ABOUT CDFAI

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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Revolutionary Hip-Hop: Mahraganat in Egypt and Beyond
Hrach Gregorian considers the impact of the emergence of a new wave of Egyptian music with a political message. Its themes of alienation and resistance resonate with its fan-based of underprivileged youth and if this demographic continues to be ignored long-term political instability is likely.

China and its North Korea Problem
David Wright examines the relationship between North Korea and China and concludes that China’s derisive view of North Korea leaves it with the difficult challenge of trying to encourage reform in North Korea while mindful of not appearing threatening to the country’s leaders.

Building a New North American Arctic Neighbourhood
Joël Plouffe calls for increased cooperation in the Arctic region, saying that a North American Arctic Forum would not only assist in building stronger northern communities, but also develop a network that would help to stabilize the region for the future.

It’s Time to Talk about Arctic Militarization
Rob Huebert draws attention to the issue of Arctic militarization, concluding that it is time to recognize the strategic value in the Arctic and that Canada can play an essential role in encouraging open and frank dialogue on military issues before it’s too late.

Canada-Russia: Towards a Real Partnership in the Arctic
Natalia Loukacheva reviews the relationship between Canada and Russia and stipulates that it is high time for the two nations to embrace closer ties, which could be strengthened through outreach to the indigenous communities of the region and further cooperation in the exploration and extraction of Arctic resources.

Asia and the Arctic: Challenges and Opportunities for Canada as Chair of the Arctic Council
Whitney Lackenbauer reflects on the increased number of states seeking observer status on the Arctic Council and states that Canada’s challenge as Chair will be to encourage a sense of Asian Arctic-mindedness to ensure that Canada’s interests, those of the council and those of the growing number of stakeholders are balanced and maintained.

Canada and the Arctic Council
Ron Wallace applauds the Harper government for selecting Leona Aglukkuq as the designated Arctic Council Chair, as her appointment demonstrates Canada’s long-standing commitment to our aboriginal peoples and to working to secure their right to self-government.

Canadian Submarine’s Success and Worth Aren’t Newsworthy
Bob Bergen reviews Canada’s poor media coverage of its Navy, demonstrating that projects that the media has scorned may be very valuable in the future, including Canada’s fleet of Victoria-class submarines that may become a tremendous asset to Canada’s allies as training tools.

Military History and the Historians
J.L. Granatstein investigates the lack of trust Canadian historians have towards the Harper government’s perspective on Canadian history, arguing that many academics fear a militarization of Canadian history; however, the protests in this area have already been lost.
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**ROB WRIGHT**
Rob Wright served as the Canadian Ambassador to China from 2005–2009, and as the Ambassador to Japan from 2001-2005.
The annual Hamburg Port Festival, sometimes known as the Hamburg River Festival, is held every May in this hugely important German North Sea city. The festival attracts over a million visitors and includes a parade of ships, including at least a half dozen tall ships, live bands, carnival rides, stalls selling all sorts of goods from traditional German food to T-shirts and hats. Some of the vessels are warships, though the festival is not in itself a military event.

Last May there were at least three warships representing their navies present at the festival. Tied alongside the main jetty was the brand new Royal Navy destroyer HMS Defender, which eventually hosted more than 6000 visitors in just two days. Defender is the fifth of the Type 45 air defence destroyers. Laid down in 2006, she was launched in 2009 and commissioned in 2013. She is a thoroughly modern naval vessel in design and performance and may reasonably be expected to serve with the RN for many decades.

Tied up alongside Defender was the German air defence F124 class frigate Sachsen. Not quite so new as Defender (she was commissioned in 2003), she is nevertheless a completely modern, missile firing, helicopter carrying warship which became the first German ship to be fully integrated into a United States Carrier Strike group at the end of March this year when she joined CV Strike Group 8. Another warship at the festival was HMCS Iroquois, the last of three Canadian 280 class destroyers laid down in the 1960s at the height of the Cold War as anti-submarine vessels, but refitted as air defence ships in the wake of the Falklands War of the early 1980s. Once state-of-the-art they are now amongst the oldest destroyers still in commission with any NATO nation and although they have been re-fitted with much modern communications and new weapons systems, still carry the 1960s era Sea King helicopter.

When I visited the festival last May, Sachsen and Defender were tied up alongside each other, hosting visitors by the score. The greenish-hued HMCS Iroquois, however, was moored in mid-river among a number of other vessels, hard to spot, harder to visit, very clearly the oldest of the three warships.
Egypt has just entered a tunnel darker than the one that just a year ago produced Mohamed Morsi and ushered in the short, sad reign of his Freedom and Justice Party. With the military’s ouster of the country’s only freely elected President, a new era begins with little promise of lasting solutions that have plagued the country in the recent past. It’s not that Egyptians are nostalgic for the authoritarianism of the Mubarak regime (although some are), or hostile toward the Muslim Brotherhood (a large number are), it’s that they are losing what was already a precarious hold on crumbling economic ground. The society is quickly running out of gas, figuratively and literally, and nowhere is this more apparent than among the young men giving voice to the condition of poor, urban populations through Mahraganat music, sometimes called “electro-shaabi.”

