we should act in tandem with the US.

NATO also has an economic mandate – inspired by Canada – so let’s make cyber-standards an Alliance initiative.

Canada was present and actively participated in the creation of NATO. Since then, times and circumstances have changed, but the rationale for collective security in an alliance of like-minded democracies remains the same.

Strategic Outlook predicts that Canadian policy makers will increasingly favour pragmatism over principle, containment over involvement, and reflection over engagement. These attitudes are likely shared across the alliance. Leaders should bear them in mind as they envisage the future NATO.
The Canadian Mining/Extraction Sector Shouldn’t Foot the Bill for Canada’s Soft Agenda

Written by:
Sarah Jane Meharg

As a diplomat, a development expert, and a private sector mining company CEO in a room together and you’ll quickly discover a three-way stalemate of who should foot the bill to absolve Canada from its throbbing mining-related headaches. No one agrees, because each interest group expects their agenda to be paid for by the other. Everyone, including the so-called bad guys of the industry, want a clean planet, healthy and sustainable communities, and businesses to be accountable for their actions. Money does wonders to solve intractable problems, yet our three “friends” just don’t know how to foot the bill.

Over the past 70 years, strong economic restructuring plans have been developed that stress using creatively-sourced funds to cover industry expansion as well as covering soft agendas in recovering societies. Funds dedicated for reconciliation, reconstruction, restitution and rehabilitation can get entire regions back on their economic feet in a few short years in the aftermath of egregious human rights violations – even genocide – and environmental disaster. So why the stalemate here in Canada between our three “friends”? Unlike international post-conflict and post-calamity reconstruction in countries like Bosnia, Haiti, Afghanistan, and now Libya, there is no dedicated fund to cover the critical soft agendas in a world besotted by the investor’s bottom line.

But agendas shouldn’t be financed by the private sector if it is in the national interest. Lalith Gunaratne of Sage Ontario for Mindful Business believes Canada’s role is to leverage its reputation for international development and diplomacy, demonstrate ethical leadership by signing conventions on climate change and sustainability, take advantage of its multicultural diversity to diversify investment into sectors other than the resource industry. The more we anticipate the private sector is going to somehow find the funds to pay for agendas that do nothing for the bottom line for their investors, the more we will be sorely disappointed as our Canadian corporations begin to dig in their heals, carry costs forward for decades, and move headquarters outside of Canada, to fly “flags of convenience.”

What is required is an economic solution with a viable financial model that companies can access to cover the soft agendas and be more innovative in their industry practices. This would:

1. Accelerate the solution from 10-12 years out, to an immediate solution;
2. It would give Canadians what they want – responsible industry;
3. It would give the Government what they want – adherence to policy, a strong tax base, and enhanced international reputation;
4. It would give industry what they need – the funds to fulfill Canada’s soft agendas while increasing profits;
5. It would give affected communities what they want – peaceful and stable societies for all citizens, as well as jobs, and local development.

Creating a fund like Norway’s 1990 Government Pension Fund, now valued at $683.7 billion, to improve Corporate Social Responsibility practices and long-term community investments would be a simple, yet calculated, solution.

Post-conflict economic reconstruction theory dictates that to protect and build a state, it is imperative to secure its natural resources supply chain. In war these important “life blood” assets are targeted for destruction in order to paralyze and destroy a country. After the Great War and the Second World War, mining assets and natural resources became a part of economic reconstruction priorities and policies, because the minerals and materials were desperately required to feed supply chains and energy needs. Perhaps of more importance was the ability for reconstruction economists to structure long-term investment finance models that allowed recovering countries to borrow against the in-ground assets. Consumption rates guarantee these assets hold long-term growth value, and countries could borrow against the in-ground resources, and future extraction contracts, thereby freeing up the capital required to stabilize and reconstruct economies, industries and communities.

Using this method now, in its most basic terms, would allow extraction and resource companies to access capital, interest free and tax free, from the Bank of Canada based on a percentage of their in-ground resource assets. A fund would be created with the capital, and divided into three parts – ear-marked to cover the three dominant agendas – to quickly enable a massive innovations investment in mining and extraction regions, as well as allowing industry to invest in profitable cost-offsetting and profit growth strategies of their choice.

