

Ignoring Tectonic Shifts

As the Asian world has risen, Canada has paid little attention

David M. Malone, Canadian Literary Review January-February 2019

Canada's population of Asian origin has been growing consistently since the early twentieth century, today exceeding fifteen percent of our overall populace and fast heading considerably higher. Yet modern Canada has remained resolutely trans-Atlantic in its orientation, with interest in the Pacific Ocean region and Asia modest and fitful for the majority of Canadians.



Image by Min Gyo Chung

While Asia's economic growth and, consequently, its economic and social development—powered by China and latterly India—has been little short of astounding over the past twenty-five to thirty years, a consequential number of robust middle powers has also emerged in the region.

South Korea, Indonesia, and Malaysia may lead the field statistically, but impressive niche players like Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan have each excelled in a

variety of ways, not least in higher education. Canadians are aware of, but not much moved by, these facts. This carries the risk that this country's international profile and its ability to support its interests will be reduced. Importantly, this is coming at a time of increased political tension between Canada and China.

The events that followed the arrest last December of a senior executive of the Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei seem to have taken the Canadian government by surprise, doubly so perhaps given its policy of seeking closer trade ties with China. The detainment of Meng Wanzhou, the daughter of Huawei's founder, was done on a request from the U.S. government, which is seeking to extradite her to face U.S. fraud charges. It came at a time when Ottawa is said to be considering some form of restrictions on Huawei's access to Canadian telecommunication networks.

At the time of writing these lines, no solution is apparent, and anxiety runs high. Nevertheless, such deeply worrying episodes generally are encouraged to a close through negotiation, often involving sympathetic third parties. These events, though, remind Canadians that we live in a suddenly much more unpredictable world, in which newly assertive governments tend to bump into others more frequently than in the past, with worrying consequences. Rhetoric is much less disciplined by diplomatic norms than was the case even in the recent past, as illustrated by a brief, vicious squall this past January between Turkey and the United States, NATO allies no less. This is a world all Canadians, myself included, must strain to understand better, not least because our economic model requires Canada to engage energetically not just in trade but also in various other forms of international exchange, and because so many of us travel and work abroad.

The United States has been the globe's dominant power for more than 100 years and, throughout most of those years, Canada's towering economic partner and mostly reliable friend. Its global reach expanded as a result of its military might but also as a result of its single-minded focus on the global interests of American companies. Until recently, an assumption that informed calculations lies at the root of most American decisions affecting other countries was well founded. However, that clearly is no longer the case, with knock-on consequences for Canada and the world.

Canadians are not alone in following Asian developments fitfully. The Western media generally tend to focus on the trans-Atlantic world (and, to a degree, on the Middle East), as has the scholarship of international relations and law, in spite of Asia's impressive recent rise. Consequently, the relationships of Asian countries among themselves and with Canada has received comparatively little academic attention, notwithstanding the fine work of a number of Canadian scholars; Brian Job and Paul Evans, both of the University of British Columbia, spring to mind. *Claws of the Panda: Beijing's Campaign of Influence and Intimidation in Canada*, a new book by Jonathan Manthorpe, a long-time Canadian columnist and foreign correspondent, may shed further light on China's strategies toward this country.

In the United States, the bitter conclusion of its calamitous military adventure in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s produced an amnesiac response to a distant Asian humiliation. Washington was long soothed by a number of bilateral alliances and staunch friendships in the region—such as Japan, South Korea, Australia, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines. But the United States now sees China as a global rival, and its traditional Asian friends are increasingly at risk of being drawn into Beijing's orbit. This shift in calculus toward wariness of China has been made by large

swathes of business and other leading sectors of U.S. life, not just by President Donald Trump. As well, Russia remains and is likely to remain a meaningful third military power and rival of the United States.

Asian friends of the United States remain nervous and are developing new international security and economic strategies of their own, in one of which Canada is a founding participant: the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (still widely known as TPP, its original name until the United States defected from it in early 2017). Meanwhile, China is working hard on its own international networks. Globally, weaker international economic performance since the 2007–08 economic crisis has reinforced geostrategic concerns of individual governments and regional formations, including in Asia, with many Asian countries highly dependent on exports.

Statistics on Canada's international economic relations tell a fairly clear story with respect to Asia. Canadian foreign investment directs itself to familiar markets that seem reassuring to Bay Street executives: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, and other traditional markets dominate (as do, interestingly, notorious Caribbean and European tax havens). Any entrepreneur open to risk might argue that the economically fastest-rising continent—Asia—might be worth a growing share of investment portfolios. Canadian entrepreneurs have tested those waters and remain invested in China in modest proportions. But beyond Japan, Australia, and (to a lesser degree) China, Canadian investment in the region might charitably be described as apathetic. Canadian investment in India is only twelve percent of that in China and Hong Kong combined. While India has often been woefully unwelcoming to foreign investment and remains prone to politically driven economic policy decision-making, this figure is surprising. Indian companies for their part require little encouragement to invest in Canada as a bridge into the U.S. market.

Canadian trade with Asia reflects a somewhat different trend than investment, with China well out in front, followed by Japan and South Korea as our biggest partners in the region. But on trade, despite repeated, high-profile trade missions, Canada runs a threefold deficit with China, produced by anemic exports and a large tide of imports. With Japan and South Korea, the deficits are high, though less striking. Each of East Asia's economic powers has long cleaved to postwar Japan's model of export-driven growth and has excelled at it. Canada is, to each of them, a secondary and modestly scaled, safe international market.

On some other fronts, different patterns emerge. Immigration, which Canada requires to keep its own flat demographic trends in modest growth mode, today hails overwhelmingly from Asia, at fifty-four percent of the total figure in 2017. For industrialized countries, Canada is a niche proposition as a migration prospect, often linked to university studies or driven by political and economic instability at home.

Canadian universities, increasingly pressured by their hybrid business models and limited government support, seem more entrepreneurial than Bay Street. They are touting aggressively, and successfully, for international business, with political dysfunction and increasingly astronomical tuition charges in the United States thereby making Canada an evermore attractive destination for Asian students. In 2017, Indians topped Canada's foreign student charts, followed by Chinese and Korean students, but pretty well every Asian country of any size is now represented on Canadian campuses.

The international outlook of most countries is shaped by history, geography, and capability. In Asia, the burden of history seems particularly strong. For example, divergent interpretations of events leading up to and during the Second World War bedevil relationships among Japan, China, and Korea, and continue to rankle in each today. Colonial and post-colonial grievances are nursed and rehearsed constantly, much more so than within the West.

The United States was created with apprehension of “foreign entanglements,” as articulated by George Washington. Nevertheless, it soon adopted the Monroe doctrine establishing the Americas as a sphere of its own influence. Relative to Asia, the United States took over the Hawaiian islands in 1898 (they attained full statehood only in 1959). Washington’s ill-fated colonial adventure in the Philippines, starting with a U.S. military government that same year, thereafter taking a variety of forms and ending definitively only in 1946, produced few happy memories. Vietnam left the Americans shattered domestically.

