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In This Issue

2  From the Editor: Values and Vision in Foreign Policy

Cover Package: Harper's Foreign Policy

4  John Baird
Q&A

10  Martin Goldfarb
Canada’s Principled Foreign Policy: No More Honest Broker

13  Jeremy Kinsman
The Legacy of the Honest Broker

17  Derek Burney and Fen Osler Hampson
Trade as a Driver of Foreign Policy

20  Jack Hughes
Economic Diplomacy Demands Free Trade with China

24  Yaroslav Baran
Canada’s Place at Ukraine’s Euromaidan

Features

26  Douglas Porter
Ottawa’s Fiscal Update: Getting from A ($18 billion) to B (Zero) in Two Short Steps

30  Robin V. Sears
Defining Leadership In a Changing World

34  Patrick Gossage
Getting a Handle on Scandal

36  Verbatim / Kelvin K. Ogilvie
The Silo Syndrome in Canadian Health Care

Book Reviews

38  David and Goliath, Malcolm Gladwell, Review by Mike Coates

39  Double Down, Mark Halperin and John Heilemann, Review by Lisa Van Dusen

40  How We Lead, Joe Clark, Review by Anthony Wilson-Smith
Welcome to our special issue on Canadian foreign policy under the Harper government. It’s not the Canadian honest broker foreign policy; it’s anything but that. It’s the no-more-honest-broker foreign policy.

As articulated by Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird, in a wide-ranging Q&A with Policy, Canada’s foreign policy has returned to its founding principles of promoting democracy, freedom and human rights.

In our 45-minute conversation at his Centre Block office, Baird discussed the Harper government’s unceasing support of Israel, Syria’s use of chemical weapons on its own people, Iran’s nuclear ambitions, and Canada’s boycott of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Sri Lanka because of the host country’s dismal human rights record. Baird also went to Kiev and met with Ukrainian protesters angry about their government’s reneging on a plan to become associated with the European Union, returning to the Russian orbit instead. Baird is also plainspoken on two human rights issues—the treatment of gays in Russia and the Sochi Olympics, and forced marriages of girls and young women.

On Canada-US relations, and the Keystone XL pipeline project as a test of the relationship, Baird said it will be “good for the Canadian economy, it will be good for the American economy. It will be phenomenal for America’s energy security. It will be good for America’s national security, it will be good for the prosperity of Canada.”

Leading off our cover package, Martin Goldfarb writes that Harper’s “principled foreign policy” sends a message to the Foreign Affairs department, and the entire public service, that policy is made by the government, not the bureaucracy. From Israel to CHOGM, from Syria and Iran to Ukraine, Goldfarb sees the emergence of “principle over expediency.”

Jeremy Kinsman begs to differ. A former head of mission in Moscow and London, as well as Rome and the EU, Kinsman is one of our most experienced foreign policy hands, and laments what he sees as Canada’s loss of influence in leading foreign policy circles. He regrets the abandonment of the honest broker legacy of engaged middle-power multilateralism built over decades.

Then there’s the role of international trade as a driver of foreign policy. It didn’t just happen with Trade Minister Ed Fast’s announcement last November 27 of the government’s Global Markets Action Plan. As Derek H. Burney and Fen Osler Hampson point out, “with roughly one third of our GDP and one in five jobs, Canadian diplomacy has always been heavily invested in trade.” Canadian leadership gave us the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement, the North American Free Trade Agreement and now the Canada-Europe Trade Agreement. These are “significant diplomatic achievements that involved many of Canada’s top diplomats.”

Having done something big with CETA, Jack Hughes makes a case for Stephen Harper thinking big again, and “transforming Canada from a trading nation into a global trading power.” To this end, Hughes writes the PM “should devote the balance of his time in office to a single goal: Free trade with China.”

