

Darroch and Diplomacy: When 'Persona non Grata' is a Badge of Honour

Jeremy Kinsman

Policy Magazine, July 10, 2019

"Did the ambassador's reportorial vanity lead him to underestimate the venality and rage that has infected government circles from the Brexit mess?"

The 17th-century British politician and diplomat Sir Henry Wotton's most enduring legacy was his observation that "An ambassador is an honest gentleman sent to lie abroad for the good of his country."

While the comment was meant wryly, the controversy over the leaked cables of Sir Kim Darroch, now-former British ambassador to the United States, about President Donald Trump reminds us that the most critical task of an ambassador is to tell his/her foreign minister and prime minister in confidence the unvarnished truth about the country he/she has been sent to, including about its leaders.

There should be no shock at Darroch's description of Trump as insecure, erratic, essentially unreliable in relationships, surrounded by fawning sycophants; we read it every day. As the caption on a cartoon by BANX in the *Financial Times* of a couple reading the news put it, "I thought calling Trump inept was rather diplomatic."

Darroch, who resigned Wednesday in a letter to the Foreign Office saying "The current situation is making it impossible for me to carry out my role as I would like," wasn't just calling things as he saw them. He was warning his readers in the Conservative, Brexit-bent Government that they shouldn't count on Trump to be Britain's best friend in need when the chips are down. It will always be "America First."

A more cogent warning on a more important issue to Britain could hardly be offered by an ambassador. That it was leaked by pro-Brexit activist/journalist Isabel Oakeshott, who ghosted Brexit financier Arron Banks's 2016 referendum memoir *The Bad Boys of Brexit*, indicates that the intent was to undermine opposition to a no-deal Brexit from the UK Embassy, the civil service, Theresa May, and any opponents to the prospective succession of Boris Johnson to Downing Street.

The destructive leakers who wished to promote closer ties to Trump for themselves and to boost Johnson risk costly unintended consequences — a provoked British patriotism against a bully, with Trump pet Johnson looking like he'll substitute rule from Brussels with rule from Washington.

If Darroch made a mistake it was not in what he wrote. It may have been in not limiting to a narrow few the number of his readers. Many ambassadors are frustrated writers who hanker for a wider audience but have to write to their private network. They persuade themselves that their full community of ministers and officials will benefit from knowing just how plugged in and perceptive their envoy is. But they must accept that distribution is nonetheless on a “need-to-know” basis for even the most important and explosive matters.

I can't consult Darroch's distribution list but it's obvious it included at least one destructive person too many. Did the ambassador's reportorial vanity lead him to underestimate the venality and rage that has infected government circles from the Brexit mess? The reports he was writing on Trump should have been for the eyes of the people he really worked for, the PM and her top advisers, the foreign minister, the cabinet secretary and a few others. No doubt they read them with relish. Others, apparently, read them with an agenda — of political disruption, personal resentment and/or a thirst for destructive revenge.

The impact has led to a typically grotesque slew of insults from Trump, who called the ambassador “wacky,” “foisted upon the US,” “not someone we are thrilled with, a very stupid guy,” and, most ironically, “a pompous fool.” He again insulted Theresa May, who on the eve of her departure as PM seems to have decided she has had enough of Trump. His rudeness and arrogance toward her, including during his visits to the UK, have crossed the line in precisely the ways Darroch has described. Sir Kim was toast as ambassador from the moment the leak broke, of course. It's not that big a thing, in that he was slated to retire soon. Being insulted by Trump is something of a badge of honour and he'll get a better book contract out of it eventually.

Diplomatic reporting at the top has always commanded the interest of leaders. Some of the curiosity is recreational. Prime ministers and presidents usually have a slew of woes and parochial and partisan worries at home. Reading the inside dope on other leaders' salacious lives, vanities, and vulnerabilities lightens the burden and places discomfort in perspective. But a higher policy purpose than entertainment is involved. Ambassadors are primarily tasked with advising on how to build strategy and tactics to advance national interests in a relationship that matters. How should we pitch our case to this leader? How to connect to his/her interests or eccentricities? What are the issues that offer opportunities?

Personal relationships matter immensely at the top. When they are good — say in the case of Mulroney-Reagan or Chrétien-Clinton — the warmth is radiated and rewarded all the way down. Doors open and things happen. When relationships are mutually suspicious — say Pierre Trudeau-Nixon or Harper-Obama — the friction is replicated by officials. When the boss refers in a staff meeting to a foreign counterpart as “that S.O.B.”

the word gets around town surprisingly fast. Access for the ambassador and his colleagues shrinks while host country officials dutifully put projects with that country on the back burner.

Ambitious ambassadors in major relationships naturally prefer their boss at home to be a favourite with the leader they are accredited to. It amps up their own prestige in the local pecking order. If the important personal relationship is rocky, they try identify some redeeming common ground.