It is estimated that billions of dollars can be quickly accessed and strategically allocated through such a mechanism, creating significant wins for governments, industry actors, and affected communities, helping Canada retake its leadership role in the global mining and extraction industry – and foot the bill for the soft agenda.
The Fragility Trap: Implications for the New Deal

Written by: David Carment
(Embassy Magazine, Mar 6)

The so called “New Deal” for International Engagement in fragile states is intended to be an innovative model of partnership between fragile and conflict-affected countries and their development partners from the DAC at the OECD. Signed by 40 countries, including Canada, the “Deal” sets out five peacebuilding and statebuilding goals for rescuing failed and fragile states - legitimate politics, justice, security, economic foundations, and revenues and services - all based on principles of country leadership rather than the dictates of the donor community. The key distinguishing feature of the “New Deal” is country ownership of the policy process. This change is, in our view, a reflection of donor desperation and geo-strategic realities. Desperation because there appears to be few policy options left for engaging the most troubled countries in the world. The conventional principles and guidelines regarding aid effectiveness in fragile states have simply not worked as well as they could. Realism because in an era of economic uncertainty and the emergence of powerful and wealthy new donors like China, South Africa and Brazil that operate outside existing DAC structures, recipient countries now have more room to negotiate a deal best suited to their interests.

Handing over some of the responsibility for decision making to the leaders of failed and fragile states may be smart politics but is it smart development policy? Perhaps the decision reflects greater donor confidence in these failed and fragile states. After all a number of them such as Sierra Leone and Liberia have managed to achieve economic and political gains over the last five years. But for places that are still lacking in effective authority, legitimacy and capacity can the New Deal work as planned or is it destined to take its place alongside other notable policy disappointments such as NEPAD and the MDGs? Our ten-year research initiative evaluating changes in fragile states performance over time is well-suited to provide some preliminary answers to that question.

For those countries mired at the bottom of the fragility spectrum, we argue there are few reasons to be optimistic about their likelihood of significant improvement in the short run. But if a focused effective outcome is to be met it will be important that an independent evidenced-based capability be implemented to monitor their progress over time. There are several reasons for that conclusion.

First, among the worst performing countries in our rankings are those have signed up for the New Deal, including the DRC, Chad, Afghanistan, Burundi and Somalia. The fact that none of these countries are on target to meet any of their Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 is telling. In evaluating our data over a 10 year period we have found that many of these New Deal partners are part of a group of failed and fragile states that are perpetually stuck in a “fragility trap.” These are countries that show little indication of lifting themselves out of their political, economic and social malaise, are some of the biggest recipients of our aid dollars and despite being resource rich, in some cases, have the lowest GDP per capita scores in the world. Examples include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Angola, Sudan, the DRC, Somalia and Burundi. Among those caught in the trap are heavily aid-dependent states. As a group, the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) reports that ODA to fragile states was 50 billion (38%) in 2010. Individually some of these countries are the most aid dependent in the world. For example Burundi received 31% and Afghanistan 42% of ODA as a percentage of their GNI. Others on the list are states that until recently suffered from international neglect or were under resourced given their size and importance such as Sudan, Somalia and the DRC, which are not among the largest recipients of ODA per capita.

In brief, fragility trap countries comprise both “aid darlings” and “aid orphans.” This finding alone is troubling since much of the recent focus on the New Deal is built on the assumption that transitions out of fragility can be best achieved through sustained donor–recipient partnerships focusing on economic and political development. In situations such as Afghanistan, for example, where such a partnership has been in place for over a decade there is little evidence to conclude that political development has followed on from economic growth.

Second, when we consider states that are trapped in fragility and where the recipient country already has an independent capacity for decision making, there is no reason to believe that those aid dollars will be used wisely. Consider the case of Pakistan, which is particularly vulnerable in certain aspects of ‘stakeness’. Pakistan is one of the Middle Income Failed or Fragile States (MIFFS). Our rankings have placed it in the top 20 fragile states in the world, in most years over the past three decades! A core component of the New Deal is to develop an independent state capacity to provide services for the good
of the public. But consider that Pakistan’s economy is run by a largely untaxed middle class that benefits from a lax financial system, and a strong military apparatus. The result is that MIFFs like Pakistan typically suffer from “undergoverned” spaces that have just enough linkages to the world (roads, phones, etc.) to allow terrorists, drug lords, etc. to operate, but don’t have enough governance to purge these threats from the country. These are countries typically combining reasonable economic performance with extremely poor governance.

Third, and perhaps most importantly the New Deal’s rhetoric notwithstanding – donors and recipient countries are still uncertain on how to tie economic success to effective political development. Africa’s economy may well be “booming” – six African countries were among the ten fastest growing economies in the world over the 2001-2010 period - but unless those economic gains lead to positive political change their future could just as easily result in deeper corruption, cronyism and increasing inequality.