Finally, Yaroslav Baran considers Canada’s privileged relationship with Ukraine in light of massive protests against President Victor Yanukovich turning away from associate membership in the EU and back towards Russia. While other countries such as the US, France and Germany have remained on the sidelines, Baird went to European Square in Kiev and publicly sided with the protesters. “Thank you, Canada,” they cried. Baran explains centuries of background in the Ukrainian-Russian dynamic.

In our features section, Douglas Porter, chief economist of BMO Capital Markets, looks at Finance Minister Jim Flaherty’s drive to balance Ottawa’s budget by 2015 and concludes he’s on track to do so, though he’s “arguably staked the government’s reputation” on hitting the numbers. “Next stop—Budget 2014.”

In a lovely essay on leadership in a changing world, Robin V. Sears, considers political giants of the 20th century, from Willy Brandt, for whom he worked at the Socialist International, to Nelson Mandela and his “long walk to freedom.” On the other side of the leadership coin, Patrick Gossage looks at the Ford Follies in Toronto and concludes that with each scandal, “our public life will be further diminished.”

Finally, in a Verbatim, Sen. Kelvin Ogilvie, accepting Rx&D’s Health Research Foundation Medal of Honour, decries the “silo syndrome” in Canadian health care. In the practice of health care in Canada, he warns “as many as 30 per cent of all health interventions may do harm.”

Lastly, we offer threereviews of current books: Mike Coates on Malcolm Gladwell’s latest, David and Goliath; Lisa Van Dusen on Mark Halperin and John Heilemann’s Double Down, and Anthony Wilson-Smith on Joe Clark’s How We Lead.
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Q&A: A Conversation With John Baird

“We promote Canadian values”

In his Centre Block office last December 10, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird sat for an extended interview with Policy Editor L. Ian MacDonald on our foreign policy thematic “No More Honest Broker”. For Baird, Canada’s foreign policy is actually re-aligning to our historical origins of doing what’s right, rather than going along to get along.

Policy: Mr. Baird, thanks for doing this. The thematic of this issue of Policy Magazine is “No More Honest Broker” and you said in your speech at the United Nations in September, “No more going along to get along”. Tell us what that means in terms of a principled foreign policy and what it means in terms of Canada’s traditional role as a middle power in the world.

Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird: I think if anything, our foreign policy has moved back to what it historically was. In two world wars, Canada didn’t put its finger in the air to test where the rest of the world was. We didn’t wait for our allies, all of our allies to make a decision. We stood and did what was right and I think too often, some people have a view that Canada is somehow a referee in the world or somehow, you know, the world’s arbiter. No, we have interests. We promote Canadian values and that’s tremendously important.
I know for some, it’s deeply offensive, but I’m at meeting after meeting after meeting where it would just be so much easier to just go along with the crowd to be popular. I remember being at one of my first leaders’ summits as foreign minister, at the Commonwealth meeting in Perth, Australia and this is the first meeting where Canada was bringing up the issue of early and forced marriage and you could see some in the room were deeply uncomfortable and it was suggested that for the good of the meeting, for the good of the Commonwealth that we just maybe scale back our interventions and I paused and thought for a moment. If Canada is not going to speak up for these young girls at the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth which is founded on values, who is going to do it and where are they going to do it?

I did the same on issues of religious freedom and gay rights and if we don’t have a strong voice, who is going to? And we don’t simply look at what our allies do and go with the crowd.

**Policy:** Let’s look at some examples where there have been some conspicuously clear lines of policy that have been drawn by you and the present government. Israel, there’s been no more staunch supporter of Israel, not even in the United States, than the Harper government. The prime minister has said that any threats to Israel are also threats to us, including any nuclear threat from Iran. Now he’s received some political benefit in the sense that the Conservative Party won predominantly Jewish seats in the Greater Toronto Area in the 2011 and 2008 that you never won before. Ipsos recently released an exit poll in 2011 that gave you 52 per cent of the Jewish vote in Canada. But one doesn’t get a sense that Mr. Harper has been doing this for votes, because in the beginning he didn’t have those votes.