Their narrative matters because half of Egypt’s 85 million people are under 25, and Egypt continues to be the epicenter of learning and culture in the Arab world. While partially eclipsed by recent programming originating in the Gulf states, Egyptian music, television, and film is still the most influential in the region.

Mahraganat, which refers to the Arabic word for festivals, originated in Salam City, just east of Cairo, home to one DJ Sadat, as close to an originator of the genre as anyone in the contemporary Egyptian music scene. Sadat works with DJ Amr 7a 7a, or Amr Haha (7 is the Arabic aspirated H), who provides the music accompanying Sadat’s rap. Other performers go by such titles as DJ Alaa Fifty Cent and DJ Figo. The music is a combination of early hip-hop, with a deafening electronic beat and auto-tuned vocals. Although they don’t speak English, Sadat and his fellow rappers draw inspiration from Bob Marley and Tupac.

The new wave of Egyptian music, shunned by traditional media outlets, found its audience through live street performances and via YouTube. Like their predecessors in the South Bronx decades ago, these artists started in poor neighbourhoods and use the language of the street. Most striking for Egypt and the Arab world is the overtly political language used by the young and marginalized.

Even the t-shirts worn by the young revelers in Mahraganat music videos carry a message of alienation and resistance, bearing such words as “NO,” “Same Same” and band names such as The Clash.

As Mubarak was going down, a popular Mahraganat tune, “The People and the Government,” carried the following message:

The people and the government, the machine guns and clubs
Egypt rose up, and even those who didn’t steal dove into it
I’ll talk about those standing, the survivors and the dead
I’ll talk about the church, the mosque and the Brotherhood

Talk today is a little less revolutionary, and considerably more downbeat. It reflects the disappointment of people revved up for a better life who are quickly running out of gas. Listen to “The People Want Five Pounds of Credit” (that is five Egyptian pounds, or seventy cents, of cell phone credit):

The people want something new
The people want five pounds’ phone credit
The people want to topple the regime
But the people are so damn tired

This message can be viewed as sounding the death knell of the Morsi government. It is also an unmistakable cry of exasperation that is echoing throughout the Middle East. It can be ignored by elites, including the Egyptian army and whomever it allows to rule, for just so long. Aid, investment and trade that does not reach down to improve their lot will mean continued misery and long-term political instability regardless of who is in power.
China and its North Korea Problem

Written by:
David Wright
(Globe and Mail, Apr 17)

The extent of the derision and contempt with which North Korea is viewed in China might surprise some Westerners. Ordinary workers, students, and taxi drivers in China I have spoken with over the year’s chuckle and sneer at North Korea for not “awakening from delusions” and reforming.

An uproariously funny eighteen-minute video clip of a Chinese comic dialogue by comedians Jia Xuming and Zhang Kang satirizing world news, including unsavoury Chinese news, was recently banned in China but still manages to circulate surreptitiously there on the Internet. Its shellacking of North Korea (some of it quite obscene) got some of the biggest laughs from the audience, especially the deadpan (and not entirely inaccurate?) comparison of its security policies with other major countries:

**America:** We attack whomever we want.
**Britain:** We attack whomever the Americans attack.
**Japan:** If anyone attacks us, we’ll allow the Americans to attack them.
**South Korea:** If anyone attacks us, we’ll hold joint military exercises with the Americans.
**North Korea:** If anyone provokes us, we’ll attack South Korea.

Although North Korea is a laughingstock, even in China, it is creating serious and decidedly unfunny problems for the world. North Korea deliberately portrays itself as a desperate, hungry, and perhaps even rabid and mad dog backed into a corner by the West, Japan, and the U.N., one that will strike out violently if it feels too threatened. For Pyongyang, the summum bonum is the survival of the Kim dynasty, the viability of the Workers’ Party of Korea that runs it, and North Korea’s independence. Anything seriously threatening these three things will enrage North Korea and make it an extremely dangerous state.

Is North Korea crazy? Yes – like a fox. Beijing has long understood this, but Beijing knows that foxy craziness could one day, under the right (er, wrong) conditions, become real madness in Pyongyang. Ever since the early 1990s and the death of North Korean dictator Kim Il-sung, Beijing has faced a tough balancing act between validating North Korea’s existential angst while telling a leery international community not to worry too much about it.

North Korea’s isolation only grows with the passage of time, and with it its anxiety about survival. North Korea’s clunky and faltering socialist economy has made it unable to feed its people, so its government has developed missiles and nuclear weapons in order to intimidate the outside world into supporting it. “Feed me or I just might be crazy enough to kill you” has essentially been North Korea’s message to South Korea in particular and the world in general over the past twenty years.

Chinese leaders perceive a divided Korea as serving China’s national interests, but truth be known, they would vastly prefer a saner, stabler, and more practical-minded government in North Korea. China is acutely aware that North Korea’s outré antics could very well lead to a massive arms build-up by the U.S., Japan, and South Korea, a scenario that would greatly destabilize Northeast Asia and present a security nightmare to China.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry’s statement in China this weekend that Chinese leaders are “very serious” about reducing tensions in the Korean Peninsula and seeing an end to North Korea’s nuclear programme is credible and encouraging. Beijing is exasperated with Pyongyang for being so bellicose, but Beijing must move cautiously because North Korea is now possibly unstable and factionalized, and Beijing does not know for certain which straws to pull and is not completely confident of what the consequences of pulling them will be.