While it is true that the most egregious cases of fragility are those that suffer from a combination of weak economic capacity, low political legitimacy and poor authority, it really comes down to effective leadership. The leaders of the New Deal for fragile states must ensure they have institutions to provide adequate services to their populations. They must also find ways to properly channel ethnic, social and ideological competition that will otherwise erode the effectiveness of weak institutions even more. Finally, leaders must find a way to overcome the cumulative effects of poverty, over-population, rural flight and rapid urbanization, as well as environmental degradation that will otherwise overwhelm a vulnerable state’s capability to function. This is a very big agenda for countries now expected to carry the burden of effective economic and political management.

From a CIDA perspective, particular attention must be paid to strategic dilemmas in terms of weighting, prioritizing and sequencing aid instruments at various junctures in the state building process and the degree to which specific initiatives may contribute to economic development but undermine political change. Of particular relevance is the implicit trade-offs between short-term economic growth and longer-term institutional development.

At its core, effective state building involves the fundamental transformation of a broad spectrum of statesociety relationships and that is something the donor community has historically shown to be utterly incapable of fixing. Far too often, CIDA relies on qualitative experts who tend to focus on the same cases repeatedly in the absence of any theoretical or methodological rigor. This won’t do even when there is the need for specificity at the policy level because donors need to know why some countries that were once considered fragile have successfully recovered and become resilient, functional and effective while others have been less successful and remain fragile for long periods of time.

Simply put, effective policies on fragile states will arise from investment in rigorous monitoring and evaluation of inter-related fragility processes coupled with integrated and targeted resource allocation and not just one-off case studies purporting to reveal some hidden truths.
Last January, North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un ordered his military to undertake “substantial and high profile important state measures,” presumably the third nuclear test they carried out in February. The North Koreans say they exploded the device in reply to tighter UN sanctions, which were put in place in response to their missile test last October. Then they said that future missile tests would target the United States.

North Korea has been doing this for years. In 1993 President Bill Clinton gave massive aid to North Korea when they threatened to leave the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. In 1998 when they fired off a long-range rocket, they were rewarded with extensive diplomatic recognition and a summit meeting with South Korea. In 2003 they quit the Nonproliferation Treaty, which resulted in the six-party talks with global and regional superpowers. By 2006, when it became clear the talks were going nowhere, they exploded another nuclear device and tested another rocket. The US responded by dropping North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

In 2009, they tried to launch a satellite, exploded one more nuclear device, and indicated for the first time that they would not be bound by the 1953 Armistice Agreement. A few weeks later they sank a South Korean Corvette, the ChonAn and shelled Yeonpyeong Island.

Their latest tantrum came last week when they again announced an abrogation of the armistice and cut the hotline to Seoul. They added for good measure that they planned to turn Seoul and Washington into “seas of fire.”

In response the Pentagon announced they would spend $1 billion to deploy additional ballistic missile interceptors on the West Coast. They also deployed Patriot antimissile batteries to Japan and South Korea along with shipboard Aegis antimissile systems.

The first thing to note about the North Korean strategy is that it obviously works in the sense that a country with a GDP the size of Latvia can get the United States, China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea to negotiate more or less on equal terms. As long ago as 1999 George Friedman of STRATFOR called their approach the “Crazy, Fearsome, Cripple Gambit.” It has one purpose: to maintain the North Korean regime in power.

The first part in the strategy was announced two decades ago: North Korea is so weak as to be in danger of starvation. The message to the world was, “North Korea is about to collapse so there’s no need to push it.” Second, North Korea is ferocious. Before it began its nuclear program it had thousands of artillery pieces aimed across the DMZ at Seoul. The third piece of the strategy was to convince the world that they were completely out of control. In a word: they were nuts. If the regime was in danger of collapse and armed to the teeth, it was easy to suggest that they would do anything to stay in power, especially go to war.

It worked, and, because no one really cares what the North Koreans do to themselves, and because no one, including the North Koreans, wants another Korean War, the rest of the world has helped stabilize the North Korean regime by rewarding their threats with money, food, and attention.

In reality, the North Koreans are not crazy. They are a hereditary oligarchy whose loyalty is maintained by Western luxury goods, especially Cognac. The new boy-King is surrounded by aging lords who faithfully served his father and grandpa. Moreover, since 1953 this regime has pursued a very cautious foreign policy.

They are not going to invade the South. The North needs the Army for internal security and certainly would never risk it in an invasion. Nor are they going to nuke Tokyo or lob something toward Alaska. The Americans would retaliate and ensure regime obliteration. Today even the Chinese might invade them.