The United States, ever with trade on its mind, had stakes in the opening of China to commerce in the nineteenth century and forced Japan to open itself to foreign trade in the 1850s. But Japan then turned from isolation to dreams of economic and territorial colonization, soon inflicting both on Korea and Manchuria, and eventually spawning a perverse logic that required it to attack Pearl Harbor in 1941, which, given Tokyo’s aversion to surrender, led inexorably to America’s nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Japan benefited from a relatively benign U.S. occupation after the Second World War, which was aimed at setting it back on its feet and at constraining its ability to make war through a new constitution and strong economic links to the United States. After the Korean War (1950–53), in which Canadian troops also fought, the United States left behind significant military forces in Japan, some of which remain, in part as a deterrent and also as an early response mechanism vis-à-vis a resurgent China. Japan, meanwhile, reinvented itself as an industrial power that emerged as the principal global trading rival to the United States by 1980.

Japan’s export-oriented economic strategy (soon mimicked in turn by Taiwan, South Korea, several countries of Southeast Asia, and, of course, China), was short-lived. In the mid-1980s the United States forced an exchange rate realignment, thus bursting Japan’s stock market and real estate bubbles. Arguably, it has never fully recovered, with demographic decline further clouding its socio-economic prospects, leaving the path open in Asia for dominance by a then-low-key but economically fast-expanding China. Today, by some measures, India is overtaking Japan as Asia’s second largest economy after China.

The end of the Cold War in the 1990s brought about a retrenchment of the formidable U.S. capacity to wage war. A view took hold that no serious threat to U.S. security existed anymore.

In particular, Washington perceived no credible threats to its power along the Pacific Rim. Deng Xiaoping’s economic policies after 1979 were to pay off spectacularly for China, but this was not widely predicted in the early 1990s; his injunction to colleagues to maintain a low profile proved remarkably effective. China focused on economic growth, and succeeded brilliantly such that, by 2010 or so, it had emerged as second only to the United States in economic capacity. Meanwhile, the United States

exhausted itself militarily and economically in Iraq and Afghanistan after the terrorist shock of 9/11, increasing the anxiety of its electorate.

President Barack Obama's effort to re-engage Asia was heralded in "America's Pacific century," a 2011 widely cited article by then-secretary of state Hillary Clinton, which mentioned a "pivot" toward the region. Her arguments were primarily economic. She cited China, India, and the United States as the "three giants of the Asia-Pacific." She claimed that Asia's impressive economic growth had been "long guaranteed by the U.S. military" before mentioning some (rather modest) new U.S. naval and military deployments to the region. This, and negotiations aiming at a trans-Pacific trade partnership, were the cornerstones of the Obama administration's rebalance toward the Pacific—never a particularly convincing enterprise, given its modest scope.

In retrospect, Obama's approach to Asia was flawed. The "pivot" was perceived as undiplomatic, the "re-balancing" as bland, and the security-related measures accompanying them as unambitious. TPP negotiations were allowed to drag on too long as Washington and Japan argued over mutual concessions. The delay turned out to have killed any prospect of ratification by the U.S. Senate after the agreement fell hostage to the presidential and congressional elections of 2016. And in January 2017, President Trump withdrew the country from TPP, creating a strong sense that allies and friends were no longer valued.

The president's chaotic initiative to engage North Korea's Kim Jong Un in 2018 created some optimism in South Korea, but disquiet elsewhere, notably in Japan and perhaps also in China. In the face of Washington's unpredictable policy, these two latter countries made serious efforts in 2018 to reconcile with each other.

The Trump administration has not made it a priority to recalibrate progressively its economic relations with China, instead reinforcing threats with tariffs. A brief ceasefire between Washington and Beijing announced following the December 2018 G20 meeting in Buenos Aires may or may not lead to positive substantive results in the bilateral relationship, but a return to the status quo ante seems unlikely.

Some of Washington's policies have sideswiped India, which is puzzling since it is Washington's best bet as a potential ally of some geostrategic heft in Asia. As of now, it's hard to see whether the Indo-Pacific concept touted by Washington and the so-called Quad (consisting of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States) favoured by policy circles inside the Beltway, will develop any traction, particularly in the absence of greater policy coherence.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership, minus U.S. participation, went ahead under Japanese leadership with eleven of its twelve original negotiating partners signing a revised pact in 2018, signalling that traditional U.S. allies in the Asia-Pacific maintain the capacity for a degree of strategic autonomy. Nevertheless, many capitals in Asia will be attracted to joining one or several of China's flagship regional or global initiatives as well. The so-called "one belt, one road" program, a set of infrastructure initiatives that aim to link various Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and Latin American countries more closely to China and potentially to each other, is so clearly China-centric and designed to China's advantage (and now increasingly controversial) that it will likely be less attractive to some countries than Beijing's more sophisticated initiatives such as the well-timed and well-managed Asian International Infrastructure Bank (which Canada, like most significant countries of Asia with the exception of Japan, has joined).

Perhaps most attractive now for several Asian signatories of the eleven-member TPP might be the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which superficially resembles TPP the most, although its actual substantive content is less ambitious. Expressed most positively, its attraction now arises from the fact that RCEP carries little geopolitical baggage. And geostrategically, TPP11 is now much undermined without the United States.

By late 2018, however, both the United States and China, for different reasons, were seen as “on the back foot” at a contentious Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting. Soothing U.S. discourse proffered by Vice-President Mike Pence during the meeting lacked credibility. Meanwhile, China increasingly wrestles with the unpopularity locally of its pattern of deploying Chinese labour to implement its infrastructure initiatives abroad, an issue not just in Asia but also in Africa. And then there is the so-called debt trap that China’s related lending can create for weaker countries, which was much in the news throughout 2018. Embarrassing (if possibly temporary) political setbacks for its political friends in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and the Maldives point to choppier waters than Beijing may have anticipated.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which first met in 1967 as a grouping of five countries close to the United States, has since expanded to include five more nations. None can afford to alienate China, and, until recently, none has wished to offend the United States. Might it be able to provide a geostrategic bridge between these two global rivals? ASEAN displays real limitations, not least the absence of the necessary political clout to lead its continent or deter from its preferred course any of the world’s geostrategically meaningful powers, even within its own region. But the ASEAN region, now centred on Indonesia, is also the geostrategic linchpin of Asia.

Playing catch-up due to its electoral choices, Washington will now strain to exercise the power and presence necessary to balance Beijing in Southeast Asia. The TPP was designed, in large part, to contain China’s ability to evade the rules of the existing global order (largely dictated by the West since the end of the Cold War) or to set its own rules. Washington, having rashly abandoned that strategy, now finds itself scrambling in Asia and has little to show as a result.

Even fifteen years ago, South Asia might have been left aside in any discussion of geostrategically vital regions of the continent. Because of India’s rise, but also its repositioning as more open to partnership with the United States, this is no longer the case. Nehru-era non-alignment is no longer the principal driver of India’s foreign policy. Now, defence of its economic and security interests in a more predatory world encourages a diplomacy that bobs and weaves, much as ASEAN’s has but with more weight.

Very few of these tectonic shifts have aroused much interest in Canada. Seemingly in part to accommodate its NAFTA renegotiation strategy, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau threw a last-minute spanner into what had been expected to be the signature of TPP11 during a summit meeting in December 2017, somewhat bruising ties with Shinzo Abe, Japan’s internationally prominent prime minister. Eventually, Canada signed on.