Beijing cannot grasp randomly at straws, and its cautions about everyone involved remaining cool and collected are wise and appropriate. Still, it is Beijing alone that must figure out how to manage the delicate and artful task of lowering the boom on North Korea while not quite driving its tyrants completely mad – mad for real this time, like rabid dogs and not wily foxes.
Building a New North American Arctic Neighborhood

Written by: Joël Plouffe
(National Post, May 8)

As Canada kicks off a second round of Arctic Council chairmanships this month, we’re reminded of the achievements brought by international co-operation in the circumpolar world since the end of the Cold War. From reduced military tensions to increased stability, transnational dialogue has brought states, regional actors and northerners together to work toward common goals, with shared beliefs in greater prosperity and well-being.

While the Arctic Council is the most prominent forum for state-to-state dialogue in the region, it’s not the only organization that promotes and strengthens Arctic co-operation. Northern Europe has produced several institutions designed to increase dialogue around issues of culture, politics and finance. Among these are the Nordic Council, created in 1952, and the Nordic Council of Ministers, launched in 1971.

With the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, the rise of Barents co-operation heralded unprecedented collaboration in the European Arctic. This mostly ensured stability among states that needed to work more closely with Russia.

There have been attempts to encourage ties between northern Canada and Alaska, but a movement for greater co-operation across our Arctic, with clear objectives of prosperity and well-being, has never really taken off. This leaves northerners on this continent, isolated from each other, with limited access to resources and expertise when it comes to dealing with Arctic and northern issues.

With common security concerns brought on by climate change, as well as increased human and economic activities in the Arctic, it’s important for North Americans to take a co-ordinated approach to knowledge-sharing and region-building in the North. A North American Arctic Forum would not only bring northerners together to discuss challenges of building stronger communities, based on new economic initiatives, it would also create a network that promotes education as the basis for a sustainable future. Dialogue and knowledge-sharing have the potential to empower local decision-makers to take the lead in planning, as well as to take steps to create and strengthen local economies and foster economic co-operation throughout the region.

Important steps taken over the past few years suggest that North Americans are willing to look at northern issues from a new angle.

Quebec has been active in many ways, both at the provincial level and at the regional level in the North. Earlier this year, the province signed a historical declaration of intention with the Nordic Council of Ministers to open new avenues of collaboration between Northern Europe and Quebec on matters of “responsible northern development.” This creates opportunities for Quebec and the Nordic countries to learn from each other on issues such as the impact of climate change on northern peoples and environments, mining practices in fragile northern areas, renewable energy for the North and transportation infrastructure. Quebec has also joined the Northern Forum, an international organization with observer status at the Arctic Council that has the potential to play a greater co-ordination role in the region. And in Northern Quebec, the Nunavimmiut have put forward a plan to create a comprehensive vision, based on the traditional Inuit way of life, for the development of Nunavik. It could serve as a model for the entire northern neighbourhood.

Alaska has recently started consultations on Arctic policymaking initiatives, which are also in line with region-building. The new Alaska Arctic Policy Commission will travel around the state this year to meet with Alaskans, hearing their concerns on topics such as indigenous peoples, oil-and-gas development, mining, fisheries and infrastructure. It plans to co-ordinate and collaborate with its nearest northern neighbours, Canada and Russia. The Arctic Caucus, formed by Alaska, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories in 2009 as part of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, is addressing ideas such as American and Canadian Arctic policy challenges. The caucus serves as a model for a North American Arctic forum, including Greenland, with the most advanced framework for collaboration in the region.

Intergovernmental bodies like the Arctic Council and regional governance structures remain at the core of circumpolar co-operation. Meanwhile, this continent needs its own pan-Arctic organization, focusing on concerns specific to the North American Arctic region and its people. Governments and regional actors, together with other groups and the business community, would gain from enhanced and co-ordinated conversations that address common issues. It’s time for a North American Arctic Forum.
It’s Time to Talk about Arctic Militarization

Written by: 
Rob Huebert 
(National Post, May 6)

Canada is set to assume the chairmanship of the Arctic Council in May 2013 and in the days leading up to this important transition there has been considerable discussion of what Canada will do as chair. One issue that has not received much attention is the need to discuss the growing militarization of the Arctic. While the Arctic Council is formally forbidden from discussing military security in the Arctic, the time has arrived to rethink this policy.

The Arctic Council was established at the end of the Cold War, when Arctic activities were substantially reduced and such a prohibition made good political sense. However, in 2013 this is no longer the case. The militaries of most Arctic states are taking on new and expanded roles in the region that go beyond their traditional responsibilities, which may create friction in the region. To help manage these relationships the Council should reconsider its refusal to deal with the sticky issue of military security.

Why should Canada take on this issue when all states seem content to ignore it? “Let sleeping dogs sleep” would seem a wise approach, except for the troubling signs that both Russia and the United States have begun to view the region through a geopolitical lens. Both countries are developing capabilities in their territories to tackle threats that originate beyond the region. To help manage these relationships the Council should reconsider its refusal to deal with the sticky issue of military security.