**John Baird:** It’s a mistake to say that we were taking this position because of a diaspora or a community within Canada. I think anyone, anyone who knows me, whether they agree or disagree with me, knows that I passionately support the Jewish people, passionately support the state of Israel and the prime minister is exactly the same way. If you were to make a political calculus, will this get you more votes or less votes, if you look at my own constituency, we have 2,800 Jews. We also have 11,500 Muslims and Arabs—there’s at least three times as many people from a different background in Canada. But that’s not why we take the position. Do we welcome the support and we hope people agree with our policy? Absolutely, but that certainly was not the motive.

**Policy:** Do you feel that Canada has got out in front of the United States in terms of its support for Israel?

**John Baird:** I think our government is never hesitant to express our support for the only Jewish state. We feel strongly that Israel—the amount of attention that Israel gets in many international fora is over the top and is out of proportion with reality and we don’t want to see the only Jewish state isolated.

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Some have disagreed with our position, but I think they respect that Canada takes a clear position. Our relationship with the Islamic world, our relationship with the Muslim world, with the Arab world, I think is excellent. I travel regularly, I’ve established a lot of good friendships. Whether it’s —the foreign minister of Jordan, the foreign minister of the UAE are both good friends of mine, the foreign minister of Bahrain. We have a good relationship with Saudi Arabia. We have a good relationship, a very good relationship with Kuwait. Our relations in North Africa are pretty good.

People may take issue with—with one or two of our stands, but we’re engaged in a big way. I am very present in the region. Canada is very present in the region. For the first time ever, we’ve appointed a representative to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. We’ve had our first formal meeting with the Gulf Cooperation Council and we’ve been active in Libya and Tunisia. I’ve established a good relationship with the new foreign minister of Egypt. I think on many issues, we align ourselves with the Arab world, our concerns about Iran, our concerns about the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and our tough stance on Assad and his use of chemical weapons against his own people. So I think we have excellent relations in the Arab world.

**Policy:** I want to come to Syria. Last August, President Obama said the Assad regime had, quote, “crossed a red line” using chemical weapons in the slaughter of hundred of civilians. Then the US and France announced plans for missile strikes. Then Secretary of State John Kerry tossed off a casual comment about how if the Syrians would relinquish their chemical weapons within a week or so, the US would call off the attack. An hour later, the Russian foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, was on the phone, took him up on it and the next thing you knew, they were in Geneva negotiating a deal. You said: “This is a man, Bashar Assad who up until a week ago knew, they were in Geneva negotiating a deal. You said: “This is a man, Bashar Assad who up until a week ago denied that they had such weapons”. So what’s your sense of the trust levels there?

**John Baird:** The prime minister and I strongly supported the president and his decision to follow through on the red line. But after the vote in the British Parliament, I think the president had to deal with the shadow of Iraq and a growing isolationist view, not just in Congress but in the country. All of us who are passionate about the Middle East and North Africa as I
am, we’re still coming to terms with the shadow that Iraq places over the United States. So he made the decision to go down the path of trying to get an agreement in Geneva to destroy the chemical weapons. But we were prepared to strongly support him. The prime minister did at the G20 and I did publicly.

**Policy:** Not with missiles because we don’t have any.

**John Baird:** No, we don’t have cruise missiles and we don’t have B-52 bombers. When we did have the resources, like in Libya, we were prepared to play a major role and did 10 per cent of the bombing, it didn’t put up red flags and a Canadian led the mission, but we were prepared to give them open public and private support, private assurances at the G20 itself and open as far—in diplomatic calls of the world. Having said that, I think you’ve got to give John Kerry some credit. Getting rid of that stockpile of chemical weapons is a major accomplishment.