An excellent example was Ambassador Allan Gotlieb in Washington telling Pierre Trudeau in 1983 that he should appeal to Reagan's wish to be seen as a man of world peace instead of as a hard-line ideological warmonger, an image conversion project that Gotlieb knew was dear to Nancy Reagan's heart. Trudeau played his part well and though I wouldn't claim he was responsible for putting Reagan on the path to an eventual understanding with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that would end the Cold War, it did help to keep the Reagan-Trudeau relationship warm enough, and much warmer than many in Reagan's entourage wanted.

But sometimes an ambassador has to set aside his wish to be on the local A-list and tell his bosses back home the truth about the guy in power — that he lies, that he is not really to be trusted, that he is paranoid, vain, and ultimately dangerous. Navigating that line between transmitting geopolitically invaluable truth and risking personal stock with the local regime if your views become known is a crucial element of diplomacy.

Wikileaks showed us how the US ambassador in Tunis — a professional foreign service officer — made it clear President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali was a venal and corrupt authoritarian whose son-in-law sent a private jet to Nice to pick up ice cream for palace fetes featuring a live tiger on a chain. The ambassador cautioned the US to maintain distance, that he was doomed (he was ousted in 2011). I think of my friend Sir Brian Donnelly, who was successively British ambassador to both Yugoslavia under Milosevic and Zimbabwe under Mugabe, and who became persona non grata to each dictator for not marketing at home the leaders' grievances from Belgrade or Harare with sufficient sympathy. Dictators blacklisting truth-telling diplomats is not new. An American president doing it is.

The highest act of professional duty is that of a top-tier ambassador who has immense prestige in a capital who nonetheless tells the boss back home the inconvenient truth that the leader we count on is on the ropes psychologically or that his support is breaking down, and that noble ambitions for a beneficial improvement in the relationship have to be reshaped to address the problem. I think of the US ambassador to Moscow under Reagan and George H.W. Bush, Jack Matlock, who understood Gorbachev and the pressure he was under but who didn't become his unqualified advocate.

The Darroch episode is of that quality of service.

The US has the attention span of a fruit-fly these days, but they should think hard about the damage that Trump is doing; Darroch didn't cause it. Like the zoologist he once studied to be, he reported the evidence, maybe too widely, but accurately and right on time. We laugh it off at our peril.

Havana Syndrome – Canadian Government Must Act More Quickly

Daniel Livermore

Ottawa Citizen, July 31, 2019

“Havana syndrome” is back in the news, after the recent release of medical studies that appear to demonstrate that 40 U.S. Embassy employees in Havana suffered significant brain damage in 2016 and 2017 as a result of what appears to be an electronic attack against U.S. and Canadian diplomatic personnel. In the same period, 14 Canadians (including family members) were affected, forcing Global Affairs Canada to withdraw them from Havana and reduce the Canadian diplomatic presence in Cuba.

These attacks were only detectable as low-level noises and vibrations, triggering in some cases momentary loss of balance, dizziness, headaches and ringing in the ears. The longer-term effects have been memory loss, problems with sleeping and balance, and an inability to concentrate. Some of the victims cannot return to work.

Yet nothing else about “Havana syndrome,” as it has now been dubbed, appears to be conclusive. There are no answers yet as to what caused the incidents, who was responsible, or why they were triggered. The RCMP is investigating the incidents, while U.S. efforts to get to the bottom of the situation have been complicated by the usual turf struggles among the FBI, the State Department’s diplomatic security agency, and U.S. intelligence agencies.

There are no answers yet as to what caused the incidents, who was responsible, or why they were triggered.

Some initial reactions doubted whether the incidents had taken place. However, the publication of a paper in the July number of the Journal of the American Medical Association suggests that there is conclusive medical evidence of brain anomalies among the Canadian and U.S. victims, including some with lasting brain damage and incapacity. In some of the cases, the medical evidence suggests a degree of brain damage that is serious and irreversible, similar to the trauma of a concussion.

But what was the cause? An early suggestion ascribing the incidents to “mass hysteria” has now been generally dismissed. Other causes have been advanced in the absence of solid evidence. The most likely explanation, albeit a controversial one, is a “pulsed radio-frequency microwave radiation” attack by a directional “source.” Was it an “attack,” intended to cause damage? Is it new, or is it similar to previous attacks in

Moscow? Is it similar to other problems affecting U.S. personnel in China? Is it a side-effect from electronic surveillance equipment? Or is it truly a “weapon,” as some U.S. sources suggest, that we should now count among the instruments of diplomatic warfare?

When we have a conclusive answer as to the nature of the attack, another question comes to mind: What are the defences?