In 2008, Russia released its National Security Policy which outlined their core security interests. At the very top of the list was the need to protect and maintain their nuclear deterrent capabilities. Since issuing this document, Russia has worked hard to rebuild its submarine based missile deterrent. Though it has been difficult and expensive, Russia is now commissioning a new class of submarines that will carry a new nuclear missile in an effort to maintain this deterrent. The bulk of these forces remain stationed with the Northern Fleet at the Severomorsk naval base near the port city of Murmansk and Russia plans to reinstates regular patrols, a practice it hasn’t pursued since the end of the Cold War. Any threat to this deterrent will be seen as a challenge to the core of Russian security; therefore, it is critical to regional stability that Russia not feel this capability is threatened. But the question remains, will other Arctic states recognize that the maintenance of Russian deterrent capabilities are a critical security requirement that remains based in the Arctic?

On the other side of the Arctic, the Americans are taking steps to respond to the increased nuclear threat posed by North Korea. The US will add 14 more interceptors to their existing number of 26 at their antiballistic missile base in Alaska in order to bolster its defences. The maintenance of a strong defensive system to repel attacks by rogue states remains a core defence interest of the United States, but will other Arctic states understand that the Americans are pursuing this course of action to protect their homeland, and not to undermine the defences of other Arctic states?

It is easy to see how both the Americans and Russians will become increasingly concerned about the security steps that the other is taking. But now is the time for all to openly discuss these developments so that as they unfold old suspicions and distrusts do not resurface.

These are only two issues that will increasingly intensify the region’s strategic interests for the Arctic Council’s member states. The time has come to stop pretending that the Arctic has no strategic value. By creating a body - perhaps another working group - in which the Arctic states can agree to discuss security issues, (perhaps in closed session), the Arctic Council will facilitate a common understanding of why these actions are taken. Canada can show leadership by recognizing the need for a frank and open discussion on military issues before it is too late.
Canada and Russia are limited, but their expansion would not be destabilizing, but instead justified as northern frontiers that were traditionally sheltered by ice and harsh climates open up. Growing economic activities, expanding navigation and cross-polar flights, and a rising demand for readiness in search and rescue capacities justify an increase in military (non-strategic) capabilities, a trend seen among most Arctic states; thus, both Canada and Russia are no exception. Additionally, a stronger and more engaged presence in the Arctic by either nation – especially in today’s times of financial crisis – is essential to addressing the real threats affecting the circumpolar region. Furthermore, bearing in mind Russia’s historic suspicion of NATO, we are wiser to engage Russia, rather than ignore it.

Transportation, both maritime and aeronautic, should be another obvious area of bilateral cooperation. Some initial steps taken in this area are the Churchill-Murmansk “Northern sea-bridge” or discussions between Winnipeg and Krasnoyarsk on the “Northern air bridge,” that would connect North America with Eurasia. But the potential for a bilateral relationship can only be realized if both nations become physically closer through transportation links and build on the mutual advantages available through technological innovation. The two countries could play a leading role in assuring the navigation, communication, and safety of the Arctic transportation system. For example, Canada could join Russia’s effort to modernize the Northern Sea Route by offering aide and working to develop the Northwest Passage. These new shipping routes could reshape world navigations and have far reaching implications for social and economic development.

The Canada-Russia bilateral relationship could be strengthened through outreach to our Arctic indigenous peoples, who in many cases are facing the same challenges and opportunities – especially with regards to socio-economic developments. The two could also encourage further cooperation in the exploration and extraction of Arctic resources. The Kinross’ success in numerous joint ventures with Russian gold mines is an important success story that could be mirrored by others.

Russians and Canadians love many of the same things – from ice-hockey to classical music – and the possibilities for tourism and other people-to-people contacts are great. It is time to transform the relationship between Canada and Russia in concert with the ongoing transformation in the Arctic. We need to remove the hurdles that impeded the Canadian-Russian rapprochement and take a new look at each other so as to truly benefit from cooperation between the two Arctic giants.
Arctic affairs are no longer the quiet preserve of the Arctic states. Once frozen in the geopolitics of the Cold War, the thawing region now commands international attention. The Arctic Council, a relaxed forum for dialogue and information sharing amongst Arctic states and representatives of indigenous groups (the permanent participants), now faces a deluge of new applicants for observer status. China, India, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Mongolia have joined the European Union, Italy, and various non-governmental organizations seeking a more permanent place in the Council. The eight ministers from the Arctic states are expected to render their verdict on fourteen of these applications in Kiruna, Sweden, next month.

But accepting new observers is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. The real challenge will come in maintaining the current structure of the Council as new actors clamour for a say in scientific research, resource development, transportation, and regional governance more generally. The extent to which Arctic and Asian states’ interests currently conflict on Arctic issues is overblown in most popular media and scholarly accounts. Nevertheless, some Chinese commentators have indicated that they consider observer status as a foot in the door to leverage greater influence over time. Indian scholars, their ideas framed by a long history of Antarctic engagement, still conjure visions of an Arctic treaty system that would resemble the international regime governing the south polar continent. This overlooks the sovereignty and sovereign rights of the Arctic states, as well as perceptions of appropriate regional governance encapsulated in their national strategies and the Ilulissat declaration of May 2008.