Trudeau is covered in the Asian media as a rock star among the contemporary crop of rather grey and uncharismatic world leaders, but this relates more to looks and style than to substance. Canada’s current foreign policy, which focuses on women’s empowerment and the fight against climate change could be a bit more popular in Asia if it was better known. Overall, Canada remains firmly over the horizon, seen as a

potential country of refuge, driven by honourable values in a time of knavish geostrategic manoeuvring, but hardly a full Pacific Rim or Asian actor of weight with a discernable strategy focused on the region as a whole. In this, it is a far cry from Australia, which engages energetically with Asia, in spite of Canberra's embarrassingly colourful domestic politics, recently tinged by nativism and sometimes racism.

No serious Asian student of international relations would fault Canada for focusing on relations with the United States *über alles* and for subordinating other foreign policy priorities to the goal of protecting its cross-border economic interests. But its indifference to Asia does surprise. Further, any observer of the White House would conclude that a foreign policy focused on the United States, no matter how intelligently and energetically conducted—and Canada is seen internationally as having done well so far on that front—is any longer sufficient.

Recent developments affecting Canada-China relations are a reminder that either Washington or Beijing can take Canada hostage whenever it suits their designs. During the distressing crisis this winter involving Canadian detainees in China, Ottawa looked fairly powerless globally. We were largely ignored by both major powers involved, although some modulated bleats of support from other NATO allies and Australia soon surfaced. Might Canada want to dust off and adapt Pierre Trudeau's "third option" ideas on foreign policy, notably his advocacy of diversifying our meaningful partnerships? One bright spot: the energy and focus Chrystia Freeland has brought to bear, as Canada's foreign minister and chief negotiator with Washington on trade, has caught the international eye, not least due to the comedown of her Saudi antagonists in recent months.

But it makes little sense to moan only about government.

Where is Bay Street in this equation? Traders depend on funders—but Canadian banks are notoriously risk-averse. This can and should evolve.

Where are the Canadian philanthropists who might endow valuable bridges to international knowledge? Jim Balsillie set an example with the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and the Balsillie School of International Affairs, linked to CIGI and the two Waterloo-based universities; as did Mike Lazaridis, Balsillie's erstwhile co-CEO at BlackBerry, with the internationally renowned Perimeter Institute of Theoretical Physics.

Where is the Canadian philanthropist willing to vie or partner with Stephen Schwarzman and his expensive, impressive Schwarzman scholars and college project, centred at Tsinghua University in Beijing? The very useful Asia-Pacific Institute, brainchild of former senator Jack Austin, is too lonely an outpost in Vancouver as a window onto the Far East and the Pacific.

Where are the exciting new ideas from Canadians on how Canada's aid strategies—including its research funding arm, the enviable International Development Research Centre—can create ambitious new waves of programming that will launch a new generation of substantive bridges to Asia?

As citizens and institutional actors across Canada, we can and should do better on all these fronts, offering the government, business, education, and other relevant sectors of our national scene specific projects to champion for the Asia-Pacific region.

Until Canada gets more serious about Asia, overcoming its instinct to indulge mainly in "safe" strategies involving the U.S. and Europe, and largely normative (if admirable) human rights, gender, and environmental issues at the global level, it sells

short the country's potential. The risk of continuing lack of focus on Asia is that Canada's international profile will wither as the West's relative importance declines, and that Canada's capacity to contend in support of its interests in a more turbulent, diverse, and fractious range of nations will erode.

Can Trump get USMCA through Congress? Canada should wait and see

Colin Robertson

The Globe and Mail, March 26, 2019

Can President Donald Trump do a deal with Congress on the new North American trade pact? The Trump administration will pressure Canada and Mexico to move on USMCA, but let's wait and see if Mr. Trump can deliver Congress.

Trade accords are like plays in three acts. In the first act, the governments decide on their respective objectives and get formal – as required in the United States – or informal legislative approval. The second act is the negotiation, with the ups and downs of the successive rounds and then the end-game gives and takes that, in the case of the United States-Mexico-Canada agreement culminated in the three leaders' signature last November.

Now comes the final act, USMCA's legislative implementation. It's no sure thing.

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and his team have been busy drafting legislation and briefing the House ways and means (where USMCA gets first consideration), and the Senate finance committees and their respective trade sub-committees. The **International Trade Commission's** required USMCA economic assessment, delayed by the government shutdown, will likely show marginal economic gains beyond the current trade deal, the North American free-trade agreement.

The Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) gives Congress **90 legislative days** to give USMCA up or down approval. Most Republicans will endorse the pact so Senate passage is likely. But passage won't be easy with various Democratic contenders for 2020 campaigning against Mr. Trump.

A blatantly Trump label on USMCA would likely doom it in a polarized Congress. Should Mr. Trump follow through on his threat to rescind NAFTA and tell the Democrat to take it or leave it, the Democrats may do just that, taking a page from the obstructionist GOP playbook during the Obama administration.

House passage will depend on Speaker Nancy Pelosi and fellow Democrat committee chairs Richard Neal of Massachusetts and Oregon's Earl Blumenauer and enough the 100-plus members in the centrist [New Democratic Coalition](#). The progressive wing of the Democrat caucus [wants changes](#). Can Mr. Lighthizer deliver enough of what members will want? Ironically, Mr. Lighthizer will point to the Canadian-inspired labour and environmental chapters with their enforcement provisions to secure Democrats' votes

As usual, there are [competing U.S. interests](#) lobbying for and against USMCA's passage. Canada and Mexico can play a supporting role in encouraging passage, but now it's an American debate.

There will be the hiccups. We need to be prepared to reopen the deal if the Democrats insist. As Speaker in 2008, Ms. Pelosi [upended](#) the TPA forcing changes to President George W. Bush's trade agreements with Peru, Colombia and Korea. And how would a U.S.-China deal affect passage Ms. Freeland rightly asks why are they applied against the US's closest ally?

Americans need to know, as Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland [said](#) this week, that passage of USMCA in Canada and Mexico will depend on them rescinding the steel and aluminum tariffs. Imposed under 'national security' provisions, Ms. Freeland rightly asks why are they applied against the US's closest ally? Economic [evidence](#) says that while steel profits may be up, these tariffs are [hurting Americans](#). The lumber tariffs [add \\$9000](#) to the construction of an American house.

For most of the House and Senate committee members, whether Democrat or Republican, Canada and Mexico are the main export markets for their districts or states. Our diplomats need to drive home this fact pointing out the jobs created by our trade and investment.

Our embassy has [state fact sheets](#) and the Business Council of Canada created a nifty district-level [map](#). Our legislators – federal and provincial, as well as business and labour – should draw on them in discussions with their counterparts. We can adjust our advocacy campaign, but we need to sustain its tempo.

Mexico needs to pass [labour reform](#) legislation. President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's party now controls both chambers in the Mexican Congress and it will likely happen. But not while the tariffs are in place and any U.S. pressure to pay for Mr. Trump's wall would back-fire.

Much of the new North American accord draws from the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership that were negotiated by both the Harper and Trudeau governments. Canada's fall election may intervene before parliamentarians consider the USMCA. Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer says he could have negotiated a [better deal](#). He may get the chance but, if so, what would he change?