Possibly the most pressing issue is to identify the state behind these attacks. It’s unlikely that the Cubans were involved, as mounting these attacks at an important time in U.S.-Cuban relations would have been counter-productive. In the U.S., fingers are pointing towards China or Russia, countries that have motive and means, as well as the capacity on the ground in Havana.

The U.S. settled quickly (and probably erroneously) on the Cuban government as either the responsible party or a knowledgeable participant. The Canadian government has wisely refrained from playing the blame game until there is more substantial evidence.

The Canadian government needs to rise to this challenge more quickly and comprehensively. There are allegations by some of the Canadian victims that Global Affairs Canada was dismissive of early reports and fumbled the ball on following up with U.S. agencies. A lawsuit has been launched by the victims that may test these claims in court. While exceptionally good at dealing with the aftermath of disasters and emergencies abroad that affect Canadians, Global Affairs has traditionally been ill-equipped to deal quickly with problems affecting its own personnel.

The publication of the JAMA article on the “Havana Syndrome” provides an opportunity for the Canadian government to elevate its game, especially when responding to what may be a new security phenomenon for those who serve the Canadian government abroad. This is an excellent topic for the newly created National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. The committee has been slow to get off the ground since its creation in 2017. Now is the time to show its value at tackling what is demonstrably a critical security issue that has already claimed its first Canadian victims.

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Letter from Moscow

Jeremy Kinsman
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Much has changed in Moscow’s capital, where feelings about Vladimir Putin are more mixed than you’d think.

With most of the Russia-generated headlines these days focused on President Vladimir Putin’s relationship with Donald Trump — and for years before that on Putin’s relationship with himself — we haven’t heard much about what life is like on the streets and in the squares of Moscow lately.

More than 25 years after my wife, Hana, and I arrived in the city where I would be Canada's ambassador from 1992-96, we made one of our return visits, this time with an assignment to report back on our sense of the place and the people for *Policy*.

Cities, especially the great ones, change constantly. Some dramatic change seems to alter everything, skyline, streets, and even spirit — think of Shanghai, and how the world's largest city has transformed over a quarter-century from China's sleepy second city into the futuristic financial hub it is today.

Over that same quarter-century, Moscow has evolved from the epicentre of Soviet mismanagement and then post-Soviet chaos to a stunning example of restorative change that has reinforced the stature of its great landmarks and enhanced everything else.

We recently walked for miles through restored and tidied streets, amazed by the way the modernization and openness of the gigantic city had softened it. Muscovites seem themselves to have become softer and more open versions of their former edgy and often sullen selves.

Red Square's brooding vastness is as impressive today as ever. It always projected incalculable power as the showcase centre of a vast empire. It seems no less compelling as the hub now of a single nation, albeit the world's largest, though its aura is less fateful than when the USSR was a secretive police state and Cold War enemy.

Today, carefree tourists and residents taking selfies against the colours and gold cupolas of St. Basil's Cathedral present a playful holiday picture so different from the intimidating emptiness under stern and suspicious communist rule. In winter, pop music wafts over the Square from the nearby skating rink. Summer concerts showcase the world's greatest artists, from Anna Netrebko and Placido Domingo to Paul McCartney.

A sense of dark history still looms over the Square, with Lenin's tomb providing a melancholy reminder of Russia's horrendous convulsions, though the man himself has been removed to an undisclosed location for some restorative work to his corpse ahead of the 2024 centenary of his death. The massive brick walls of the Kremlin fortress still speak from the ages, placing in diminuendo the 800-metre long romantic facade of the former GUM department store, now a luxury goods shopping mall.

Standing on the Square's cobblestones, it remains easy to visualize one's stored images of the parades of stern soldiers, deadly missiles, and shuffling columns of workers and party faithful who came regularly to commemorate the suffering, sacrifice, and wartime valour of Russia's catastrophic twentieth century.

Fifty years ago, the Square's atmosphere of malevolence extended into surrounding dark lanes and out through vast boulevards, where harsh secrets hid behind silent walls. Their customary drabness was interrupted from time to time by the rewarding discovery of down-at-heel but still affecting Orthodox churches, and by stunning-if-shabby art

deco architecture commissioned by merchants before the Bolsheviks tried to re-engineer society forever.

In Soviet Moscow, the city's inaccessible inhabitants walked silently stone-faced to and from the Metro, with its temple-like stations and marbled walls, aimed to convince the capital's residents their civic amenities were up to world standards (which in the case of the Metro, they were).

Eventually, Mikhail Gorbachev forced the Soviet Union to face up to its crippling legacy of violent repression and chronic dysfunction. In ending the Cold War, he seemed to have changed our lives as much as theirs. The sense of freedom his *glasnost* ushered in was at first euphoric, and then devastatingly confusing and chaotic for the many who were unprepared.