**Policy:** Is compliance the hard part in terms of enforcing this agreement?

**John Baird:** Yes, thus far, yes.

**Policy:** Getting Assad to turn over his chemical weapons?

**John Baird:** Thus far, you’re talking about fully respecting the agreement, thus far, I think it’s been positive.

**Policy:** Let me ask you about another arena where Canada has taken a stand that’s conspicuously its own and that’s the CHOGM, that Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Sri Lanka which Mr. Harper boycotted because of the local regime’s human rights record and it ended up that he wasn’t alone on that. You even tweeted that “almost half of all Commonwealth heads of government aren’t attending the CHOGM, the lowest number in years.”

**John Baird:** Well, there were 54, there were 54 heads of government in the Commonwealth and then 53 when Gambia withdrew. And only 27 showed up.

**Policy:** And India didn’t show up either.

**John Baird:** India explicitly boycotted, the prime minister of Mauritius explicitly boycotted and I think the fact that you have—it’s still a Commonwealth Summit, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Summit. What would people think at a G8 meeting only four leaders showed up. I think it’s a wake-up call to an organization in big trouble.

**Policy:** Critics of this policy, those who are Canadian joiners of every club, would say Canada’s place is at the table. Joe Clark, one of your predecessors, has said that. How would you respond to that?

**John Baird:** Let me say two things. One is, we feel the Commonwealth is in need of reform. We were very pleased that the Eminent Persons Group did a lot of good work. A Canadian, a member of our caucus, Senator Hugh Segal was a member of that, I think it was a 10-person group and played a major role of shaping a pretty pragmatic reform. All leaders in Port of Spain agreed that there had to be a reform and to rejuvenate the Commonwealth, to make it relevant. We received their report and the run-up to Perth, at the meeting of Perth and with the secretary general and the secretariat and some forces in the Commonwealth did everything they can to water down the reform that all leaders agreed to. When there were problems in Pakistan, there were problems in Fiji, in Zimbabwe, the Commonwealth took action, but with respect to Sri Lanka, we couldn’t even get this issue put on the agenda to discuss.

The issue of the Maldives was briefly on and then off the agenda and then finally—those are the two cases. And the Commonwealth is not there to accommodate evil, it’s there to confront evil. It’s a commonwealth of values. I think frankly, because of Canada’s stand, India joined us, Mauritius joined us. Mauritius was so disappointed in the Commonwealth that they
resigned their chairmanship and said they wouldn’t host the next Commonwealth meeting and the ultimate indictment is that only half of the leaders showed up in a leaders’ meeting. David Cameron went and the United Kingdom is a very difficult situation obviously with the Queen being the head of the Commonwealth. The fact that the prime minister has spoken up so loudly, probably encouraged David Cameron to take a more active and vocal approach, of visiting—visiting Jafna and speaking out. I do note that he was not in the chair for a majority of the leaders’ portion as well.

**Policy:** Okay, let’s look at Iran and the deal between the P5 plus one and the Iranian government, on relaxing economic sanctions in return for dialing down their nuclear program. Normally, critics at least would—had expected the government to—work with our allies as both opposition parties put it in the House. You said that you were “deeply skeptical”.

**John Baird:** Privately I don’t know a single country in the Middle East that would disagree with Canada’s position other than Syria and Iran. Obviously it’s a first step.

**Policy:** Is, again, implementation the hard part?

**John Baird:** Implementation, well this is the first step. This is an interim six-month agreement. So the hard part will be getting a final agreement. Our view is 10,000 spinning centrifuges, enriching uranium, a nuclear state is a big issue for its Gulf neighbors. If Iran wants to have a civilian nuclear program, that’s fine. You don’t need to have an enrichment capacity. You can immediately sign on to the International Energy Agency. Canada was the chair of the IEA until a few months ago. We played a very active role as chairman. We were a big funder of the IEA. I visited their leadership in Vienna. Their leadership has visited me here in Canada. So we’re very active. We’re making sure the IEA has the capacity to be able to fulfill the agreement.