A seat at the Arctic Council may serve as a symbol of prestige for Asian states in international affairs, but the practical benefits are less clear. After all, only Arctic member states and permanent participants have seats around the main Council table. The observers listen in on deliberations and speak when invited to do so, but generally operate on the sidelines. To secure even this access, however, they must meet a host of new criteria, including acknowledgment of Arctic states’ sovereignty and sovereign rights, respect for indigenous cultures, and support for the Council’s original objectives as a high level forum to promote “cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States on common Arctic issues.”

Does this reality accommodate non-Arctic states’ rising ambitions and perceived “rights” in regional affairs? Some Asian voices suggest it does not. For example, political scientist Guo Peiqing of the Ocean University of China has recently encouraged his country not to join the Council, arguing that it can better assert influence through other bilateral and multilateral channels – without acquiescing to the Arctic states’ self-interested rules and agenda.

A case in point is the new Arctic Circle forum, announced last week by Icelandic president Olafur Grimsson hot on the heels of a new free trade agreement with China. His country’s well-documented courtship of China and its fear of exclusion by the “Arctic-5” coastal states underpin this announcement which may, ultimately, undermine the perceived role of the Arctic Council as the primary forum for international dialogue about the region.

With Asian states asserting growing weight in international affairs, the Arctic is already feeling the reverberations. The challenge for Canada as Arctic Council chair lies not in excluding Asian states from regional conversations, but in striving to educate non-Arctic interests about why the existing system of governance is appropriate and relevant. Alienating Asian states will feed perceptions that the Arctic countries view the region as a private backyard, dismissing international interests and simply dividing the spoils amongst themselves. Instead, Canada should work with its Arctic neighbours to foster a sense of Asian Arctic-mindedness that is sensitive to the region’s unique environmental and human attributes. During its chair, Canada must look at the region through global, regional, and national lenses to ensure that its interests, those of the Council, and those of a growing array of interested stakeholders are balanced and maintained.
Canada and the Arctic Council

Written by:
Ron Wallace
(National Post, May 9)

Canada is about to enter an entirely new phase of heightened diplomatic responsibilities in the circumpolar Arctic in assuming the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. Made up of the USA, Russia, Denmark (including Greenland), Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden among others, the Arctic Council’s member states will rotate the chairmanship to Canada in May, 2013. This event will present Canada with an opportunity to demonstrate tangible international leadership in the circumpolar Arctic region. In parallel, the Arctic Council is about to consider requests by several countries for permanent observer status – this developing interest in the polar Arctic is also coming at a time when (December 2013) Canada plans to make its first submission under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Additionally, Canada will soon assume chairmanship (2014-2018) of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) that also acts as a permanent representative on the Arctic Council.

All these events represent material diplomatic and national, strategic interests for Canada.

Into this complex political and diplomatic whirlwind is soon to step Canadian Cabinet Minister and designated Arctic Council Chair Leona Aglukkaq (Chairmanship term extending from May 2013 to 2015). Ms. Leona Aglukkaq became the first Inuk to be sworn into the Federal Cabinet on 30 October 2008 as the Minister of Health. She was subsequently re-elected to a second term in May 2011 and retained her appointment as the Minister of Health but was also accorded new duties as Minister for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency. Quite significantly, in August 2012 when Prime Minister Harper deftly selected an Inuk to be the Arctic Council Minister for Canada who would eventually assume the role of Chair of the Council, he positioned Canada to be seen internationally as a leader in the development and promotion of the interests of aboriginal peoples in the north. This selection by the Prime Minister also comes at a time when material environmental, strategic and commercial interests are fast assuming increased importance to member, and non-member states, throughout the Circumpolar Arctic and, indeed, around the globe.

Canadians should not squander the opportunity to support an Inuk woman who has demonstrated that she is capable of meeting significant political and managerial challenges. Aside from past biased, one-sided, political sniping that has accompanied her nomination to the Council, we should cherish the opportunity for Canada to demonstrate responsible international capabilities through the service of a distinguished Canadian Inuk woman. Her appointment, coming at a time when the plight of indigenous peoples of the circumpolar north has become an increasing focus for governments, is surely a credible demonstration of Canada’s long-standing commitment to our aboriginal peoples and to working to secure their right to self-government with associated increased self-determination.

Canada, with its high-profile participation on the Arctic Council, may have a unique opportunity to work with other international agencies to elevate and inform future discussions about the circumpolar region – particularly with the key issue of Arctic industrial activities that may directly impact indigenous interests, land claims and social-economic development. The high-profile Arctic Council Chairmanship falls to a Canadian aboriginal woman and Cabinet Minister precisely at a moment when these material issues will unquestionably emerge into this intergovernmental forum. It’s not only high time that a distinguished northern aboriginal leader be allowed to assume the duties of Chairmanship of the Council but that we should reflect with pride that it is Canada that has brought forth such capable, and diverse, aboriginal leaders to the global circumpolar diplomatic stage. All Canadians should proudly be supporting her and providing all the technical, scientific and diplomatic support that we can muster. Anything less would be a disservice to Canada, our northern aboriginal heritage and the international community.
Canadian Submarine’s Success and Worth Aren’t Newsworthy

Written by: Bob Bergen

It is an axiom in the news media that airplanes which land safely don’t make news, it is the ones that crash that do. Ericson, Baranek and Chan advance the argument that by participating in discussions that define deviance and control the news media actively participate in the establishment societal norms and behaviours. The news media visualized deviance when two brothers set off car bombs at the Boston Marathon because they broke the societal norms of accepted behaviour.