Living in Moscow in the 1990s, we saw firsthand the effects of *perestroika's* unprecedented political, economic, and social upheavals as Gorbachev launched his reform project into the unknown. After the break-up of the USSR in 1991, Russian President Boris Yeltsin's attempted follow-through on economic reforms convulsed society.

But it also ushered in dramatic change for Moscow and city life. As top-down command economics were thrown away, a wide-open and chaotic urban economy emerged. In the scramble, certainties of Soviet life went under. With no viable social safety net in place, many citizens had to face destabilizing existential changes. Everyday life became helter-skelter.

By contrast, the fledgling new economy brought material rewards for opportunistic insiders and winners. Their new cars competed with trucks and front-end loaders on raucous backed-up boulevards. The city seemed to be choking under a discernible mist of blue, toxic exhaust.

The once-dark facades of the city discovered neon as garish casinos and nightclubs opened for new moneyed "businessmen" with their Maseratis and Hugo Boss suits, showgirl companions, and body-guards. McDonald's (of Canada, actually) offered whatever McDonald's offers everywhere, but also an impressive new norm in public restroom standards.

Moscow under ragged transition wasn't pretty and didn't seem fair but there was energy and initiative, including in the first efforts to clean and colour the gigantic city, now brightly lit, as storefronts proliferated and apartments became the property of their inhabitants, changing personal outlooks perhaps more than anything else did.

As Yeltsin's Russia tried to re-tool its finances and set the foundation for the country's economic future — a task of complexity that had no precedent as a guide and less Western assistance of significance than we had promised — the head of the International Monetary Fund casually observed that perhaps a generation would have to be sacrificed to the transition.

The oil and gas industry and rising commodity values finessed the inevitability of the anticipated sacrifice by providing sufficient finance to permit transition to a somewhat free-for-all market economy. In due course, it permitted a changed city to emerge from under the heavy hand of 70 years of increasingly stagnating communist administration.

It took a combination of infrastructure investment and a massive renovation. There were actually many beautiful apartments and offices that dated from the tsarist era, and some stone ones that had survived the great fire of 1812, but for seventy years some sort of official obligation to make everything look proletarian had imposed dullness upon them.

Over the last two or three decades, their original elegance has been recaptured. Now, the streets that form spokes of the great wheel of inner Moscow, from the Garden Ring Boulevard as the wheel, with Red Square as the hub, to a depth of about a mile in all directions, join up mostly residential neighbourhoods as attractive as any in Europe. Gone are broken concrete sidewalks, replaced by wide-tiled walkways, shaded by trees, many of which were planted in the 1990s under legendary Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov, a political boss in the style of LaGuardia with the instincts of an oligarch. But he got the recuperation of Moscow started, and not just in now-privatized elegant apartment areas, but all over the gigantic city of everyday workers and commuters.

From the beautiful park around Patriarch's Pond, streets are lined with the summertime awnings of cafes and restaurants of all kinds, most with cushions spread over the wide open windowsills for those who want to relax with a coffee and their iPhone to watch passers-by.

Locals are indistinguishable in dress from Viennese or Lyonnais. Unemployment is low in Moscow. People are generally doing pretty well. It was believed that sanctions against Russia over the annexation of Crimea would be crippling. Far from it, partly because Russians have been very successful in substituting home-grown and regional produce for European cheese and other imported foodstuffs.

Fruit and berry sidewalk sellers who are mostly from the Caucasian republics proudly tick off that the blackberries are from Azerbaijan, the cherries and peaches from Georgia, the plums from Ingushetia, the strawberries from Armenia, and so on, reminiscent of the USSR itself, multi-ethnicity being a frequently recalled feature of the old Union among the nostalgically-minded.

The Soviet Union was 50 per cent ethnic Russian; Russia is 80 per cent and Putin's nationalist rhetoric emphasizes Russian values, traditional virtues and their alleged superiority to the decadence of the liberal West. He doesn't, however, stigmatize ethnic or racial minorities. Yet, African immigrants seem consigned to being dispensers of promotional flyers in the parks and streets, while Central Asians and Caucasians drive taxis and deliver food.

Everybody's on the phone, just like here, and the internet is pretty open. A couple of newspapers are good, though the regime owns and edits regime-friendly TV news with

cynical manipulation. It's not what democracy activists had hoped for but it's freer than what older Russians have ever known. The big cities — Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhny — where professionals are tired of being treated like political infants, remain expectant of some kind of change, at some time, though there isn't much organization to produce it. But in late July, more than 20,000 Muscovites protested on Andrei Sakharov Avenue to rescind the ban on opposition candidates participating in a crucial city election. Meanwhile, young reformers are going into local issues, especially environmental, which is a top concern of women especially.