Until Mr. Trump delivers, Canada and Mexico should hold their own ratification efforts. While we should encourage congressional passage, our efforts need to focus on rescinding the steel, aluminum and lumber tariffs. For now, it is up to Mr. Trump and Congress. Let's see him demonstrate his art of the deal.

What's at stake when restraints on nuclear powers go out the window?

Paul Meyer,

Open Canada, March 21, 2019

With disappearing restraints on the nuclear systems of Russia and the United States, the atmosphere at a recent nuclear policy conference in Washington was unsurprisingly a mix of gloom and dismay.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has hosted a major conference in Washington devoted to issues of nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament every two years since its inaugural gathering in 1989, drawing diplomats and security experts from around the world. This year's [version](#), which took place on March 11-12, had 800 attendees plus another 400 participating remotely (and, as the convenors proudly proclaimed, was the first to achieve full gender parity in terms of speakers and moderators.)

The conference provides an unrivalled platform for policy wonks to take the pulse of current strategic postures and programs. However, this year the pulse of arms control was hard to detect. The gloomy atmosphere reflected the mood of most participants. With a background of the withdrawal in February of the United States from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with Russia and the lack of any evident commitment to an extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which limits strategic nuclear systems and which expires in February 2021, it seems likely that the last remaining treaty restraints on the nuclear systems of these opposing powers will disappear.

Combine this with the failure at the February Hanoi Summit to conclude any agreement on North Korean denuclearization, the recent resumption of military clashes across the

Line of Control between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan, a major rift within the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) community and last year's US rejection of the Iran JCPOA nuclear deal; it is no wonder that pessimism on the future of cooperative security and nuclear restraint was pouring out faster than the coffee during the conference breaks.

One seasoned European diplomat described the situation as “worse than the Cold War,” with strategic dialogue suspended and nuclear powers moving away from pure deterrence postures and engaging again in arms racing (aka “modernization”) and sabre-rattling.

Having last attended the Carnegie conference in 2013, the contrast between the relatively upbeat mood under the Obama administration and the sense the arms control community now has of being under siege with the duo of Donald Trump and National Security Advisor John Bolton in the White House was striking. I came away with particular concerns over four areas: the breakdown of the US-Russian strategic relationship, the current impasse in denuclearization talks with North Korea, the bleak prospects for the NPT, and Canada's silence on the issues.

US-Russian relations

The breakdown of the bilateral strategic relationship between the two leading nuclear powers was a salient theme, with many participants urging a revival of the strategic stability talks that had been the vehicle for developing and sustaining the strategic arms control framework over decades.

The few Trump administration officials in attendance were of a different view — gamely suggesting that their policy line was the only correct one. A senior State Department speaker defended the US withdrawal from the INF Treaty as an exercise to “uphold standards” and was non-committal on an extension of New START, noting simply that an inter-agency dialogue was underway on this issue. A senior Department of Defense official from the Obama administration stressed that maintaining New START (and the verification and data exchange provisions that go with it) was very much in US interests. Former US Senator Sam Nunn, now the co-chair of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, decried that there seemed to be no political will in Washington to save the treaties.

“One seasoned European diplomat described the situation as ‘worse than the Cold War.’”

Russian Ambassador to the US Anatoly Antonov reiterated Russia's stance, saying that although the US claim of violation of the INF Treaty was a “fairy tale,” President Vladimir Putin had stated that Russia would not deploy ground-based missiles anywhere in the prohibited range unless the US had done so first. Antonov said that Russia would not get drawn into an expensive arms race with the US and dismissed allegations that Russia had adopted an “escalate to de-escalate” early use of nuclear weapons doctrine as “fake news” promoted by American interests behind development of “low-yield” warheads and new missile systems.

If these developments were not disturbing enough, a session on “Nuclear Command and Control Vulnerability” raised the spectre of cyber attacks on early warning or command and control (C2) systems which might prompt a “use it or lose it” reaction and put further pressure on crisis decision-making. A Chinese expert warned that when combined with shortened flight times of new hypersonic missiles and the conflation of conventional and nuclear systems the strategic situation was “more risky than ever before.”

Antonov and other Russian experts argued for a revival of the strategic stability talks for managing the increasingly complicated relationship. This call for resumed dialogue was supported by many participants who criticized the downgrading of diplomatic approaches to addressing the geopolitical tensions and sustaining strategic stability in favour of military buildups.

One supportive voice on the US side was Democratic Representative Adam Smith, the new chair of the House Armed Services Committee, who called for restarting the arms control process and re-opening strategic communication channels. He also suggested that the US can achieve nuclear deterrence with far fewer warheads. Echoing some of the concerns of the cyber experts, Smith said his priorities included securing nuclear command and control and developing US capacities for cyber and information warfare. He emphasized the need to work with allies rather than “badger them,” characterizing Trump’s “America First” posture as “a moronic foreign policy.”

The failed Hanoi Summit and the elusive goal of denuclearization

Steve Biegun, Trump’s Special Representative for North Korea, gave a keynote speech that downplayed the failure of last month’s Hanoi Summit between the president and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to yield an agreement on denuclearization, suggesting that the US was playing a long game and that Trump had set no timeline for negotiations.

Biegun defended not agreeing to any partial easing of UN sanctions, saying that this would only allow for new funds to be directed into weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs. He said the US was seeking the comprehensive elimination of all WMD arsenals and facilities including all dimensions of the nuclear fuel cycle. This would require intrusive verification to ensure that a North Korean declaration was accurate, and that disarmament would be irreversible. He noted in this regard that the establishment of permanent liaison offices in the North would be essential in support of this effort.

Biegun expressed support for confidence-building measures (CBMs) underway in the demilitarized zone that had been developed between North and South Korea and indicated that certain CBMs were being discussed in the US-North Korean track as well. When challenged as to why North Korea would put any faith in an eventual agreement with the US, given the latter’s withdrawal from the JCPOA despite Iran’s compliance with its terms, Biegun side-stepped the question by asserting that the US was engaged in a much broader endeavour with North Korea, not merely a nuclear deal. Biegun

defended the current approach of the Trump administration, saying that it was the only one that had succeeded in directly engaging the North's "main decision maker."

The Non-Proliferation Treaty under threat

How the current bleak prospects for nuclear arms control and disarmament would impact the NPT (the global treaty governing nuclear affairs with 190 states parties) and its [2020 Review Conference](#) was an underlying concern at the conference.

Trump administration officials took a "not to worry" stance, pointing to resumed talks amongst the P5 nuclear weapon states in Beijing in January (although disagreement amongst them prevented the issuance of any statement).

The US Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation trotted out the old figures of an 88 percent reduction in the nuclear arsenal since the peak of the Cold War without any reference to the current build-up or the absence of any arms reduction negotiations. He championed the US proposal for a "creating the conditions for nuclear disarmament" working group, although this terminology has now been changed to "creating the environment for" (an even vaguer term).

"Official Canadian statements on the key nuclear challenges facing the international community are few and far between."

The Russian ambassador was much blunter in his assessment, stating that if the strategic arms control framework is allowed to collapse, the NPT Review Conference will be "a disaster." If the present trends continue, what results on nuclear disarmament will the nuclear powers be able to present to the NPT membership, he asked, noting that the NPT regime would be easy to destroy and difficult to rebuild.