Certainly, this agreement was less a P5 plus one and more a bilateral agreement between the United States and Iran, but they’ve obviously been negotiating this since March. I congratulate John Kerry. He’s put a significant degree of effort into this. The United States is a friend and an ally and I chose my words very carefully because we want this agreement to work. I hope my skepticism is misplaced. But when it comes to trusting Iran, they haven’t earned—they haven’t earned trust from the international community and that’s why it’s not trust and verify, it’s verify, verify, verify.

The United States is a friend and an ally and I chose my words very carefully because we want this agreement to work. I hope my skepticism is misplaced. But when it comes to trusting Iran, they haven’t earned—they haven’t earned trust from the international community and that’s why it’s not trust and verify, it’s verify, verify, verify.

We can’t take a Kumbaya policy when it comes to Iran. This is a government whose nuclear program is deeply disturbing. This is a government with an atrocious human rights record and getting worse under President Rouhani.

The last thing we need is another four or five countries in the world, many unstable, to get or look at getting nuclear weapons and that’s what we’re fighting for and that’s the historic Canadian position. We can’t take a Kumbaya policy when it comes to Iran. This is a government whose nuclear program is deeply disturbing. This is a government with an atrocious human rights record and getting worse under President Rouhani. The number of executions have gone up, not down and finally, a government who supports terrorism. It’s a state sponsor of terrorism and you know, stone women, hang gays and they’re not going to get the benefit of the doubt from Canada and I’ll tell you, in the Middle East, there’s not many countries who disagree with me or disagree with Canada.

**Policy:** Let’s look at Ukraine. Canada was the first country under Prime Minister Mulroney to recognize Ukraine in 1991. You’ve been there recently and in the House of Commons, just before Christmas, you were asked by the opposition foreign affairs critic, Paul Dewar: “What were you doing mixing it up down with the crowds?” He said that you should be trying to bridge Ukraine’s “great divide” between the pro-Russian and the pro-European supporters there and you replied, “I’ll tell you whose side this government stands on, we stand on the side of the Ukrainian people and their fight for democracy.” What was your sense?

**John Baird:** I’ll put it in context. The government went into a small demonstration, to break things up under the guise that—to remove these protestors, beat protestors, beat journalists, a lot of violence because they, quote, “...had to put Christmas decorations in the square”. Obviously they were trying to clean up the street before the international community arrived and then they made the decision, just before the meetings in Vilnius to suspend their European association agreement talks and the decision on that.

A lot of leaders, a lot of foreign ministers didn’t go. I did. The message that I delivered to—to my colleague, the foreign minister, we had a good professional meeting, was to be very mindful of how they conduct themselves, to avoid violence and to engage with the opposition. I also took the opportunity that I was there to meet with some of the opposition—I met with the government, I met with the three opposition leaders, heard their take. The Canadian embassy is two blocks from where this demon-
I've always been very proud of Ca

He spoke with a strong and powerful voice, frankly not just alone but putting together an international—an international effort, primarily first within the Commonwealth and then elsewhere. There was no moral relativism there and that was probably Mr. Mulroney’s single biggest stand for what was right in the entire time that he was prime minister.

It is a real concern that you have some—some very real influences from one of Ukraine’s neighbours and you know, obviously we want the best, we want peace and prosperity and freedom for the Ukrainian people and I think the best path for them to achieve all three is with the association agreement with the EU. I’ve engaged with my colleague in the past. I spoke to him 10 days before, on the decision that they made to suspend their discussions with the EU, to encourage him in this path, even though it may be difficult and we’ll continue to engage.

Policy: You spoke earlier of actually returning to the principled origins of Canadian foreign policy. We’re speaking on the day of Nelson Mandela’s memorial service in South Africa and it occurred to me that one example of that was Mr. Mulroney’s crusade against apartheid and to freeing Nelson Mandela. On this, he differed from Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

John Baird: Arguably his two closest friends in the circle of foreign leaders and he took on Thatcher and Reagan head on. He wasn’t going to go along to get along with our major allies. He spoke with moral clarity. He spoke with a strong and powerful voice, frankly not just alone but putting together an international—an international effort, primarily first within the Commonwealth and then elsewhere. There was no moral relativism there and that was probably Mr. Mulroney’s single biggest stand for what was right in the entire time that he was prime minister.