A surprising number of women are pregnant, and/or pushing prams. I read that demographically, deaths are exceeding births in Russia, but it isn't apparent in Moscow. It's good news. Young moms want the best for their kids, parks, clean and safe streets, and clean air.

They're getting them. The sidewalks and streets are alive with cleaning machines. The boulevards channel traffic that actually flows, aided by unusually long 75-second traffic lights (that pedestrians patiently wait out). Where have all the gasping truck-wrecks and erratic Ladas gone? Late-model Camrys and BMWs roll silently in disciplined order.

Amazingly, car horns seem a distant memory. One hardly hears even a siren in Moscow.

Most impressive to us was the relative openness of people. Because everybody now dresses alike, more or less, even visiting Canadians get asked directions, including from Russians unfamiliar with their capital city, which for Russian-fluent Hana frequently turned into impromptu discussions.

Residents and experts attribute the openness to the effect of the enormously successful World Cup host-country experience last year. Having been told for generations that Westerners were deceitful adversaries, Russians then found the tens and tens of thousand visitors to be not so different from themselves. Everybody got along, most nearly everything worked in all the locales across Russia, and there was hardly any crime.

It's a dichotomy. While North American pundits inveigh against a Mafia state run by a KGB kingpin, expatriate mothers of teenagers tell us that at night they never worry about the safety of their kids.

This isn't the place for profound political analysis, but the one thing most people agree western comment has wrong is our prevailing belief that Putin decides everything as a top-down dictator, mostly concerned with his own power. In Russia, he is generally seen as the guy who pulled the country up off the floor. We call him right-wing and autocratic. Most Russians would peg him as a relative liberal because they know there are more lethal potential tyrants in the wings that Putin fends off.

Most see Putin as an arbiter of various competing and diverse interests. His job has been to restore Russia's stature, pride, and performance and a large majority of Russians credit him with a good job on those. He oversees, fairly loosely, an increasingly

professional and technocratic administration that is almost apolitical. It isn't a vision of inclusive and participatory democracy but it delivers.

Again, contrary to Western sentiment about Russia, Putin's external adventures get mixed reviews domestically. Russians I know are tired of the extended conflict with Ukraine (though they see the Crimea annexation as a justified retroactive adjustment to the way the USSR broke up in haste). They don't view the alliance with Bashar al-Assad as a trophy to cherish. Russians now travel abroad a lot; they get that there is resentment over Russian meddling in other peoples' politics. On these issues, Putin's nationalist populism may be out of step with European-inclined Muscovites. People are proud when he plays the statesman and mediator, especially when compared to Trump the disruptor. They like it when he pushes back against US unilateralism but they like it best when Russia succeeds in strengthening international cooperation among regional allies like the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Council, and on disarmament.

Russian grievances linger over the last 30 years, but they are less prominent now. Our grievances about Russian behaviour are more recent and mock the spirit of partnership we had envisaged only twenty years ago.

Among Russians, Canada is still spoken of with affection and a sense that we share something important and durable. Officially, and in substance, our relationship is in the cellar. Did Russian actions in Ukraine put it there? Or is it driven by our diaspora-driven electoral politics? The question is what is to be done. We haven't had an ambassador for over a year but we have top-flight officers in our reduced representation.

At the French Embassy's National Day reception, their ambassador, a top international performer who had been ambassador in London and Beijing, Sylvie Bermann, put the duality dilemma boldly in her speech to guests. She told them that the historic friendship between France and Russia has been real and profound for centuries (skipping lightly over Napoleon's 1812 visit, I suppose). France wants the friendship to intensify. On the basis that it is an obligation of friends to speak frankly to each other, it needs to be understood that relations between the two countries cannot be normal until a) Russia stops meddling in Ukraine; and b) treats its best friends better.

The message was delivered with warmth and affection that is genuine. Canada hasn't been able to do that for a decade now and we pay a price.

Being "normal" has been a hope and prayer for many, many Russians for a long time. "Why can't we be normal?" was the lament on multiple TV panels after the failed coups against first Gorbachev, and then in 1993 against Yeltsin. In many ways, by whatever norms apply, life in Moscow is increasingly "normalizing" to fairly wide satisfaction. In rural Russia though, the norms are way behind, and that remains a huge challenge.

But can Russia pull back and reach out a little more? Can Western erstwhile partners reconnect? Based on what you hear in Moscow these days, that outcome could be more popular in Russia than we think.

Canada's passive playbook on China takes too many pages from Beijing

Colin Robertson

Globe and Mail, July 30, 2019

Given the deep and tense chill in the Canada-China relationship, it seems a bit incongruous for a cabinet minister visiting Beijing to tweet about ice cream. Yet that's just what Small Business and Export Promotion Minister Mary Ng did at a World Economic Forum meeting in early July. There was no public comment about China's trade embargoes, which have kneecapped our canola, beef and pork industries; nothing about democratic rights in Hong Kong; nothing about Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, who have now spent seven months in jail in China, ostensibly in retaliation for Canada's arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou.