The significance for the NPT of the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (which currently has 70 signatories and 22 ratifications en route to the 50 required for the treaty's entry into force) was fiercely debated at one panel. The French Foreign Ministry's director of strategic affairs decried the treaty for its "divisive effects" and supposed weaknesses, while supporters argued that it was the failure of the nuclear weapon states to deliver on their nuclear disarmament commitments that had prompted the prohibition treaty. The upcoming NPT PrepCom in New York (April 29-May 10) will provide further evidence as to whether the NPT membership will be able to transcend the failure of the 2015 Review Conference and find some common ground at the 2020 meeting.

Canada's silence

It is perhaps reflective of the decline of Canadian engagement in the arena of nuclear affairs that, to my knowledge, no Canadians figured amongst the panellists at the Carnegie conference. What the Canadian view of these developments consisted of was

not a matter of concern for the organizers. Indeed, official Canadian statements on the key nuclear challenges facing the international community are few and far between. Despite urging from several Canadian NGOs, the government has not spoken out in favour of maintaining the strategic restraint regime represented by the INF and New START treaties.

Concerns over the deteriorating strategic situation had prompted the House of Commons Committee on National Defence to recommend unanimously last summer that the government take a leadership role at NATO to initiate discussion of these risks and what can be done to counter them. Specifically, the Committee's recommendation #21 reads in part "That the Government of Canada take a leadership role within NATO in beginning the work necessary for achieving the NATO goal of creating the conditions for a world free of nuclear weapons. That this initiative be undertaken on an urgent basis in view of the increasing threat of nuclear conflict...". The government essentially ignored this operational direction in its response to the Committee's report, offering up only boiler plate text on existing positions. Leadership on these issues within NATO, it seems, would have to come from some other member state.

Ostrich-like evasive postures are not appropriate at this point in time, when the risks of nuclear weapon use, be it from calculation or miscalculation, are elevated and the cooperative restraint regimes of the past are rapidly fraying. If some of the destructive consequences of the current impasse, outlined at the conference, come to pass, Canada will not be immune from their effects, and people may well ask: what did Canada do to prevent them?

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Trump and Kim: Round 2

Marius Grinius

Canadian Global Affairs Institute, February 2019

Introduction

After their unprecedented summit in Singapore last April, President Donald Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-un of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) agreed to meet in Hanoi on Feb. 27 and 28 for round 2. In their joint statement in Singapore, the two leaders agreed to establish new U.S.-DPRK relations. The new relationship would include building a lasting peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, committing DPRK to work toward "complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" and recovering the remains of U.S. soldiers missing in action (MIA) from the Korean War. Their joint

statement also noted that Trump “committed to provide security guarantees to the DPRK” although what exactly these would be was left unspecified.

However, not much has happened since the Singapore summit, particularly on the road to denuclearization. Trump has boasted of “great progress” because North Korea has not tested any more nuclear warheads or missiles. But North Korea does not have to, because as Kim declared, it already has a credible nuclear weapon capability to hit Seoul or Tokyo, if not the continental U.S. For some time, the U.S. had insisted on “complete verifiable and irreversible denuclearization (CVID)” of North Korea’s nuclear forces. This phrase more recently morphed into “final, fully verified denuclearization (FFVD)”, perhaps admitting that nothing in nuclear weapons technology is irreversible. On Dec. 20, the official (North) Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reminded the U.S. and the rest of the world that, for North Korea, the Korean Peninsula includes both the northern and southern parts of the peninsula. Thus, denuclearization of the peninsula means “removing elements of nuclear threats from the areas of both north and south of Korea and also from surrounding areas from where the Korean peninsula is targeted.” The article maintained that the U.S. must remove all its nuclear threats to the DPRK before North Korea eliminates its own nuclear weapons, which Kim described last year as “a powerful treasured sword for defending peace”.

Denuclearization

The Singapore summit took place without any prior discussions. However, in the run-up to the Hanoi summit, the U.S. and DPRK have had what hopefully may be substantive working-level talks regarding the way forward. On the nuclear side, many issues remain to be resolved, including the definition and scope of denuclearization. No one knows the number or location of North Korean warheads, the number or location of mobile North Korean missile systems, or the size of North Korea’s fissile material stockpile, containing both enriched uranium and plutonium. All is pure speculation. Indeed, while there have been no further nuclear tests, at least for the time being, North Korea has also made no commitment to stop production of fissile material, something most observers believe continues full-bore. There are also reports that North Korea may be moving and widely hiding its nuclear assets to ensure that they cannot be subject to any potential decapitation strikes.

Verification

To get a handle on the unknowns listed above, any credible denuclearization agreement will require robust verification measures, the “trust but verify” mantra of any serious arms control and disarmament agreement. Verification will require on-site inspections, something that the Hermit Kingdom will have considerable difficulty accepting, given that North Korean casualties from the Korean War remain a state secret. Last year, the main nuclear test site was apparently demolished (or perhaps mothballed), but only a

handful of non-expert foreign journalists witnessed the controlled demolition. North Korea had also offered to dismantle a missile test site but suspicions remain that the country may be creating nuclear warhead and missile test facilities elsewhere. According to Moon Chung-in, South Korean President Moon Jae-in's special adviser for foreign affairs and national security, Kim gave the president his personal assurance that North Korea's primary nuclear facility at Yongbyon, which produces fissile material, would be permanently and verifiably dismantled. As part of an earlier dismantling process, all five nuclear facilities in Yongbyon were shut down in 2007 and a cooling tower demolished in 2008. By 2009, however, North Korea had started to reactivate and expand its nuclear facilities. At issue now, of course, is whether other such production facilities exist elsewhere.

Kim's reported promises to allow international inspectors to inspect closed test sites remain just promises. While International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) experts would be key to verifying the status of any North Korean nuclear fissile-material facility, other experts in missile and nuclear warhead technology would be needed to confirm the dismantling of North Korean nuclear forces. It is doubtful that DPRK would agree to have U.S., Chinese or Russian experts snooping around.

Timeline

Any coherent denuclearization roadmap would presumably include a clear timeline. After the failure of various attempts to negotiate with North Korea, the Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations adopted a policy of strategic patience. Trump, however, argued that strategic patience simply allowed North Korea to test and perfect its nuclear and missile arsenals. After his short-lived "fire and fury" tantrum in 2017, Trump settled for a combination of increasing UN and U.S. sanctions in response to DPRK's nuclear and missile tests, while urgently pushing for CVID. Then, the Singapore love-in occurred. Immediately after the Singapore summit, Trump declared that "[t]here is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea." The collective U.S. intelligence community begged to differ and continues to do so. Then, on Feb. 19 at a White House press scrum, Trump gave Kim a pre-summit gift by stating "... We need denuclearization ultimately ... I'm in no particular rush, the sanctions are on ... I'm in no rush; there's no testing. As long as there's no testing I'm in no rush. If there's testing that's another deal ... I hope that very positive things will happen." Trump's off-the-cuff comments probably caught his negotiating team off-guard. The comments seem to imply that the U.S. no longer views North Korea's denuclearization as the end goal. Of perhaps greater concern is Trump's apparent acceptance of North Korea as a *de facto* nuclear weapon state as long as it does not test. A similar situation existed with both India and Pakistan throughout the 1980s and well into the 1990s.