John Baird: I’ve always been very clear. My job is about promoting Canadian values and promoting Canadian interests. Increasingly those interests are—have an economic dimension. What do we want for the world? Three things: peace, prosperity and freedom.

Policy: Let’s turn to trade and the economy and Canada-US relations. At the end of November, your colleague, Trade Minister Ed Fast, released the Global Markets Action Plan, or as it was immediately dubbed, “diplomacy for dollars” and I guess some of the traditionalists in your department thought we’re leaving our traditional areas of interest. What are your thoughts on that and CETA, the Canada-Europe Trade Agreement or the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, is the TPP the next play? And what about the bilateral with South Korea and Japan?

Policy: On Arctic sovereignty and the North Pole, part of the policy that you announced before the holidays was a mapping of the Lomonsov Ridge to the North Pole. Is drawing a map going to get us what we want or what more do we need to do?

John Baird: What the prime minister has said, or what our government has said for the past eight years is that we will aggressively stand up for our sovereignty in the north. We support the convention on the continental shelf and the commission’s work. Our officials have done a tremendous amount of good work.

What the government said is that we wanted to get all the facts before we make a decision, to get the mapping and then to analyzing before we made a final submission which I think is a good one. Canadians expect us to do our best and to—and to make an informed decision. We’ll get the facts and then we’ll submit.

Policy: What do we want for the world? Three things: peace, prosperity and freedom. That’s why we’re making investments in security so that they’ll be peace. That’s why we’re making investments in humanitarian and development assistance.

What we also want—I mean the guild and—the guild and the clothier operations in Haiti, they’re coming in. They’re going to provide jobs for the people of Haiti. We don’t want to give them development assistance. We want them to be able to provide for themselves and their families. So trade is a big part of that and promoting Canadian interests. Listen, when Barrick Gold does well, that’s good for Canadians who own Barrick Gold.
The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, the Ontario Teachers Pension Plan, the municipal pensioners in Ontario, when Barrick does well, in the Dominican Republic, in Chile, in Africa, Canada does well because there’s so much Canadian investment there. That’s good for Canadians’ retirement. When we have—when Canadian companies do well, they pay—they pay more taxes and that’s how we pay for health care and education.

We’re not afraid to push for Canadian interests on the economic side, but it’s never an either/or equation with Canadian values or Canadian trade interests.

It’s not about a pipeline, it’s not about the energy sector, this is about the future prosperity of our country. It matters, it’s important and we want to see it approved and we’re working aggressively at the political level and the diplomatic level, with the province of Alberta, with the private sector to get it approved.

Policy: On Canada-US, in a word, Keystone, is this a test of the relationship?

John Baird: It’s not about a pipeline, it’s not about the energy sector, this is about the future prosperity of our country. It matters, it’s important and we want to see it approved and we’re working aggressively at the political level and the diplomatic level, with the province of Alberta, with the private sector to get it approved.

Policy: What’s your sense of where the White House is coming from on this, because usually in a negotiation, you say to the other guy, what do you need for your comfort level and to get you to where you need to be on this? You get conflicting messages coming out of Washington. President Obama gave an interview with the New York Times in July where he pointedly referred to the tar sands rather than the oil sands and he added that Keystone would create only 2,000 jobs during construction and after that, he said: “We’re talking about somewhere between 50 to 100 jobs in an economy of 150 million people”. And interestingly the State Department had a number that they subsequently stuck to, that it would create 42,000 direct and indirect jobs and TransCanada’s number is 16,000 direct jobs and they’re very confident of it.

John Baird: This is a project that will be good for the Canadian economy, it will be good for the American economy. It will be phenomenal for American energy security. It will be good for America’s national security, it will be good for the prosperity of Canada.