Now come revelations that a senior Global Affairs Canada official, reportedly at the instigation of the Prime Minister's Office, asked our former ambassadors to clear their public commentary with the department. When opposition parties called for parliamentary hearings into the allegations, the Trudeau government used its majority to vote them down.

The federal government looks committed to hearing no evil, seeing no evil and doing nothing on the China file, for fear of further upsetting Beijing. That is no policy for Canada.

Without parliamentary hearings, questions remain. The PMO has denied the allegations, but if the request did emerge from the PMO, was it initiated by the Privy Council Clerk, as head of the public service, the national security adviser or the deputy ministers at Global Affairs?

Justin Trudeau's government seems to be learning all the wrong things from the Chinese. The guardrails between our politicians, public service and judiciary are fundamental to democracy, and this is a norm that needs to be respected by all parties. Besides, ignoring norms has already cost the government a clerk of the privy council, a national security adviser and an unfairly keelhailed vice-chief of the defence staff.

We need a realistic, not a romantic, China policy. It should start with the recognition that China is an authoritarian state, a strategic competitor and systemic rival. It will never follow Western democratic norms because that would destabilize the Communist Party – the root and base of the People's Republic of China.

We have to contain what even Mr. Trudeau acknowledges is China's "aggressive" and "assertive" behaviour. We need to deter Chinese efforts, as reported by our intelligence agencies, to destabilize our democratic elections. We need to engage, not just for trade and investment, but to ensure peaceful co-existence and detente. Otherwise, China will continue to turn the screws: seafood may be next.

For self-respect – we are, after all, a Group of Seven and Group of 20 country – we need to push back.

First, we should launch an appeal to the World Trade Organization over China's illegal actions against our canola, beef and pork. We need to encourage like-minded countries to join us, starting with the United States, which got us into this mess by asking us to arrest Ms. Meng.

We should also support Taiwan in its application to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. Keeping the vibrant democracy out of international institutions just because China wants it that way no longer makes sense.

Let's also put the spotlight on China's abysmal human-rights record, starting with Hong Kong. Canada has one of the world's largest diasporas of Hong Kongers, many of whom sought Canadian citizenship after the Tiananmen Square massacre. We helped organize the Lima Group, to tackle the crisis in Venezuela. We've hosted a conference focused on democratic reform in Ukraine. Why can't we do something similar about China's incursions?

And then there are the million-plus incarcerated Uyghurs in China. We are committed to multilateralism, so why not take advantage multilateral institutions such as the UN Human Rights Commission?

We need to hit those calling the shots in the Communist Party. We should lift the visas of Chinese students in Canada who are related to party officials. A Canadian education is a valued commodity in China.

A strategic approach to China means thinking about the long game. Where do we want to wind up? What are our assets and vulnerabilities, our overriding objectives and goals? Where do the pieces fit together? Engagement, containment and deterrence should be the guiding principles. Trying to muzzle our China ambassadors – foreign service experts – is not the way to achieve a better way forward.

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The Two-State Solution is Dead. Is There an Alternative?

Ferry De Kerckhove

International Policy Digest, July 11, 2019

I am writing this while listening to John Williams' *Schindler's List* for the hundredth time, reminding myself of the immense tragedy of the Shoah and of the small but

glorious Schindler redemption and then I think of the creation of Israel as the ultimate redress for millennia of persecution. I cringe when I still hear debates whether that creation is a gift or a right, but I am prepared to salute the often-maligned Balfour Declaration. Yet, I am deeply saddened by how history has unfolded for Palestinians since the momentous event of Israel's declaration of statehood on May 14th, 1948, whose founding text promised to "ensure equality of social and political rights to all inhabitants." There is no point in rewriting history or even trying to interpret the seven last decades as there is not a single scale sufficiently sophisticated to disentangle the rights and the wrongs.

But one thing is clear – and made clearer by Benjamin Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel, announcement prior to the elections to the effect that he would absorb most of the West Bank's settlements into the state of Israel, likely emboldened by President Trump's formal recognition of the occupied Golan Heights as part of Israel's territory, is that any earlier concept of the two-state solution has become null and void, including the now-defunct option of exchanges of territories between the designated Palestinian areas for a future state, and Israel's boundaries. The latter was last discussed seriously by Olmert and Abbas in 2008 (former Spanish Foreign Minister Moratinos had discussed that option in Taba in 2001). Of course, every foreign ministry's website will continue to pay lip service to the concept and all the UN assorted resolutions to that effect for fear of having to think beyond.

