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Message from the Editor
by DAVID BERCUSON

COVER STORY
Canada and the TPP 11: Don’t Miss the Opportunity
by HUGH STEPHENS

Transparency, Public Engagement, Human Rights: What China and Canada can Learn from Canada-EU Free Trade
by ROBERT HAGE

Canada and the Arctic Council
by ROB HUEBERT

NATO, Deterrence and What it Means for Canada
by STÉFANIE VON HLATKY

Canada, What Are You Waiting For?
by LINDSAY RODMAN

Delays on Defence: Costly Or Not? Yes.
by STEPHEN SAIDEMAN

Cyber-Security at a Frantic Time: Principles that Matter
by HUGH SEGAL

The Luring Dangers of Right-wing Extremism in Europe
by VANJA PETRICEVIC

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While the attention of NATO and the western powers is focused on terrorism, the really immense global trouble spots remain unaddressed. One of the ongoing crisis areas is the South China Sea where United States freedom-of-navigation patrols continue to evoke vocal pains and frustrations from the Chinese whenever an American warship or two passes within 12 miles of one of China’s pop-up bases in places such as the Spratly Island chain.

Late last month, two American warships entered waters near Mischief Reef where China dredged enough seabed to pile on a rock or two to create what is now an immense air and naval base far from mainland China. The reef is now an island with a sheltered inland bay containing Chinese patrol ships, a long runway for the use of military jet aircraft and an anti-aircraft radar installation capable of shooting down aircraft which penetrate its airspace.

The problem is that the so-called reef has no airspace. A World Court decision handed down last year in response to a complaint from the Philippines made it quite clear that the creation of artificial islands in the Spratlys, which are themselves contested, is not legal. Armed with this important decision, no one is taking it upon themselves to enforce China’s growing presence on these artificial reefs because to do so might provoke China into some sort of military action. No one wants military action in the South China Sea because it is a hugely important transit route for a very large percentage of the globe’s seaborne trade.

The Americans continue to send their ships into waters and airspace near these islands and the Chinese continue to respond in the same way: American ships go in, China makes “solemn representations to the U.S. side” and the problem subsides until the next round of American freedom-of-navigation patrols. It is all like a game, but it is a deadly game indeed. Since the presence of the American ships is patently legal because they stay far enough away from transiting these islands’ coastal waters, it is the Chinese who must bear the burden of over-reach. One such incident happened at the start of the George W. Bush administration 17 years ago when a Chinese fighter clipped a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft near Hainan and was forced to land in China. Nothing like that has happened since, but it is only a matter of time before it happens again.

In other parts of the world, such as the Strait of Hormuz and the waters of the Gulf of Iran, there have been several incidents when Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps speedboats have swarmed smaller American vessels, forcing them to shore. In all cases, no one wants to provoke a major international incident and the crews are quickly released, but tensions build just the same. And every time it happens in or near the Strait of Hormuz, it is a green light for the Chinese to do the same in the South China Sea.

Another factor complicates the equation in the South China Sea. Now that U.S. President Donald Trump has made a new buddy of Chinese President Xi Jinping, and hopes to elicit Chinese support for some kind of action against North Korea’s nuclear and missile program, these freedom-of-navigation patrols have become sheer theatre. But behind the curtain the possibility remains that a local Chinese commander will miscalculate or the captain of a Chinese “coast guard” vessel will overstep his bounds and actually take action against an American destroyer or frigate. A few shots fired in warning could quickly escalate into a major international incident.

Terrorism is ugly, scary, puts entire populations on edge and evokes passionate cries for vengeance. But on a global scale it means little – except, of course, for its direct victims. So, NATO and other global powers need to keep an eye on it. But the chance that the U.S. and China might come to blows as a result of China’s overweening ambition in the South and East China seas could bring on a major armed clash that is growing more possible by the day.

Canada, with its crippled naval assets, has no way of conducting such freedom-of-navigation patrols of our own. And our obsession with trying to find some way of reviving the Trans-Pacific Partnership without the Americans, but in some form with the Chinese, means we are in no position to do anything about matters such as this.

David Bercuson is Director of the Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary, Area Director, International Policy for the School of Public Policy, University of Calgary and Program Director, Canadian Global Affairs Institute.
When President Donald Trump pulled the plug on U.S. participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership on Jan. 23 — day 3 of his administration — it was a bad day for Canadian supporters of the TPP (although those opposed to the agreement no doubt rejoiced). But now it seems the TPP may still live under another guise, often referred to as the TPP 11. New studies have shown that even without the U.S.’s participation, a trans-Pacific agreement based on the new rules negotiated in the original TPP will still bring gains to all the partners. More important, moving ahead with the TPP 11 would constitute a global signal that trade liberalization is still vital for economic growth, and that preservation of open markets through multilateral agreements is the way of the future, rather than Trump’s protectionism or preference for zero-sum bilateral deals.