Policy: Are you confident that Secretary Kerry understands how important this is to us?

John Baird: I had a great relationship with Hillary Clinton who was a big supporter of Canada. I’m developing a really solid relationship with— with John. I have huge admiration for his leadership, particularly on the Israeli-Palestinian peace question. I have spoken to Ambassador Gary Doer in Washington. The embassy is working hard and the government is seized with it. We’ll see—we’ll see where it goes. It’s important for Canada.

Policy: Two final questions. First on the treatment of gays in Russia. The Olympics are coming up in Sochi in February. How confident are you that the Olympic Village is going to be a place of tolerance?

John Baird: It would be a public relations disaster for the Russian Federation if they started to arrest people for walking around with a rainbow flag or if two athletes were holding hands. Obviously we’re concerned and we’ll have consular officials available, we always do in foreign countries to deal with any issues, but this is kind of—it’s kind of selfish to sort of think of the human rights of a few thousand athletes for 16 days rather than the 140 million Russian, 150 million doing 365 days a year, year after year after year. I think it’s patently clear what—that the motivation in this (Russian) law is and Canada was the first big country to speak up against it and I was pleased to see President Obama and Mr. Cameron in the UK to follow Canada’s lead. And obviously we’ll maintain our opposition. I had a long discussion with Sergey Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister about it and we’ve agreed to disagree.

Policy: And finally, a subject that’s close to your heart. You’ve made speeches about this cause that you’ve adopted as your own and that’s young women and girls and forced marriages. What your sense of the progress on that dossier?

Maternal and early child health, women and peace and security, early and forced marriage, rape as a weapon of war, these are all issues that are important to Canada. These are not just some arcane human rights issues. This is all about development as well.

John Baird: This is the first time that this is front and centre on the international agenda. Someone has called it the effect that Hillary Clinton brought in 1995, that women’s rights are human rights and then her leadership on this as secretary of state. Canada has been very active in that and Canada is doing a lot on putting the issue of early and forced marriages on the agenda. We’re working with civil society. We had the first side event at the UN General Assembly on it. We’re getting a lot of support.

We’ve got to change attitudes. This is not exclusively a government issue, but it’s an attitude and we’re putting a lot of programming dollars into, working a great organization, Girls, Not Brides, in London. It’s an interesting issue for a conservative man to champion, but there is a theme in this. If you look at the prime minister’s leadership on maternal and early child health, women and peace and security, early and forced marriage, rape as a weapon of war, these are all issues that are important to Canada. These are not just some arcane human rights issues. This is all about development as well. If country X in Africa wants to see itself grow and succeed, they need everyone in their country making it grow and if you’re only using 49 per cent of your population’s brain power, you’re not going to get very far.
Canada’s Principled Foreign Policy: No More Honest Broker

Martin Goldfarb

The Harper government’s determination to change Canadian foreign policy has been nowhere more obvious than in its bilateral relationship with Israel and how it informs Canada’s role in multilateral institutions. The shift in both policy and process has agitated the media and public service and precipitated a backlash in some quarters. It has also proven that policy based on principle can be achieved without the high price some had predicted.

When Stephen Harper became Prime Minister, he was determined to change the process and thereby the perception of how our government makes decisions. Harper apparently believed that previous governments had been overly influenced by expediency as defined by the civil service and the media. Especially in foreign affairs, I think he believed that decisions were made based on realpolitik or the path of least offense and he was determined to reposition how citizens experienced government decisions. Now, decision making would be driven by principle.

The first and best example of this is the Harper government’s position on Israel. It seems to me that Prime Minister Harper chose to support the principle that countries have a right to act in their own interest. Flowing from this was the belief that the State of Israel should have the right to act accordingly. While Israel is often criticized
for acting in its own interest, even if its decisions are ethical and legal, Canada would support these decisions on principle.