First, former Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion stated early on that it was not possible to accommodate both Jews and Palestinians in a single territory at a time when geographically there was still a way to construct two entities within the British Mandate Palestine. But the right of self-determination at the heart of the creation of the UN institutions, which led to the powerful decolonization movement, was never granted to Palestinians in their own original territory as they were progressively colonized. Neither do they have a state nor have they been able to decide when and how to create a state and eschew the status of colony under military rule. And a great number of them are in exile beyond their original lands.

A number of scholars and even politicians from Israel and Europe have construed the situation/plight of Palestinians as a case of Apartheid. In fact, analogies are made with South Africa despite the differences in territorial size, history and ratio between Africans and white settlers in the area for a longer period than the first Aliyah in Israel – as Mandela said to his followers who wanted to expel whites from South Africa: "no, they belong here." A new approach to the Palestinian cause would require a mutual recognition that both Israelis and Palestinians belong "there," but it is the "there" that needs a changed definition and more importantly, a changed mindset, very different from the arrogant Jared Kushner's "Palestinians are on probation."

Apart from Hamas and part of the Iranian leadership, the right of Israel to exist has been officially recognized and enshrined by the international community, but "against" the Palestinians – again, this is not to rewrite history or if it is, then the fault is equally shared by the Arab countries. Today, a more or less equal number of Israelis and Palestinians live within the original "mandate Palestine" but 83 percent is under Israel's total jurisdiction, with total control on water and sea access, vs. 17% remaining for a

Putin and Camouflage Diplomacy

Ferry de Kerckhove

IEFA Magazine, June 27, 2019

In a way, the story of Russia since the dismemberment of the Soviet Union is a sad one. Looking at developments since 1992 from the Russian perspective – something we mostly fail to do – the diagnosis is profoundly different. Despite François Mitterrand's 1995 warning “never to humiliate Russia,” the West did exactly that: taking advantage of a diminished leader in the person of Yeltsin; trying to fast-track the transformation of Russia from Soviet socialism to “wild wild East” capitalism even before property laws were clearly defined; and bringing NATO closer to its borders by incorporating some former Soviet republics into the fold – a development Putin's Russia considers an existential threat.

As Putin himself stated, “Unfortunately, our Western partners, having divided the USSR's geopolitical legacy, were certain of their own incontestable righteousness having declared themselves the victors of the ‘Cold War.’” To Putin, ideology matters little; territory does. This explains why, feeling it has been robbed of its history, space, and legacy, “Moscow harbours a strong sense of strategic entitlement and will assert its ‘rights’ energetically.” While the West confidently felt that Russia would see the advantage of globalization, which it was prepared to “teach” to the new student, the actual result was an explosion of nationalism in the face of an alien culture.

That is the Russian narrative today, irrespective of the nearly tripling of both GDP – \$1.469 trillion, still only 1/8th of China's – and GDP per capita since 1992. Thus, Russia's interpretation of globalization is both very much correlated to its recent political history and linked to its efforts to regain its status as a superpower, notably through the awkward concept of the Eurasian Empire, linking the two sides of the Eurasian continent into a single economic space with Russia at the centre, acting as the link, the bridge, and the dominant power.

In the early stages of his multiple tenures, President/Prime Minister/President Putin took advantage of high oil prices to position Russia as a major supplier to Europe, to negotiate long-term contracts with several countries, including China, to obtain preferential rates from previous Soviet republics like Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and also to establish strategic control of many pipelines from Turkmenistan. Russia's initial take on globalization was a kind of oil-for-technology exchange and a closely controlled Western investment gambit. As Nigel Gould-Davies explains, Putin's central dilemma has been to manage the tension between controlling the state and growing the economy, i.e. “reap prosperity through globalization while maintaining domestic control and great-power autonomy.” Yet, while initially ensuring powerful foreign exchange earnings and lifting its GDP, Russia would eventually experience the “Dutch disease syndrome” of undue reliance on a single source of earnings from a commodity highly sensitive to price fluctuations. This explains why Russia suffered more than any Western country from the financial crisis of 2008.

Furthermore, for a country of nearly 150 million, Russia's level of exports is lower than that of the Netherlands, far from the powerhouse it would aspire to be on international markets. It tried to compensate for this weakness by aggressively pursuing any opportunity in former Soviet republics and its “near abroad” – Georgia, Ukraine, Central

Asia in competition with China, and Syria, to name a few – to reestablish its dominance or at least to prevent their democratization and eventual cozying up to the West. As Celeste Wallander puts it, Russia on the international economic stage does not play by the rules and norms of the liberal order, but tries to establish relations of subservience with its clients.