Canada came late to the TPP, having passed on the initial opportunity to join the negotiations, and was only admitted in the fall of 2012. By the time the Harper government realized that Canada needed to be part of the emerging trans-Pacific trade architecture in order to take advantage of the new rules being forged by the TPP (and to ensure that any additional access granted to the U.S. market through the TPP didn’t undermine Canadian access through NAFTA), it was almost too late to get in. In fact, Canada and Mexico joined the negotiations in October 2012, followed by Japan in July 2013. Japan’s addition made the negotiations really interesting for Canada since now significant new market access was potentially available for Canadian exporters. Canada and Japan had already begun bilateral negotiations that were moving slowly before being suspended once Japan joined the larger TPP negotiating group.

When Trump gave notice that the U.S. would not proceed to ratify the agreement reached in the fall of 2015 and signed in February 2016, the TPP in its current form could not enter into force. To come into effect, it had to be ratified by at least six of the 12 negotiating partners, constituting 85 per cent or more of the bloc’s combined GDP. Given the U.S.’s economic predominance, without American ratification the deal as negotiated was dead. But rather than hold a wake, the other partners convened a meeting in Chile in mid-March to discuss future steps. International Trade Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne attended and then reinforced Canadian interest by holding a further meeting of officials in Toronto in early May. There are good reasons for

(Continued on page 7)
Canada’s ongoing interest in exploring how to retain many of the gains from the TPP.

First, a modified TPP offers the possibility of cementing the market access agreement with Japan that was negotiated as part of the wider pact. It will also open trade in interesting, if not currently large, export markets such as Australia, New Zealand, Vietnam and Malaysia where Canada has no preferential bilateral arrangements. Second, it will ensure that the new rules negotiated in the TPP to deal with many “behind the border” non-tariff measures will come into effect for Canada’s trade with the other 10 TPP countries, including Mexico, Chile and Peru where we already have bilateral agreements. Third, it will maintain Canada’s strategic engagement with important partners in Asia, and keep the door open to possible wider preferential trading arrangements, such as an eventual free trade area of Asia Pacific (FTAAP).

These gains are not just theoretical. A recent study by Kenichi Kawasaki of Japan’s National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) has predicted that even without U.S. participation, trade gains to the TPP 11 countries from removal of tariff and non-tariff measures would still be significant. Under Kawasaki’s model, Canada would achieve a GDP gain of 1.97 per cent under a full TPP scenario but would still see a gain of 1.06 per cent as part of a TPP 11. In fact, four of the remaining 11 countries would see larger GDP gains under the TPP 11 scenario than under the original TPP agreement. Major gains under a TPP 11 scenario would accrue to Malaysia (20.65 per cent), Singapore (14.72 per cent), Vietnam (10.39 per cent) and Mexico (5.63 per cent). The numbers in most cases would be larger if the U.S. were a participant, but the GRIPS study shows there are valid economic reasons to proceed even without the U.S. Japan and New Zealand have already ratified the original TPP agreement and Singapore has committed to do so.

Canada has not yet taken that step but has been active in keeping its options open and its powder dry when it comes to the question of a modified TPP. We have shown interest and demonstrated some leadership by holding the talks in Toronto. At a time when the Trump administration is flexing its protectionist muscles, the TPP 11 is an important alternative strategy that Canada can and should pursue.

Hugh Stephens is a fellow with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, the executive-in-residence at the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, and vice-chair of the Canadian Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation.

Canada has a problem. Since Pierre Trudeau’s government, Canada has been trying to diversify its trade away from the United States, first to Europe and second to Asia. China, with the world’s second largest national economy, is an ideal prospect. Canada just concluded the second round of exploratory free trade talks with the Chinese.

A recent national survey, however, indicates 88 per cent of Canadians are uncomfortable with the prospect of deeper economic ties with China. Is it possible to negotiate a free trade agreement with an authoritarian, controlled capitalist state without the rule of law?

Canada has shown it can adapt to different and challenging trade situations, and with preparation and wider public support, can likely do so again. Two years after Canada signed its first major free trade agreement with the U.S. in 1988, then-president George Bush embarked on free trade negotiations with Mexico, a developing country. Seeing a threat to its U.S. market share, in 1991 Canada proposed a trilateral agreement, giving birth to NAFTA.

NAFTA was the first free trade agreement between developed and developing countries. It required new measures. To meet concerns about the fairness of Mexico’s judicial system, NAFTA provided for special investor-state procedures outside the parties’ national courts. To respond to environmentalists’ worries that Mexico’s industrialization and lax laws would create serious problems, the parties negotiated and signed a separate environmental co-operation agreement. When labour unions argued that Mexico’s low wages would take away their jobs, Canada and the U.S. responded with another side agreement committing all parties to enforce the protection of labour standards.