More is the pity for that unrelenting phenomenon, because when an event of strategic importance to Canada goes unreported – the Canadian government and the Royal Canadian Navy eventually got it right with its Victoria-class submarine program – Canadians’ overall understanding of that much-maligned program can be seriously compromised. That got-it-right event took place on July 17, 2012, off the coast of Hawaii when HMCS Victoria sank the former USS Concord, a decommissioned 19,000-ton tanker, to the bottom of the Pacific with the single shot of a Mk48 torpedo. It was a historic moment for the four-submarine program best-known for the October 5, 2004, fire aboard the HMCS Chicoutimi that killed one officer during its transit to Canada from England.

The 2012 achievement off Hawaii positioned HMCS Victoria for high-readiness certification, the final benchmark for an operational submarine. But, what did the Canadian news media report about HMCS Victoria’s accomplishment? Sadly, not much. Of the 331 Canadian publications in the Canadian Newsstand database that includes Canada’s major daily newspapers, just two carried any news about the milestone. Only the Victoria News and the Victoria’s Times-Colonist, seldom seen outside the west coast, reported on the submarine’s historic success. The Victoria News headline screamed: “You sunk my Battleship! The Canadian Forces use live torpedo for the first time”, when, in fact, the ex-USS Concord was a tanker. The Times-Colonist only reported on it in passing in a larger story about Defence Minister Peter MacKay visiting CFB Esquimalt to announce $10.9 million in contracts for four infrastructure projects there.

About five weeks later – and completely ignoring its own earlier news story – the Victoria-Times editor-in-chief and national affairs columnist with Troy Media wrote a scathing review of the Victoria-class submarine program, referring to it as “those four pathetic bathtubs we’ll call our submarine fleet.” The gentleman is certainly entitled to his opinion, but it distracts readers’ attention away from much larger strategic issues involved with HMCS Victoria’s graduation to high-readiness certification.

One hates to cry wolf, but as Adam P. MacDonald notes in his analysis of China’s evolving maritime strategy that: “China’s arrival as a maritime power is an undeniable feature of today’s international system.” It noted that China is increasing production of its Yuan-class air Independent propulsion diesel-electric submarines, but did not make mention of China’s first aircraft carrier, bought from Russia and refitted, and couldn’t have mentioned recent news that China will build a much bigger second carrier capable of carrying more jets. The original carrier, the Liaoning, is reportedly slated to house two aviation regiments including fighters, reconnaissance aircraft, anti-submarine aircraft, electronic-countermeasure aircraft and rotary-wing aircraft. Macdonald notes that China admits to developing “an anti-access/area-denial strategy in its adjacent waters to disrupt the freedom of action of other naval players, specifically, the United States.”

History has shown that, since the Second World War, America’s aircraft carriers have delivered air forces to regions that dwarfed all others in countless near-war circumstances that had “a sobering effect on political adventurers.” As such, aircraft carriers are the ultimate projection of America’s super power around the world. Now China appears to be taking bold steps toward its own power projection. Elinor Sloan astutely noted last year the U.S. Pentagon’s 2012 announcement of a rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific Region and Canada’s necessary turn toward the Pacific, as well.

Also of concern is China’s diesel-electric submarine fleet. Those diesel-electric submarines have long proved to be a particularly vexing problem for the U.S. Navy because they are far quieter than nuclear submarines. Consequently, they could give China a relatively low-cost asymmetric advantage. It is hard to envision a Canadian submarine ever sinking a Chinese aircraft carrier, but they do provide opportunities for the U.S. Navy to train with and against the very same threats the Chinese submarines pose. In the fullness of time, those “pathetic bathtubs” will likely prove to be important strategic assets for our allies in the Asia-Pacific Region. It is a shame Canada’s news media don’t report that.
Canada must be the only nation in the world where historians object to the government investing money in the country's past. When the government put cash up front to commemorate the bicentennial of the War of 1812, the reaction from the professors was one of scorn. Celebrating a military conflict from two centuries ago was simply the Tories carrying out their agenda of militarizing Canada, akin to the government's support for the war in Afghanistan. That said support had all but disappeared around 2010 scarcely mattered to the critics who had no doubt that they knew absolutely what was intended.

Next it was the Harper government's decision to turn the Canadian Museum of Civilization into the Canadian Museum of History. Historians expressed shock and outrage. The wonderful—in fact, sadly outdated and almost completely made up—exhibits that showcased a Chinese laundry, a black Prairie schoolhouse, an ethnic printshop, and other subjects that misrepresented the Canadian past to make it fit into a multicultural present would disappear, they feared, to be replaced by a chronological rendering of the entire Canadian past.