UN and U.S. Sanctions

North Korea wants UN and U.S. sanctions lifted. North Korea has argued that it should be rewarded for dismantling its nuclear test site and for abstaining from further testing. It has argued that the U.S. should reciprocate action for action by easing sanctions. UN sanctions are already wobbly, mostly thanks to China and Russia and to North Korean

expertise in evading sanctions for decades. The country has illegally sold its missile technology, engaged in money laundering and has used its diplomats to smuggle gold. While exceptions to UN sanctions have been made for humanitarian purposes, U.S. bilateral sanctions have hurt North Korea the most because they are aimed at financial institutions that deal with North Korea, including Chinese banks. In Hanoi, Kim will be expected to push Trump hard to ease sanctions and Moon will assist him in this.

South Korea's Role

As chief cheerleader for U.S.-DPRK rapprochement, Moon has worked hard on his vision of North-South peaceful co-existence through co-prosperity. Moon has met Kim three times, including in Pyongyang, and has advocated the re-connection of North/South roads and railways, the resuscitation of economic joint ventures and the sharing of South Korean technical expertise. During his telephone conversation with Trump on Feb. 18, Moon reiterated his willingness, according to Korean reports, “to take on any role, from inter-Korean rail projects to inter-Korean economic cooperation if requested by President Trump, and that could lessen the burden on the US.” The U.S. and South Korea had just agreed to a cost-sharing formula, bizarrely for one year only, to finance the presence of U.S. troops. Moon wants U.S.-DPRK action-for-action rapprochement to continue but is conscious of businessman Trump’s inclination to view U.S. foreign policy in terms of financial costs (vide Syria, Afghanistan and NATO). Moon’s vision of co-prosperity fits in well with Trump’s idea of turning North Korea into “a tremendous economic power”.

Security Assurances

The recent North Korean demand, via KCNA, for the removal of U.S. nuclear threats to North Korea from surrounding areas is nothing new. Indeed, as part of the 1994 U.S.-DPRK framework agreement, the U.S. undertook to “provide formal assurances to the DPRK against the threat or use of nuclear weapons by the US.” But this recurring issue does raise questions of U.S. commitment to extended deterrence over South Korea and Japan at a sensitive time. It can call into question U.S. defence agreements and even the presence of U.S. troops in both countries.

At the Singapore summit, Trump surprised his military advisers and South Korea by announcing the suspension of major annual military exercises with South Korea. Perhaps Trump meant this gesture as a confidence-building measure, but he also noted how expensive these exercises were. Parallel to U.S.-DPRK discussions, North and South Korea signed a detailed agreement whose aim is to ease military tension and build confidence between the two sides. Measures being implemented include the withdrawal of some guard posts within the demilitarized zone (DMZ), some mine clearance, recovery within the DMZ of remains of soldiers from the Korean War and agreement to demilitarize the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom where official North-South talks occur. For the Hanoi summit, there has been speculation that, with Moon’s support, Trump and Kim may agree to a declaration that would officially end the Korean War. The current 1953 armistice simply agreed to the cessation of hostilities. An end-of-war declaration would be a political gesture reflecting better relations between the two

Koreas and the U.S. There is concern, however, that even such a political gesture would put more pressure on the U.S.-South Korea defence agreement, including raising questions about the presence of U.S. forces on the peninsula.

Weather Vanes

While the above issues will be central to the outcome of the Hanoi summit, other related elements should also be monitored as weather vanes for future progress. These include:

Future North-South family reunions

Since the warming of North-South relations last year, one set of family reunions took place in August 2018. In September 2018, Moon and Kim agreed to open a permanent facility for family reunion meetings and also to hold meetings via video. Neither of these initiatives has happened, apparently because they require exemptions to UN sanctions. In the past, North Korea has held family reunions hostage to the state of North-South relations.

Ongoing return of U.S. MIAs

Of 7,800 U.S. MIAs from the Korean War, some 5,300 are believed to have died in North Korea. As a result of the Singapore summit, North Korea did turn over 55 boxes of remains in July 2018. Apparently, in the past, DPRK officials have indicated that they possess as many as 200 sets of remains. Presumably, discussions are ongoing for the repatriation of the remaining sets and the modalities to continue searching for more MIAs. As in the past, North Korea may calibrate how much it wants to co-operate. *New U.S.-DPRK relations*

New U.S.-DPRK relations presumably will eventually require the establishment of reciprocal diplomatic liaison offices in Washington and Pyongyang.

Human rights

North Korea's egregious human rights record has been rarely mentioned in the context of warming relations. In 2007, then-South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun and North Korea's former leader Kim Jong-il agreed that neither country would "interfere in the internal affairs of the other". This meant that human rights issues would not be raised. In April 2017, Moon and Kim Jong-un agreed to improve inter-Korean relations "by fully implementing all existing agreements and declarations adopted between the two sides thus far." This has meant no discussion of human rights. Trump has also followed that course.

In the longer term, more fundamental issues may have to be addressed. These include the possibility of a treaty that ends the Korean War and whether North and South unification will ever happen. In the meantime, however, all eyes will be on the Hanoi summit and its results.

Link to Marius's Interview on Global News Radio, March 4, 2019
[U.S-North Korea nuclear talks fall apart](#)

DES DÉCISIONS DÉCONNECTÉES DE NOS PRIORITÉS

FERRY DE KERCKHOVE
La Presse, 23 février 2019

La décision récente de l'Allemagne de ne pas acheter le chasseur F-35 a dû frapper durement Lockheed Martin qui venait de célébrer de façon presque démesurée l'acquisition par les Pays-Bas de l'avion de chasse de cinquième génération. Il est difficile de ne pas voir dans la décision allemande une rebuffade politique à l'hostilité du président Trump envers aussi bien le surplus commercial allemand que sa soi-disant relation trop étroite avec la Russie en matière d'oléoducs.

Évidemment, Trump n'a que lui-même à blâmer dans la mesure où sa politique étrangère, pour autant qu'il y en eût une, a impulsé une révision presque déchirante des programmes européens d'acquisition et de production d'armement, ce qui, dans une certaine mesure, fournit une justification à une décision probablement erronée. En effet, on ne cesse d'entendre parler des qualités exceptionnelles du F-35, tant pour ses performances que pour ses innovations technologiques, au point que la plupart des alliés et autres acheteurs admissibles ne peuvent guère faire autrement que de le prendre.

Le Canada étant en année électorale, la décision quant au programme d'achat d'un avion de chasse risque fort d'être reportée.

Les fabricants d'images trouveront une façon ou une autre de vilipender le seul chasseur au monde qui semble susciter une acceptation presque obscène.

Même les Russes et les Chinois en voudraient s'ils étaient admissibles. Malheureusement, plus on se rapproche des élections, plus la décision stupide d'acheter les F-18 Super Hornets comme solution intérimaire aux besoins à long terme du Canada a de fortes chances d'être confirmée.

De nombreux experts ont souligné la politisation des programmes d'acquisition, à commencer par la saga du navire ravitailleur impliquant l'ancien chef de la marine canadienne et vice-chef d'état-major Marc Norman, ensuite par les tentatives de disqualifier le F-35 du processus d'appel d'offres ainsi que l'atermoiement répété de ce dernier, sans oublier la fiction de l'écart des capacités.