Canada and the European Union have just entered into the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström told an Ottawa audience there has never been a more important time to defend “progressive trade policy. Trade should not mean a race-to-the-bottom on standards or come at the cost of the environment.” She added: “The EU’s trade strategy sets out how a responsible trade policy can be effective, sustainable, transparent and based on values.” Prime Minister Justin Trudeau embraced this approach, telling the European Parliament in February that CETA is a “blueprint for future trade deals.”

This blueprint does indeed offer guidance for the proposed Canada-China free trade agreement. The first lesson is to prepare the ground, and public opinion, without setting artificial deadlines. The CETA process began in early 2007 when then-Quebec premier Jean Charest toured Europe calling for a free trade agreement. Canadian and EU leaders responded that fall, agreeing to co-operate on a joint study “to examine and assess the costs and benefits of a looser economic partnership” and to review the results at their October 2008 summit.

(Continued on page 9)
The 180-page joint study went beyond tariff barriers to the breadth of bilateral co-operation in a wide variety of fields including science and technology, transportation and investment promotion. The whole study was made public. The leaders then asked their officials to work together to define what the scope of this deepened economic agreement might be and to identify the points for its successful conclusion. One key inclusion, at the EU’s insistence, was to involve the provinces — a first for Canadian trade negotiations. In May 2009 the leaders agreed to negotiate a “comprehensive and ambitious” economic partnership agreement with everything on the table. This preparatory and public process took a year and a half.

During a visit to Ottawa in January 2016, China’s vice-minister of financial and economic affairs, Han Jun, said China saw what he called “a rare historical opportunity” to negotiate a free trade agreement with Canada during Trudeau’s term. Han stressed that China needed Canadian agricultural produce and energy but that China would come “with demands of its own.” It wanted the Harper government’s restrictions on Chinese state-owned investment in Canada’s oil and gas sector removed and a commitment to build a pipeline to the West Coast to furnish petroleum products to the Chinese market.

A year later, China’s new ambassador to Canada, Lu Shaye, told the press that Beijing is “seeking unfettered access for Chinese state-owned firms to all key sectors of the Canadian economy.” He repeated Han’s demand that this include an end to investment restrictions. Lu concluded that China has no interest in talking about human rights or democracy: “We don’t want one side to use democracy or human rights as a bargaining chip to make the other side compromise.” These messages are not the way to change Canadian public opinion.

Canada and China began exploratory free trade talks in Beijing in February. Just before the second round began in Ottawa in April, China’s Ottawa envoy urged their quick conclusion. The government seems to agree to a two-year time frame. Finance Minister Bill Morneau said the government wants to “demonstrate progress in our first mandate” with a need to bring “urgency” to the discussions. At the same time, International Trade Minister François-Philippe Champagne announced “exciting news” regarding commercial relations with China. As part of the government’s “progressive trade agenda”, he encouraged Canadians to provide the government with their ideas on how it should proceed in Canada’s best interest. He said ideas can be provided in a variety of ways: via the departmental website, in person, at an event or by mail.

This approach contrasts with the start of the Canada-EU process where both sides began by publicly releasing a joint study and then a bilateral scoping exercise which outlined the opportunities that liberalized trade would bring for both sides. The joint study examined questions that citizens on both sides of the Atlantic needed to know: the impact of removing barriers, labour mobility, government procurement, electronic commerce, energy, environment and employment, and social affairs, to name a few.

In 2011, of its own accord, the EU published a sustainability impact assessment on CETA examining the potential impacts of trade liberalization under the agreement. All of these issues were subsequently included in the final CETA text. The parties also agreed to facilitate the establishment of a joint civil society forum.

There is no doubt that the negotiations took more time than expected, and yes, there was opposition to signature on the streets of some EU countries and even in legislatures. Opponents focused on possible job losses and fear that multinationals would use CETA to undermine how governments regulate, particularly regarding the environment and labour. EU and Canadian leaders could point to a transparently negotiated agreement which already included provisions on the subjects of concern. The parties amended the investor-state provisions (those drawn from the NAFTA text) to make those provisions more compatible with domestic legal practice. The groundwork that Canada and the EU had done at the start of the negotiations more than paid off in the end.