The 2008 financial crisis was a watershed for Russia in its relationship with globalization. Putin saw it as evidence of the failure of the liberal capitalist order as universally imposed by the West, and a confirmation that “economic state dirigisme” was a more efficient model of development, as amply demonstrated by its Chinese neighbour. But 2008 also drove Russia to confront more directly what it saw as Western incursions in out-of-area regions, either by the US through coalitions of the willing, or more institutionally through NATO’s engineering of “colour revolutions.” Ukraine became a no-go zone for Putin, so he seized Crimea. There is a strong correlation in Russian thinking between its security concept and strategy, and its perceptions of Western-imposed globalization, such as when the EU proffered a special economic partnership to Ukraine. Russia’s intensive arms buildup, including nuclear weapons, is both part of its desire to reassert its lost status and power as well as a tacit admission that Putin “cannot do this by claiming Russia is a successful economy or a peer competitor.”

As Richard Weitz puts it aptly, after 2008 “Russians described Western-led neoliberal globalization as universally destructive economically, culturally, and politically and responsible for sparking a worldwide revolt.” For Putin, “it is essential to transform globalization from something for a select few into something for all.” Putin’s view is geographically determined, especially given the disappearance of the Soviet Union, hence his determination to prevent Ukraine from falling into the economic orbit of the European Union, seen as a Trojan Horse sent by the US.

So, for Putin, recent events such as Brexit, Trump’s accession to the presidency, the rise of fascism in Europe, and the emergence of illiberal regimes in Eastern Europe – some strongly encouraged by Moscow for security reasons to weaken NATO and EU solidarity – clearly point to the failure of the Western concept of globalization. Putin sees this as an opportunity to foster – by both overt and covert means – an alternative concept with sovereignty at its core, based more on traditional nationalism and conventional, unanimity-based, multilateral institutions, where Russia has a veto power and can suborn anti-establishment groups, parties and movements.

But, at the same time, Moscow wants to benefit from existing economic and technological networks resulting from globalization, and views Western sanctions as attempts to curb Russia’s growth, with Crimea merely a pretext. Russia is thus concerned by a slowdown in international trade as well as by oil prices’ downward spiral, which it sees as brought about by US fracking and politically driven delays and/or competition in expanding pipeline networks. It does not want to be excluded from international trade routes but refuses to abide by the rules and norms of international investments. This makes Russia one of the less attractive markets for long-term foreign investment, even though returns could be highly profitable. Foreign investment in Russia, fairly high before 2008, has dwindled in recent years while outflows exceed the latter by 2 to 1. Russia is definitely not for the faint of heart.

The yearly Valdai conferences – a Russian version of the Davos World Economic Forum – often emphasize the importance of the Eurasian Economic Union, calling it the

“revisionist” alternative to Western models of integration. There is no comparison with structures such as the European Union, if only because of Russia’s total domination. And despite various attempts at interaction, member countries end up looking to Moscow and interact very little with their counterparts. Whatever structure might emerge, it will be no match to the Euro-Atlantic centric political-economic structure so strongly denounced by President Putin. Therein lies the difference between Russia and China’s perception of globalization: at the 2016 Valdai conference, the senior Chinese delegate did repeat Russian criticisms of Western-led globalization, but noted that “the US dollar-centered global economic framework spawned global governance institutions and opened up the world economic structure” and also helped China attain “unprecedented growth.”

All of that makes for little cooperation, whether economic or political, within the troubled globalized world. While Vladimir Putin dreams of some rebirth of the Soviet Union, the real globalization, or variants thereof, is playing out away from Russia, pitting the US against China as the real economic powerhouses of the world, barely noticing Russia other than as a nuclear power to contend with. But that latter dimension is also part of the changing nature of globalization, whereby the established bipolar arms control regimes no longer reflect the reality of a multipolar world. Systemic imbalances add to the uncertainties reflected in renewed arms races, where China is the disruptor until it is included – if ever – in entirely new arms control regimes yet to be conceived. Meanwhile, as evidenced by the recent oh-so-friendly embrace between Mr. Putin and North Korean Chairman Kim – as Donald Trump refers to him – the Russian President demonstrates once again an uncanny ability to fill whatever void opens up on the international stage, hoping to upstage both China and the United States, to the utter delight of Kim Jong-un whose stature continues to grow unchecked.

It may be presumptuous to even think that Canada might have a role to play, as it is much less a player now than previously in the new international environment. What is very sad is the growing, widespread “Russophobia” in the world, and in our own country particularly, fed by our leadership. Gone are the days when, as people of the North, ice hockey included, we used to harbour positive feelings towards the people of the Soviet Union, during and despite the Cold War, and subsequently in the years following the fall of the Berlin Wall. The situation in Ukraine and Crimea plays a part but it should not be a justification for hatred at the people’s level. It is hard to think that such attitudes are good for our economic relations with Russia. And from a foreign policy perspective, not talking to Russia is not a policy.

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