Pourtant, la nouvelle politique de défense canadienne, « Protection, sécurité, engagement (PSE) », aurait dû mettre fin à toutes ces allégations si seulement des dépenses correspondantes avaient suivi la déclaration ou, plus important encore, si un concept de politique étrangère était venu sous-tendre l'énoncé de défense. Malheureusement, il n'en fut rien d'un côté comme de l'autre.

Au fond, c'est la vraie question aujourd'hui. Certes la décision du gouvernement Harper de ne pas aller en appel d'offres pour le F-35 est à l'origine de l'assertion ridicule de M. Trudeau selon qui « le F-35 ne fonctionne pas ».

Mais au moins, M. Harper avait choisi le meilleur appareil tout en enchâssant la décision par la participation au consortium de R et D du F-35.

Nous continuons d'ailleurs à y contribuer tout en soutenant que les avantages découlant du programme ne pouvaient être pris en compte dans la politique canadienne des bénéfices technologiques qui prévoient des retombées industrielles plus ou moins équivalentes à la valeur du contrat. Il y a là un manque de cohérence ou d'intégrité.

UN SLOGAN VIDÉ DE SENS

Malheureusement, tout cela n'est qu'un reflet de notre incapacité à exprimer une politique de sécurité nationale qui sous-tendrait tant notre politique étrangère que notre politique de défense connexe. Le slogan du retour du Canada sur la scène internationale perd de son lustre alors que bientôt l'Assemblée générale des Nations unies décidera ou non de nous donner un siège au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU – de moins en moins plausible.

Certes, l'arrivée de Trump sur la scène a fait dérailler tout le processus politique canadien, mais ce n'est pas une excuse pour ne pas articuler nos priorités et agir en conséquence avec détermination et constance. La triple débâcle de l'échec des négociations commerciales avec la Chine, le traitement désinvolte du Japon et de l'Australie pour ce qui est du Partenariat transpacifique, et le ridicule du voyage en Inde ont souligné la fragilité du premier ministre sur la scène internationale. La preuve en est notre isolement dans les premières heures de la crise avec l'Arabie saoudite ou l'affaire Huawei.

Dans un sens, notre politique étrangère ne semble prendre un tournant dur que quand il s'agit de la Russie avec laquelle nous ne voulons tout simplement pas parler, ce qui n'est pas une politique même si on connaît le point de vue de la ministre Chrystia Freeland sur la question. Mais si la Russie et la Chine sont de véritables ennemis, comme cela semble être le consensus tant à Washington qu'au quartier général de l'OTAN, n'est-il pas logique de faire en sorte que la capacité soit à la hauteur des menaces dans les meilleurs délais ? Financièrement, il ne devrait pas y avoir de problème puisque le ministre Harjit Sajjan et ses fonctionnaires nous assurent que la PSE est entièrement financée.

Le report d'acquisitions majeures n'est pas une réponse adéquate – au moins le programme d'acquisitions navales est enfin lancé. Un pays comme la Norvège l'a bien compris puisqu'il a commandé 56 F-35 pour compenser sa vulnérabilité dans le Grand Nord qui, à une plus petite échelle, ressemble passablement au nôtre.

Nous ne pouvons jouer sur deux tableaux : d'un côté, dénoncer nos ennemis, et de l'autre, ne faire que très peu pour notre défense et n'exprimer qu'une politique étrangère timorée.

Nous venons de découvrir combien est pénible d'être seul quand on fait face à des crises, alors que par le passé, on pouvait toujours compter sur le soutien des États-Unis.

Dans un sens, nous venons d'apprendre à apprécier la réalité des choses et les journées ne sont plus ensoleillées. Le Canada n'est plus la coqueluche du monde multilatéral, non pas parce que nous avons changé, mais parce que le monde a changé. La légèreté n'est plus de mise. Et si le F-35 est véritablement le meilleur appareil au monde et qu'il assure la meilleure interopérabilité avec les États-Unis, c'est sans doute le meilleur choix. Mais ce qui est bien plus important, c'est que les choix que nous posons soient alignés sur nos priorités, la constance de notre vision et des politiques clairement conçues et définies, et non sur le goût politique du jour.

L'AVENIR INCERTAIN DE L'ALGÉRIE

Ferry de Kerckhove,

La Presse, 4 mars 2019

L'Algérie est le plus grand pays d'Afrique, soit un quart de la superficie du Canada et une population légèrement supérieure à la nôtre.

Là s'arrête toute comparaison, même sur le plan francophone puisqu'elle ne fait pas partie officiellement de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. Cette dernière est considérée comme trop harnachée à la France, même si le président Abdelaziz Bouteflika a toujours fait son apparition aux sommets francophones sur invitation solennelle du secrétaire général de l'OIF.

Mais il faut essayer de comprendre l'Algérie avant de déplorer son incurie. Comme tous les pays du Maghreb, elle est plus berbère qu'arabe même si cet aspect identitaire a été souvent réprimé. Mais la grande différence avec l'Algérie, c'est qu'elle a été la seule colonie de peuplement de la région. Même si les raccourcis historiques font état de 1830 comme la prise par la France du territoire aux Ottomans, cette conquête a pris 35 ans de durs combats et par la suite, la population locale a subi une inégalité de traitement profonde en termes de représentation politique et de développement économique et social. Par

ailleurs la guerre d'indépendance a été d'une brutalité inouïe jusqu'à ce que le général de Gaulle accepte de l'accorder par les accords d'Évian de 1962.

L'Algérie devait s'engager dans une phase d'arabisation forcenée, récusant toute influence française qui lui aurait permis de profiter de l'émergence du Marché commun européen. Elle se dota d'un système politico-économique inspiré par l'URSS et les expériences de dictature des pays du Machrek, à la sauce stalinienne de surcroît, tout en gardant les yeux sur la France comme un aimant mythique dans le style « je t'aime moi non plus ».

Le pétrole léger, en grande demande, et le gaz sauvèrent l'économie, mais cette richesse n'empêcha pas l'horreur de 10 années de guerre civile entre islamistes du Front islamique du salut et l'armée du régime. Cette guerre est la raison pour laquelle le pays fit l'impasse sur le Printemps arabe, bien que le régime ait eu à lâcher du lest pour satisfaire les islamistes.

Le pays vit encore et toujours dans une atmosphère lourde de tensions sous la botte d'un appareil de sécurité que le régime justifie par la lutte contre le terrorisme.

La sclérose politique que dénoncent les manifestants aujourd'hui – dont il faut saluer le courage – tient à la peur d'un éclatement entre revendications identitaires, religieuses et culturelles.