Second, Canada and the EU included human rights as part of their trade liberalization. Since 1995, the EU has had the policy of including or incorporating commitments to democratic principles and human rights in trade agreements between the EU and third countries. This EU requirement initially caused Canada some consternation. After all, Canada has been a democratic state under the rule of law for longer than a majority of EU members. Nevertheless, the EU prevailed — how can we negotiate trade agreements around the world, and now our first with a developed non-European country, they asked, and ignore human rights? What would that tell the others? Canada agreed. Article 2 of the overlooked Canada-EU Strategic-Partnership Agreement accompanying CETA is entitled “Upholding and Advancing Democratic Principles, Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.” This 41-page agreement reaffirms the parties’ undertakings for furthering international peace and security and the rule of law. Canada and the EU agreed to consult on their adherence to, and implementation of, all articles under the oversight of a new joint ministerial committee. With CETA as the blueprint for Canada’s future trade agreements, it no longer seems possible to overlook human rights.

Both Canada and the European Union call CETA the “gold standard” of trade liberalization. How it was put into place, and the public acceptance it enjoys, is something that Canada can mine in dealing with China.

Bob Hage was a Canadian diplomat for 38 years, most notably as Canada’s ambassador to Hungary and Slovenia. He is now a fellow with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.
Canadian relations with Russia have just gotten a lot more interesting. On the one hand, Canada, Russia and six of their Arctic neighbours have just completed a successful ministerial meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska, during which there were some very notable achievements for international Arctic cooperation. But at the same time, Canada is preparing to send troops to the Baltics in a bid to deter Russian aggression in the region. In the week leading up to the Fairbanks meeting, Russia announced that it plans to have a large-scale exercise — Zapad — of over 100,000 troops near the Baltic border in September. Third, and perhaps most troubling, there is growing concern that the Russians are actively attempting to hurt the democratic processes of Canada’s most important ally and trading partner — the United States — and they appear to have been quite successful. In short, Canada now has its hands full responding to this growing complexity in the relationship.

For those unfamiliar with Arctic issues, the Arctic Council is the predominant international body that brings together the eight main Arctic states — Canada, the U.S., Russia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Denmark for Greenland, as well as six northern indigenous organizations known as Permanent Participants, plus an ever-increasing number of observers. Every two years senior government officials, along with the Permanent Participant leaders, meet to agree on the work that has been conducted since the last ministerial meeting. Recently, these meetings have approved international agreements pertaining to the Arctic. This year’s meeting in Fairbanks was no different. Among a number of new cooperative arrangements, the members agreed to a treaty improving international scientific co-operation. As a result, there were a number of pictures of Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov smiling and congratulating each other for being able to co-operate so well in the Arctic.

... while Freeland and Lavrov were shaking hands and smiling ... both were also moving to deploy military forces against each other.

(Continued on page 11)
While Russia was indeed playing nice with its Arctic neighbours at this meeting, it has also been playing a very different game from a military perspective. It has continued to build up its military forces in the region and is increasingly using them to try to influence and intimidate its neighbours. Just prior to the Fairbanks meeting, Russia resumed its long-range bomber patrols up to Canadian and American Arctic airspace. Canada's three Baltic allies have become increasingly worried about Russian behaviour on their borders; they have requested and received increased NATO forces to be stationed in their countries. Canada has also agreed to send troops to reassure our allies and to deter the Russians. So, while Freeland and Lavrov were shaking hands and smiling at each other in Fairbanks, both were also moving to deploy military forces against each other.

What is particularly jarring for Canadians about the smiles and handshakes in Fairbanks is that they hide a much more sinister reality. Evidence is mounting that the Russians have been involved in attempting to influence the recent American election. While it has not been proven that they were involved, it is becoming clearer that they favoured a Donald Trump victory. And what a victory it has been! It is probably safe to say that Trump's actions are now exceeding whatever the Russians had been hoping for. Trump's recent release of classified information to the Russians and his alleged efforts to stop the FBI investigation all point to a mounting crisis in the American political system.

So, one has to wonder what Freeland was really thinking as she congratulated both the Americans and Russians on agreeing to the new Arctic Council pact on international scientific co-operation on May 12. It is clear that our relationship with the Russians is developing a dangerous complexity that means if we get it wrong, there will be serious ramifications for our security. Let's hope that the current Canadian government understands this.

Rob Huebert is a Canadian Global Affairs Institute fellow and renowned Canadian expert on Arctic defence and security policy. He is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Calgary and a senior research fellow with the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies.

Source: Department of National Defence/The Canadian Press
The government has decided to postpone the unveiling of its defence policy review until after the NATO meeting in Brussels, which is being held later this month. This will be President Donald Trump’s first visit to NATO Headquarters and allies will be looking for signals that he is committed to transatlantic security. In the past, Trump had indicated that NATO was obsolete but later changed his position, emphasizing the role in counterterrorism in particular. NATO’s other big priority is deterrence, a word most Canadians had relinquished to Cold War history.

While the concept is familiar, the hybrid conflict environment that has emerged on NATO’s eastern flank presents new challenges. What does this mean for Canada?