The premise of the strategy is never actually to do something but always to appear that you might do anything. This means both seeming too weak to attract serious attention and too dangerous and unpredictable to annoy. It has worked for the past 20 years and, judging by the American response, it still does.
On January 16, members of the Masked Brigade, an offshoot of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), seized the Western owned Amenas gas facility in Algeria and held hundreds of hostage for four days, ostensibly in revenge for the French intervention in Mali. At least 81 people, including at least 48 hostages, were killed when Algerian government forces recaptured the plant. The attack highlights the complexity of the current situation in the Sahara and Sahel regions of North Africa. Although some of the key groups in the region have internationalist ties and objectives, others are much more localized in their goals. Consequently, while it has been tempting to portray recent events in Mali and Algeria as part of a global jihadist struggle, such an understanding risks obscuring many of the key dynamics.

When the Masked Brigade’s Mokhtar Belmokhtar was one of AQIM’s leaders, Western targets were a major part of their operations. For example, the group attacked employees of the Canadian company SNC-Lavalin in 2008 and 2009. The group was also responsible for the kidnapping of the UN Special Envoy to Niger, including Canadian Robert Fowler, in December 2008. In the Amenas operation, Canadian participation was as perpetrator, rather than target. On January 21, the Algerian Prime Minister claimed that two of the hostage-takers were Canadian, including one of the leaders: “Chedad”. The 2012 CSIS Report suggested that AQIM was seeking to radicalize and recruit Canadians, amongst other nationalities, for its operations. In March 2013, the RCMP, sent to Algeria to investigate a Canadian connection following the siege, confirmed that two of the hostage-takers were Canadian citizens.

The allegation that Canadians were involved in terrorist activities in North Africa is no surprise. According to CSIS, in the past decade dozens of Canadians have been involved in plots or campaigns around the world, including Afghanistan, Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Iraq, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Yemen. Partly in response to this situation, the Government is currently considering new legislation that would strip dual-citizens of their Canadian status if they are convicted of terrorism offences.

However, the narrative of global jihad hides at least as much as it reveals in this case. AQIM’s links to al-Qaeda Central have been loose, and while providing assistance to Islamist groups such as Boko Haram in Nigeria and al-Shabaab in Somalia, at times AQIM has been closer to a simple criminal group, focusing on money-making operations that went beyond fundraising to sustain an ideological campaign. Several of the al-Qaeda inspired groups in the region such as AQIM or the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA) have been characterized more by fratricidal splits and competition for control over regional crime networks than by concerted pan-Islamist campaigns. However, the criminally acquired resources and resulting military power that AQIM and others have been able to employ have been much too weak for regional governments to match.

Even among groups that are Islamist rather than criminal within the region, the relationship between global and local concerns is not straightforward. The connection between the Arab Spring in Libya and violence in Mali illustrates this complexity. Rather than the simplistic account of helping to defeat Colonel Qadhafi and then moving from Libya to Mali, AQIM and its Tuareg allies fought on opposite sides of the Libyan civil war. While AQIM did align with the anti-government forces, Qadhafi was the Tuareg’s key regional supporter in their campaign for an independent homeland in northern Mali. When Qadhafi’s forces were defeated, anti-Qadhafi militias, including Islamists, expelled the Tuareg from Libya. These Libyan Islamist groups, such as Ansar al-Shari’a, have sought to work within the post-Qadhafi state and have pursued national rather than globalist objectives. In Mali, the Tuaregs, fighting as the National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA), have been divided between those seeking independence and those simply demanding greater rights within the Malian state. However, the Tuareg’s goals have been largely superseded by those of allied groups pursuing both Islamist and criminal objectives.

The situation in North Africa thus poses a challenge for the Canadian government: to tailor a policy that reflects and protects Canadian interests. To do so necessitates the distinguishing of groups that espouse various combinations of Islamist, nationalist or criminal objectives. Such a policy also needs to differentiate between transnational factors, including the participation of Canadians in such campaigns as both victims and perpetrators, and those elements that are more appropriately understood as localized, such as the difficulties faced by weak states in governing the large and sparsely populated spaces of the region.
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CDFAI was created to address the ongoing discrepancy between what Canadians need to know about Canadian international activities and what they do know. Historically, Canadians tend to think of foreign policy – if they think of it at all – as a matter of trade and markets. They are unaware of the importance of Canada engaging diplomatically, militarily, and via international aid in the ongoing struggle to maintain a world that is friendly to the free flow of goods, services, people and ideas across borders and to the spread of human rights. CDFAI seeks to inform and educate Canadians about the connection between a prosperous and free Canada and a world of globalization and liberal internationalism.

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