DÉPENDANCE AU PÉTROLE ET AU GAZ

Mais c'est sur le plan de l'économie que l'aberration politique risque de provoquer une nouvelle déflagration. En effet, pour comprendre combien la situation économique algérienne est délétère, il suffit de passer en revue huit points précis :

- Le pétrole et le gaz représentent 97 % des exportations algériennes et 75 % du budget ;
- Pour que le budget de l'Algérie soit équilibré, il faudrait que le baril de pétrole soit à plus de 110 \$US ;
- Le fonds de réserve qui avait été créé en 1986 pour parer aux difficultés – un peu comme le fonds albertain – est pratiquement vide ;
- L'économie de rente de l'Algérie est telle qu'elle ne produit pratiquement rien d'autre. Ses dattes sont certainement très bonnes, mais leur exportation ne couvre que les importations de moutarde et de mayonnaise ;
- Le pétrole est entièrement subventionné – le litre d'essence ne coûte que 10 cents. La facture pour l'État est de 70 milliards de dollars ;
- La fonction publique est pléthorique avec des augmentations de salaire insoutenables, mais accordées pour éviter qu'il y ait en Algérie des tentations de Printemps arabe ;

– L’aspect le plus extraordinaire, c’est que les pensions pour les soi-disant pères de la révolution et de l’indépendance représentent 6 % du budget national, presque 60 ans après les accords d’Évian ;

– Il y a eu des investissements massifs dans la construction d’usines de liquéfaction du gaz, mais aujourd’hui, il n’y a plus suffisamment de capacité de production gazière pour alimenter ces usines.

Il n’est donc absolument pas étonnant que la foule manifeste contre la cinquième candidature de Bouteflika.

On peut s’étonner et se féliciter – au moment d’écrire ces lignes – qu’il n’y ait pas eu de répression massive, mais il est difficile de croire qu’elle ne se produira pas si les manifestations s’accroissent. La mémoire de la guerre civile ne suffira peut-être plus à forcer le calme.

La candidature du président Bouteflika a été déposée hier au Conseil constitutionnel, a déclaré son directeur de campagne. Le président algérien s’est néanmoins engagé à ne pas terminer son mandat s’il est réélu le 18 avril prochain.

La momie Bouteflika permet aux militaires et aux services secrets de se partager le pouvoir dans un équilibre instable et ils ne sont pas prêts à le céder à qui que ce soit qu’ils ne seraient pas en mesure de dominer. L’avenir de l’Algérie est loin d’être rassurant.

The struggle for democracy in Bangladesh deserves our attention

Jon Scott and John Richards

Globe and Mail, February 6, 2019

When a ferry capsizes killing hundreds, or a cyclone comes ashore killing thousands in low-lying coastal regions of Bangladesh, Canadians notice. Otherwise, Bangladesh largely flies under Canadians’ radar. However, a country of 160 million is currently slipping into an authoritarian quagmire. It deserves our attention.

When Bangladesh seceded from West Pakistan in 1971, U.S. National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger held that the new nation was a “basket case” of no strategic interest. From 1975 to 2007, Bangladesh experienced multiple military coups. In 2008, sheik

Hasina and her Awami League won reasonably fair elections, and expectations were high that, finally, the country would entrench democratic practices. That has not come to pass. The major opposition party boycotted the flawed 2014 elections, which the Awami League won by acclamation.

In December 2018, Bangladesh conducted another election. According to official results, the incumbent Awami League government won more than 80 per cent of the popular vote and 288 of 300 seats in the national Parliament. The main opposition party won seven seats. Pre-election professional polls suggested the Awami League would probably win in a fair vote, but the actual election was, as the New York Times editorialized, a “farfetched vote.”

The government violated virtually all conventions of electoral fair play. It appointed a supine electoral commission. The police harassed opposition politicians and drove most opponents into exile or jail. The leader of the main opposition party remains imprisoned by the current government.

Following the election, the U.S. government expressed dismay: “We note with concern credible reports of harassment, intimidation and violence in the pre-election period that made it difficult for many opposition supporters to meet, hold rallies and campaign freely. We are also concerned that election day irregularities prevented some people from voting, which undermined faith in the electoral process.” Britain and the European Union issued similar statements.

Bangladesh has realized a decent development record since independence. It is now the world’s second-largest exporter of garments. It has achieved nearly 100-per-cent primary-school enrolment for both boys and girls, and lower under-5 mortality than either Pakistan or India. From the beginning of the century until 2016, Per-capita GDP has grown at an annual rate of nearly 6 per cent. Inequality is, however, acute: 60 per cent of the population lives below the World Bank poverty threshold of \$3.20 per person per day.

Bangladesh has pioneered numerous world-class innovations: microcredit, oral rehydration in treatment of diarrhea, an effective set of cooperatives in managing rural electrical power and – of relevance to the present situation – a neutral caretaker government of technocrats who assume control of the government at times of election in order to assure free and fair elections.

The caretaker government was used successfully in 1996, 2001 and 2008. With good reason, each of the major parties distrusted the others’ willingness to conduct proper elections. Regrettably, the Awami League abolished caretaker government through a constitutional amendment in 2011.

The Awami League is now in a position of near-total control of the country’s destiny. Misconduct of the 2014 and 2018 elections has resulted in the eclipse of the political opposition. Sheik Hasina has even sought to restrict the outreach of Nobel Prize-winner and inventor of microcredit Muhammad Yunus.

What lies ahead? Probably more pressure from the Awami League on independent news outlets. There will probably be more oppression of opposition voices, misuse of parliamentary powers and possibly further unilateral amendments to the Constitution. On the assumption that absolute power corrupts absolutely, inevitably more corruption of the public services and society at large will ensue.

Canada's interests are well-served when Bangladesh, one of our largest development partners, combines economic advances with social progress. Since both countries are members of the Commonwealth, Canada should support Commonwealth initiatives to strengthen independence of the judiciary and protect freedom of expression in the media and the academy.

Bangladeshis will sort themselves out, but the process will take time. There may be worrisome distractions, including renewed terrorist attacks and the possibility of a military takeover.

Canadians need to display understanding, concerted involvement and strategic support for strengthening institutions consistent with the ideal of a tolerant Islam and democracy affirmed in the Constitution of 1971.

We should heed the words of Manzoor Ahmed, emeritus director of the BRAC Institute of Educational Development, writing a few days after the election in the Dhaka Daily Star: "Sheikh Hasina's legacy need not be that she was Prime Minister for four terms ... it should be how strongly she lays the building blocks of a prosperous, inclusive and democratic Bangladesh."

It is a hope that all Canadians should share.

Links

Contributions Form Numerous Colleagues on Numerous Issues

Courtesy of Brian Northgrave

[JustOttawa's](#)

Jeremy Kinsman

CTV News, March 6 2019

China and Saudi Arabia

<https://www.facebook.com/CTVNewsChannel/videos/288255235189256/>

CTV News March 12, 2019

SNC

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1634285>

CTV News March 19, 2019

New Zealand Murders

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1639617>

CTV News March 26, 2019

BREXIT, May's Position

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1645168>

India-Pakistan

Ferry de Kerckhove

Global News, February 28, 2019

<https://omny.fm/shows/danielle-smith/india-pakistan-tensions>

Chine

Radio-Canada 4 mars

<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/tele/en-direct-avec-patrice-roy/site/episodes/428379/politique-societe-economie-actualite-direct>

Radio Canada Vancouver 4 mars

<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/premiere/emissions/phare-ouest/segments/entrevue/108442/ferry-de-kerkhove-meng-wanzhou-huawei-canada-chine>

Radio Canada, March 25, 2019

Edward Snowden

<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/tele/24-60/site/episodes/430149/edward-snowden-rapport-mueller-implants-mammaires>

Colin Robertson

Canada-China, CTV News

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1626793&playlistId=1.4320447&binId=1.810401&playlistPageNum=1&binPageNum=1>