Deterrence made a comeback in 2014, following Russia’s annexation of Crimea, and was featured prominently in the NATO Communiqués during the Wales and Warsaw summits. Canada has been especially supportive of NATO deterrence by offering a sizable commitment to support Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), which is the deployment of four battlegroups (about 4,000 troops) to Poland and the Baltics. Canada will be leading one of the battlegroups, as a Framework Nation, alongside the U.S., Germany and the U.K. The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) have begun to send equipment over to Latvia in preparation for their June deployment. Hundreds of CAF members will be stationed in Ādaži as part of Operation Reassurance, Canada’s contribution to EFP. But what does that mean in practical terms?

Deterrence is supported by a combination of nuclear, conventional and missile defence capabilities. EFP is strengthening NATO’s conventional posture by stationing a multinational contingent close to Russia. This is meant to discourage Moscow from considering an attack on any of the Baltic states or Poland, countries that have all expressed a growing sense of insecurity since 2014. This is worth highlighting because deterrence is also about reassuring allies about the credibility of the collective defence arrangements enshrined in NATO. EFP thus serves both deterrence and reassurance functions. So far, this is not all that different from the Cold War.

(Continued on page 13)
What is new is that the multinational battalions would not be enough to defend against a full-scale Russian attack. A previous RAND study noted that at least seven brigades (up to 28,000 troops) and Air Force personnel would be needed for this. However, the ability to defend is not necessary to deter. Even if modest, the mere presence of NATO troops changes Moscow’s calculus when contemplating any subversive action to “protect” Russian-speaking populations in the Baltics. EFP prevents a limited fait accompli in the Baltics and complicates the equation for President Vladimir Putin. At the present time, it seems unlikely that Russian forces would attempt to run NATO troops over and trigger an all-out war. So beyond acting as a tripwire force, what are we asking the NATO battlegroups to do?

First, these multinational forces will be enhancing defence co-operation with the countries in which they are stationed. In Latvia, for example, the armed forces are composed of about 5,000 military personnel and will certainly benefit from having new training and capacity-building opportunities. Second, this deployment will reinforce interoperability among the deployed NATO troops. Canada is leading a battlegroup which includes Albania, Italy, Poland, Slovenia and Spain. Co-ordinating the activities of five nations under the NATO flag may not be as straightforward as imagined, as previous coalition operations have shown. Finally, NATO troops will have to gain force acceptance, meaning that the local population must view their long-term presence favourably. In Latvia, Canada will have to build this support through constant engagement at the political and military levels. Even if Latvia is a NATO ally, the population’s support for the presence of foreign troops on their soil might fluctuate over time, especially among ethnic Russians or Russian-speaking communities. Moscow will try to undermine this support at every turn.

Co-ordinating the activities of five nations under the NATO flag may not be as straightforward as imagined.

Stéfanie von Hlatky is the Director of the Centre for International and Defence Policy at Queen’s University and a fellow with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.
The Department of National Defence once again seems set to release its long-overdue Defence Policy Review (DPR). A number of recent moves by the Canadian foreign policy establishment indicate that the Defence Policy Review may be somewhat underwhelming. The release of the budget earlier this year without any major allocations or shifts for defence priorities is the biggest clue that the DPR is not likely to be earth-shattering. Also significant is that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has made it clear that he is waiting to take cues from the United States. Shuffling the cabinet was proactive, but this administration has otherwise chosen to wait for President Donald Trump's first moves.

The DPR delay seems consistent with this wait-and-see foreign policy posture. From an American perspective, Canada is ceding a lot of territory in the defence and foreign policy space by hesitating in this way. Giving up the first mover advantage is not likely to yield the best policy outcomes for either country, for two major reasons.

First, President Trump is not likely to articulate a clear policy for Canada to react to, especially in the defence policy arena. As we have seen with his treatment of NATO thus far, the message will be muddled. Trump may make strong statements, but the actions of the rest of his cabinet — those who will execute American foreign policy — indicate that the actual take-away might be subtler. To be sure, every American administration wants to see Canada (and the rest of NATO) meet its obligation to put two per cent of GDP toward defence spending. But we are all still trying to figure out exactly how the Trump administration intends to hold the line on this matter. Clarity does not appear to be forthcoming.

Second, the Trump administration is not staffed to address Canadian defence priorities, and will not be any time soon. This past week, the U.S. Senate confirmed the second political appointee (after Secretary James Mattis) to the Department of Defense. There are dozens of these positions, and very few of them have been nominated, let alone scheduled for hearings on Capitol Hill. It will take many months for the administration to fully staff up. Even once the new leadership is in place, it will take another few months for them to get up to speed. Near-crisis priorities such as Russia, North Korea and Syria are likely to take their immediate attention. Matters of priority for Canada are not going to be front of mind, without
some deliberate action on Canada’s part, or without some truly disastrous cross-border crisis.