What could possibly be wrong with that? Nothing except that with the Tories in charge, they would stuff the museum with Conservative icons like John A. Macdonald or John Diefenbaker's Bill of Rights and put far too much emphasis on military history and on the world wars. There would be no room for the great social experiments, for labour unrest, for women, gender, culture, and the social injustices that Canadian historians love to wallow in. How did the historians know this? Well, it was Stephen Harper in charge, the moribund Canadian Historical Association had not been consulted by government and, as the chair of York University's History Department observed, not a single one of the faculty from the nation's largest history department had been involved.

Some of these complaints are easily answered. Why would the new history museum emphasize military history when the Canadian War Museum, the other half of the same Crown corporation, does that job superbly not two miles away? It was far more likely that instead of covering the battles on the Western Front and re-playing the triumph at Vimy Ridge, the impact of the world wars on the homefront would be presented, an impact that sped social change, labour unrest, prohibition, the rise of women, and all those topics the complaining historians fear would be omitted. And the great exhibits in the present Canada Hall at Civilization? Most will disappear, for sure, and good riddance. They presented Canadian social history as a Disneyfied travesty of the past, and no one truly interested in the extraordinary stories of the nation's history will miss them—or the exhibits of Chinese pots, Peruvian urns, or Afghan trinkets that usually filled the temporary exhibit galleries.

What the historians really object to is the Harper government. They hate the fact that it sees the past from a different perspective than they do and that it believes that 1812 and the coming commemorations of the Great War, Confederation, and Macdonald's 250th birthday matter to Canadians and deserve celebration. They hate that peacekeeping, the now-past role in which Canada achieved near-mythical prowess, is not pursued or, they believe, sufficiently celebrated by a militaristic government. Simply put, they hate Harper and all his works.

This battle of words is merely yet another skirmish in the history wars that have torn the Canadian historical profession apart for decades. In fact, though the professors don't realize this, the war is over, and the complainants have lost. History in the universities has become like political science, sociology or English literature—a post-modern desert in which the acolytes flourish but the mass of students shy away, unable to understand the jargon or the tired Marxist political slant. Better to go into business or law, surely.

Outside the universities, military history is enormously popular with the public and the Great War commemorations will make it more so, and the Canadian War Museum is generally assessed as the best museum in the country, at present the only one that treats the entire span of Canadian history in a chronological and well-researched way. Of course, that museum was built by Jean Chretien's and Paul Martin's Liberal government, suggesting that even the Grits, not the most militaristic of our political parties, understand who won the history wars. It's time that the profs hoist the white flag and give up. The war is over, and there is no point trying to emulate the last Japanese soldiers hiding in the Philippine jungles who held out for decades after 1945.
DAVID BERCUSON
David Bercuson is Director of the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary and Program Director for CDFAI.

FERRY de KERCKHOVE
Ferry de Kerckhove has served as Canada’s High Commissioner to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Ambassador to the Republic of Indonesia, Director General, International Organizations with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and most recently served as Ambassador to the Arab Republic of Egypt.

J.L. GRANATSTEIN
J.L. Granatstein is one of Canada’s most distinguished historians, focusing on 20th Century Canadian national history.

ANDREW B. LESLIE
Andrew Leslie is currently Senior Vice President with CGI and a partner in InnovaNord, a strategic consultancy and cyber resilience practice. He first joined the Army Reserves in 1977, and in 2003 was promoted to Major-General and deployed as the Deputy Commander of ISAF and Commander Task Force Kabul, Afghanistan, following which he was promoted to Lieutenant-General while appointed Chief of Land Staff and Commander of the Land Forces (Army), and in 2010 became the Canadian Forces Chief of Transformation. He retired from the Canadian Forces in 2011.

COLIN ROBERTSON
Colin Robertson is Senior Strategic Advisor for the US-based law firm of McKenna, Long and Aldridge. A former foreign service officer, he was part of the team that negotiated the Canada-US FTA and NAFTA.

HUGH SEGAL
Hugh Segal served in the public and private sector for thirty-three years before being appointed by Prime Minister Martin to the Senate as a Conservative in 2005. He is an Adjunct Professor (Public Policy) at the Queen’s School of Business.

DENIS STAIRS
Denis Stairs is Professor Emeritus in Political Science and a Faculty Fellow in the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University. He specializes in Canadian foreign and defence policy, Canada-US relations and similar subjects.
CDFAI Senior Fellows

**BARRY COOPER**
Barry Cooper, FRSC, is a Professor of Political Science and Fellow, Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary. In 2009 he edited Tilo Schabert’s How World Politics is Made: France and the Reunification of Germany. He publishes a regular column in the Calgary Herald and other CanWest Global papers.

**ROLAND PARIS**
Roland Paris is the University Research Chair in International Security and Governance, and Founding Director for the Centre for International Policy, at the University of Ottawa. His research interests are in the fields of international security, international governance and foreign policy.

**DARYL COPELAND**
Daryl Copeland, a former diplomat, teaches at the University of Ottawa’s Graduate School of Public and International Affairs and is Visiting Professor at the London Academy of Diplomacy (UK) and Otago University (NZ). He specializes in the relationship between science, technology, diplomacy, and international policy.