...election in the U.S. did not fundamentally change what is right for Canada in the defence arena.

In fairness, Trump’s election was disruptive to the global foreign policy establishment. But his election in the U.S. did not fundamentally change what is right for Canada in the defence arena. The two countries remain inextricably intertwined, and the relationship will transcend individual personalities. Canada’s commitments to NORAD, NATO and peacekeeping priorities, just to name a few, should not change depending on the leadership to the south.

American observers will be looking to see if the DPR signals any first moves on Canada’s part, i.e., whether there is any fundamental change in how Canada views its relationship with its partners and its bilateral or global obligations. From the American perspective especially, a procurement plan is not a defence strategy, nor does a shift in buying priorities establish a defence policy. American policy-makers will be looking instead to see whether Canada has broader principles in mind, including an articulation of how Canada sees its role in the world. Canada should not be shy about making such statements.

If the status quo is acceptable, or even desirable, then it does not make sense to make the first move. The status quo is likely to endure for now. But if there’s anything in particular that Canada wants to see come out of its relationship with the U.S. or the world, it might be time to take the first step.

Lindsay Rodman is a former Obama administration appointee in the U.S. Defense Department and White House National Security Council official. She now resides in Ottawa and is a fellow with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.
The long-awaited Defence Policy Review (DPR) has been delayed again. So, rather than addressing the review itself, I’d like to consider whether the delays are problematic. This government has established a reputation for being slow especially when it comes to defence decisions, whether that is agreeing to be a framework nation for the NATO mission in the Baltics, figuring out where Canada will send peacekeepers, or, yes, putting out the DPR. Whether the government is dithering or being diligent and deliberate is not entirely in the eye of the beholder, as delays can have consequences.

To be fair, the previous government also delayed on defence issues. It did not have to punt the F-35 decision past the 2015 election, but chose to do so. The delays in the shipbuilding program today are, of course, a product of delays from the previous government. So, this is not just a Liberal thing. However, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s preference for cabinet-government is a factor as decisions will often require several meetings of a group that does not meet that often. And, yes, some decisions get deferred because they are hard ones.

A tour of delayed decisions illustrates that not all delays are costly, but some are problematic whether the causes are confusion, deliberation or fear of consequences. First, the DPR is late (as of the time this is being written in mid-May). Of all of the delays, this is probably least consequential. Important decisions have been made before and during the DPR process, so the delay of the document’s release is not inhibiting government decision-making. Minister of National Defence Harjit Sajjan promised not to cut personnel or close military bases even before the review was underway. The interim fighter plane purchase occurred at about the same time the various roundtables were meeting last summer. So, holding up the DPR has minor costs, as long as we consider pundit inconvenience as relatively minor.

Second, last spring, a relatively easy decision seemed to take more time than it should: whether to be the fourth country agreeing to be a leader in the NATO mission in the Baltics. Once France dropped out, Canada quickly

(Continued on page 17)
became the obvious choice, yet Canada did not announce a decision until a few days before the Warsaw Summit. The decision was made, so why should anyone care? Dithering meant that Canada got the last available choices — of places and of partners. The word is that Latvia, where Canada is deploying troops this summer, is the least prepared for a NATO presence. Latvia does not have the infrastructure needed to host the Canadian troops, and it does not have a good understanding of how NATO things work. I have been told that the Latvians expected Canada to be under Latvian command, and that is not how NATO works. Working this out has probably taken time, which might explain why Canada is showing up in the Baltics after the other three leaders (U.S., Germany and U.K.). By going last, Canada also got, sorry to say this, the weakest partners. Canada is going into Latvia with Italy and Spain, two of the larger countries in NATO, but neither one was particularly helpful in Afghanistan. Canada’s other partners are Albania, Croatia, Poland and Slovenia. Canada has no experience working with any of these countries, which means that it will take a while for the relationships to develop and for trust to be built. Maybe Canada could have gotten the Dutch or the Danes had Canada’s diplomats moved quickly; maybe not. But by moving slowly, Canada lost any chance to work with the most reliable NATO members.

Third, the vaunted peace operation that has been a central campaign promise has not yet been chosen. A lot of work has been done, but we still do not know where Canada is going. Certainly, any major operation in Africa would be risky, as none of the peace operations are traditional missions where the troops would separate combatants. All are complex, multidimensional and the combatants may target outside forces deliberately à la the Belgians in Rwanda. Do delays matter? It looks like Canada lost an opportunity to take the lead of a UN mission. While doing a peace operation is one key Liberal promise, trying to win a UN Security Council seat is another promise, and leaving the UN hanging is probably not going to help.

This government came in facing four summits in its first month and the Liberals had been out of power since 2006. So, it is understandable that it has taken a while to figure out how to make decisions. However, we are now more than a year and a half in, so we should be expecting that the Liberals do better. Deliberation in a difficult world makes sense, but sometimes it means paying a higher price or having one’s choices reduced to less attractive options.

Stephen Saideman holds the Paterson Chair in International Affairs at Carleton University’s Norman Paterson School of International Affairs and is a fellow with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.
In any democracy, where government has a measure of accountability, but security and intelligence officials require some confidentiality in protecting the country’s security, cyber-attacks from foreign, state, state proxy or non-state actors present a difficult challenge. This challenge is not made easier by the tendency of the press — wishing to alert the public to danger, and for the less admirable reason of fascination with new and glittery things — to sometimes overstate the importance of some cyber-attacks that are rarely existential in impact.

The broadly held view that all of industry, the economy, government, the military and the very future of civilization itself are utterly dependent upon the digital octopus, does not help. Ubiquitous use of hand-held smartphones, which have more computing power than early space capsules, only adds to the mix of both complacent reliance on these devices and sharp outbreaks of hysteria when some system is corrupted or hacked.

A number of developments have contributed to a broad sense of angst and fear. Among them are President Donald Trump’s recent executive order to upgrade the U.S. government’s cyber-defences, and assertions in Canada by private sector American cyber-defence branch plants that Canadian companies face exploding cyber-attack threats. There were also statements by CSIS in November 2016 that Russia and China are out to steal Canada’s most important secrets and a mandate letter for a new minister of democratic reform to “lead the government of Canada’s efforts to defend the Canadian electoral process from cyber-threats …”

Recent events do not encourage faith in the capacity of any Canadian government to get the defence of our cyber-networks right. These events include the Phoenix payroll system failure, the dither-path on fighter aircraft procurement and naval construction, and the frequent discussion of cyber-attacks having had variable but not inconsequential impact on systems at the Canada Revenue Agency, the National Research Council and elsewhere.

However, the horizon is not totally dark. It is now publicly asserted that Canada’s NATO deployment to Latvia is attuned to and preparing for Russian cyber-forces’ likely deployment of a series of hacking schemes to disrupt digital communications among NATO forces, and create false narratives and “disinformatsia” on social media so as to portray Canadian and other NATO troops in the most
disreputable way possible. As part of the lead-up to substantive China-Canada trade talks, cyber-security is on Canada’s agenda just as it was when both the U.S. and the U.K. concluded cyber-non-aggression pacts with China recently. It is one of the joys of modern diplomacy that the Chinese can conclude agreements not to continue doing what they have always denied doing in the first place. Canada has also announced and put into place a national cyber-security strategy which CSIS, the Communications Security Establishment and Public Safety Canada are advancing and deepening. By focusing on securing government systems, partnering with the private sector to secure Canadian cyber-systems outside of government, and promoting rational rules of the road for Canadians to be more secure online, the strategy seems grounded if not spectacular.

One of the challenges for government and the private sector should be familiar to military and intelligence planners and practitioners: One needs to say enough to sustain one’s own forces’ confidence and deter the enemy, without revealing the precise mix of technologies, strategies, intelligence and security options available to deter or attack the putative predators, be they military, private profit-seeking, terrorists or simply interested in intimidation.

There is a short set of operating principles that if adopted by Parliament and the Canadian government would not only enhance public understanding of the genuine nature of the risk, but increase the anticipatory, intelligence and preventive capacity of our private and public sectors in the cyber-combat world:

1. Perspective:

   Beyond the actual damage cyber-attacks can do to critical military, civilian and information infrastructure, the enhanced impact of wildly overstated reports of the actual risks and damage done should not only be discouraged but quickly countervailed. As in the case of terrorist events that are rarely existential in threat or impact, wild overstatement of the import or impact can add to the damage done in terms of the most essential component of open markets and democratic societies — public confidence and trust.

2. Capacity:

   While Canadian government and private sector cyber-capacities to defend, repel, adjust and engage are not unimpressive, complacency is unconstructive. Partners like Israel in both the public and private sector, and the Munk School of Global Affairs’ Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto, have depth, acuity, flexibility and talent banks that are truly impressive. As Israel faces existential threats in its neighbourhood that exceed ours, and the Citizen Lab is strictly independent and works for no government or corporation, Canadian government officials would do well to reflect on ensuring we have comparable or better analytical and instrumental capacity in the agencies tasked with civilian and strategic cyber-defence.

3. Flexibility:

   A cyber-trained intelligence operative in a Canadian military role, seeking to take his or her skills to another government department with cyber-security or intelligence mission priorities, will face unconscionable delays as existing security clearances are started all over again at great cost of resources and time. This not only diminishes cyber-security and intelligence, but discourages outstanding and experienced talent. Canada can afford to do neither.