**DAVID PRATT**
David Pratt is an independent consultant. Most recently he spent five months in Baghdad, Iraq as a Senior Parliamentary Expert with the USAID sponsored Iraq Legislative Strengthening Program. From 2004-2008 he served as Special Advisor to the Secretary General of the Canadian Red Cross. He served as Canada’s 36th Minister of Defence in 2003-04.

**HRACH GREGORIAN**
Hrach Gregorian is President of the Institute of World Affairs (IWA), a non-governmental organization specializing in international conflict management and post-conflict peacebuilding and Associate Professor, Graduate Program in Conflict Management, Royal Roads University.

**ELINOR SLOAN**
Elinor Sloan is Professor of International Relations in the Department of Political Science at Carleton University, specializing in US, Canadian, and NATO security and defence policy. She is also a former defence analyst with Canada’s Department of National Defence.

**FRANK HARVEY**
Frank P. Harvey is University Research Professor International Relations with Dalhousie University, was appointed Eric Dennis Memorial Chair of Government and Politics in 2013. His book, Explaining the Iraq War: Counterfactual Theory, Logic and Evidence (2011, Cambridge University Press), received the 2013 Canadian Political Science Association Book Prize in International Relations.

**ROB HUEBERT**
Rob Huebert is Associate Director of the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies and Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Calgary. In November 2010, he was appointed as a director to the Canadian Polar Commission.

**PHILLIPE LAGASSÉ**
Phillipe Lagassé is assistant professor of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa. His research focuses on Canadian defence policy and politics, civil-military relations in Westminster democracies, machinery of government related to foreign policy and national security affairs, and the nature and scope of executive power in the Westminster tradition.
CDFAI Fellows

**George Macdonald**
George Macdonald retired from the Canadian Forces as Vice Chief of the Defence Staff in 2004. He then joined CFN Consultants in Ottawa where he continues to deal with defence and security issues.

**Whitney Lackenbauer, Ph.D.,** is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of History at St. Jerome’s University. He specializes in Arctic security and sovereignty issues, modern Canadian military and diplomatic history, as well as in intelligence.

**Bob Bergen**
Bob Bergen is Adjunct Assistant Professor, Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary and a former journalist.

**Aurélie Campana**
Aurélie Campana is Associate Professor in Political Science at Laval University, Quebec City. She holds the Canada Research Chair in Identity Conflicts & Terrorism. She is also a member of the Institut Québécois des Hautes Études Internationals of the Centre International de Criminologie Comparée and of the Canadian Research Network on Terrorism, Security and Society.

**David Carment**
David Carment is a Professor of International Affairs at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University. In addition, he is the principal investigator for the Country Indicators for Foreign Policy Project (CIFP).

**Mark Collins**
Mark Collins is a former diplomat with postings in Pakistan (1975-77), and Yugoslavia (1984-87). He retired from his career as a public servant following a posting with the Canadian Coast Guard from 1997-2002. He is now a prolific blogger and contributes extensively to CDFAI’s 3D’s blog.

**Andrew Godfrey**
Andrew B. Godfrey CD, Ph.D (RMC), is a strategic analyst serving on the adjunct faculties at the Royal Military College of Canada and the University of Calgary. With over two decades of military service, he is also a graduate of the Canadian Forces School of Military Engineering, the Canadian Forces School of Aerospace Studies, the Canadian Land Forces Command and Staff College, the Joint Operations Staff Course (UK).

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**SARAH JANE MEHARG**
Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg is President of Peace & Conflict Planners Canada and serves as Adjunct Professor at the Royal Military College of Canada. She is Canada’s leading post-conflict reconstruction expert.

**JOHN NOBLE**
John Noble is a former diplomat, having served as Canadian Ambassador to Greece, Consul General of Canada to Monaco, Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein in 1998 and Permanent Observer of Canada to the Council of Europe. After retiring in July 2001 he was named a Fulbright Scholar at Michigan State University.

**JOËLL PLOUFFE**
Joëlle Plouffe is a Research Fellow at the Raoul-Dandurand Chair of Strategic and Diplomatic Studies at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), and is currently serving as Visiting Professor at the Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington. His research focuses on the Geopolitics of the Arctic, Regions of Circumpolar North, Security, Defence, and Canada-IS Foreign Policy.

**STEPHEN RANDALL**
Stephen J. Randall, FRSC, is Professor of History at the University of Calgary and Director of the Latin American Research Centre, which he founded in 2000.

**HUGH STEPHENS**
Hugh Stephens, a former diplomat, is currently Executive-in-Residence at the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada and Vice Chair of the Canadian Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation (CanCPEC). Previously he served as Senior Vice President, Public Policy (Asia Pacific) for Time Warner, where he was based at the company’s Asia regional headquarters in Hong Kong.

**DAVID WRIGHT**
David C. Wright is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Calgary specializing in imperial Chinese and Mongolian history. Dr. Wright graduated magna cum laude with baccalaureate degrees in History and Chinese language. He went on to complete his M.A. and Ph.D. in East Asian Studies from Princeton University.

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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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