4. Democratic Oversight:

   Cyber-attacks entail the theft of corporate data and private research depth and the dilution of operational capacity or the destruction of communications infrastructure, but their net purpose is really the destruction of public confidence, trust and belief in the legitimacy and value of our core data sets. This is about destroying democracy. Our defences against these threats must not be anti-democratic themselves. That is why the proposals of Bill C-22, the government’s version of legitimate democratic oversight for security and national intelligence services, plans, activities, operations and strategies, while not perfect, is so vital. Alone among the main NATO countries, Canada has no such link between democracy and the forces mandated to its protection. Regular legislative review, in camera or otherwise, would go a long way to ensuring a core accountability and broad support for those working hard on the cyber-security file in the military and public service frame, as well as a broader understanding of what challenges they face.

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Europe and its citizens find themselves in the midst of a radical right-wing vortex that has been sweeping across the European continent. Called on to withstand these political forces in the May 7 presidential run-off, French voters refused to succumb to the unwavering radical right-wing rhetoric of Marine Le Pen by casting a vote for a fairly new figure within political circles - Emmanuel Macron. In his victory speech, Macron mesmerized his supporters by his stage demeanor and eloquent disposition while expressing his gratitude to them for having engaged in a courageous fight. As he underscored the significance of his presidential victory by his assertive proclamation - “France won” - one is left wondering: can we say the same for others who are still fighting a similar fight in Europe? The answer is rather daunting given the surge in right-wing radicalism in recent years.

While France has barely escaped falling into the trap of the far right this time, the right-wing radicals’ allure will not fade anytime soon. There are several factors that can drive voters into the niche of the far right which has become fueled with opportunities to pass judgment on the prevalent issues in European politics. It is without doubt that the euroskeptic hard-liners are emboldened by Brexit as an example of what national independence looks like in the age of supranationalism and the push for ever so “wider and deeper” European Union (EU). Their outright rejection of the EU resonates with certain sectors of the electorate that have lost trust in the EU’s ability to address their needs and wants, and which sympathetically position themselves toward the declining EU favourability rates. The far-right parties feed off of, what they consider, weaknesses of the EU’s current state of affairs and utilize such as means of voter mobilization. However, in order to sustain themselves on the fringes of the political right, these parties are aware that running single-issue campaigns will not immerse them in the electoral fortunes they desire. Therefore, they continue to strategically re-position themselves by carving out spaces within, what they often deem, the EU sphere of influence.

The far-right parties weave their way through electoral politics by proposing, radical but often unsubstantiated, solutions to socio-economic and political problems. The rise in immigration, the surge in terrorist attacks across Europe, the continued uncertainty about proper protection of refugees arriving at European shores and years of EU austerity-driven measures, among others, are

(Continued on page 21)
complex and multi-dimensional issues. They deserve the EU’s and individual member states’ unreserved attention, but they are best addressed in a collaborative manner relying on the dynamics and diplomatic patterns that have been the basis of EU’s decision-making frameworks for decades. The far right’s euroskeptic tendencies, their blatant anti-immigration and anti-Islam stance, and their engagement in xenophobic discourse should be taken as a serious threat to the mere principles that underpin post-WWII European politics. Further attempts at anchoring divisions among different groups in their respective countries should not be passively ignored but electorally fought against.

There is a growing ideological shift in Europe as exemplified by the ever so expanding support base of the far-right parties and their affiliate groups.

While there might have been sighs of relief on both sides of the Atlantic with recent electoral defeats of Norbert Hofer in Austria, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, and Marine Le Pen in France, the fact that these parties managed to secure substantial electoral gains in national elections across Europe should serve as a wake-up call for European countries; many of which, up to this point, have largely sidelined the dangers that the far right poses to their countries and the EU as a whole. There is a growing ideological shift in Europe as exemplified by the ever so expanding support base of the far-right parties and their affiliate groups. By necessity, countries should feel a sense of urgency to better understand and address the underlying causes of the surge of right-wing radicalism in their own countries. We live in an age where it is no longer enough to dismiss them as mere nuisances of politics as there is no guarantee that history cannot repeat itself or be exploited for the sole purpose of the far right’s electoral success. What we ought to dismiss is the misled notion that countries can build an armor of immunity which cannot be pierced by the far right.

The future elections in Europe and the rest of the world will be a litmus test for the far right. They will also be a litmus test for the current course and dynamics of European and international politics. The far-right parties should not be allowed to slip under the radar but, if they do, the voters should remain vigilant for the mere reason that these parties possess the capability to stage a sudden come-back when we expect it the least. Thus, it is the duty of every voter to be informed and “not give in to fear” that these parties are trying to instill. They ought to be ready to protect the EU principles which ever so loudly echo the significance of the EU’s motto “United in Diversity”.

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