What did Canada actually support and what has been the result? The issue for Harper was to get the civil service to pay attention to this new approach to decision making and at the same time to get the attention of the media. His actions were brilliant as he clearly accomplished both by supporting the government of Israel on principle—because it was democratic in the same way that Canada is democratic. Israeli values were easily understood in Canada.

Previous prime ministers gave great speeches in Canada to Jewish audiences about how they admired and were supportive of Israel. But, when it came to vote at the UN, following the advice of our bureaucracy, Canada often abstained and rarely voted with Israel. When resolutions at the UN condemning Israel for one thing or the other were voted on, Canada rarely voted with Israel. Harper changed that.

Canada began to vote with Israel: Harper’s position was that his support of Israel was a principled support based on ethics and morality. As Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird made clear in his speech to the UN General Assembly on September 30: “Canada’s government doesn’t seek to have our values or our principled foreign policy validated by elites who would rather ‘go along to get along’.” Principled foreign policy is in Canada’s long term best interests.

But in my mind, there was also a political positioning in Canada. The prime minister was sending a clear message to both the civil service and the press that they would not have as much influence in decision making with this government as they have had with previous governments. Elected representatives would now decide and implement policy. The message that this government would not act as previous governments had was clear and direct.

Apparently, many in the civil service were aghast. They privately condemned the government and quietly spoke to the press suggesting that these decisions with respect to Israel would cost Canada valued support and influence at the UN, both in the Middle East and elsewhere.

In my mind, there was also a political positioning in Canada. The prime minister was sending a clear message to both the civil service and the press that they would not have as much influence in decision making with this government as they have had with previous governments.

This may be true. But has it really hurt Canada’s image? Has anybody decided not to trade or do business with Canada because of its support for Israel? Indeed, Joe Oliver, our Natural Resources minister, has stated that no Arab country has refused to do business with Canada because of Canada’s support of Israel. Taking a principled position—doesn’t it suggest that as a country we believe in fairness? Is alleged influence more important than principle? In the long perspective principle generates respect, admiration and support. I believe, with Stephen Harper, that principle will win out on the end.

Riyad al-Maliki, the Palestinian Authority’s foreign minister, recently visited Canada. The Globe and Mail reported that Minister al-Maliki’s visit showed a warmer tone towards Canada and that Minister Baird reciprocated the warmer tone towards the Palestinian Authority. Baird referred to Minister al-Maliki as a friend. What Baird clearly demonstrated was that Canada’s support for Israel has not really hurt Canada’s standing with the PA. Baird said that Canada and the Palestinian Authority “see eye-to-eye on many issues in the region”. Canada is contributing an additional $5 million on top of the $25 million previously pledged to the PA and the PA appeared delighted to take it.

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imilarly, Canada’s unstinting support for Israel at the UN was seen as the partial driver of Qatar’s bid to move the International Civil Aviation Organization from Montreal to Doha. The UN aviation body has been in Montreal since its creation in 1947. But Qatar later withdrew its bid in the face an intense lobbying campaign by the federal, Quebec and Montreal governments, in which over 100 countries were contacted.

The Harper government has applied this new way of doing business to other areas, both externally and internally.

Externally, Harper’s focus on the health of women and girls is another example of speaking out and acting through the Muskoka Initiative, where many in the world would prefer silence. Again, as Baird said at the UN in reference to violence against women: “We condemn it. Even though some might prefer that we kept quiet. The discomfort of the audience is of small concern, particularly in the context of a crime that calls to heaven for justice.”

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learly, Baird’s meeting with Israeli Justice Minister Tzipi Livni in East Jerusalem has not been a deterrent to our government’s evolving positive relationship with the PA. And this is true, despite the hyper-

January/February 2014
Harper’s decision not to go to the Commonwealth Conference in Sri Lanka is another example of principle over expediency. The government did not want to be seen to be condoning Sri Lanka’s human rights record whether or not other Commonwealth nations decided to attend the meeting or however they may react to Canada’s position. Then, just a week before the Commonwealth summit in mid-November, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh also decided not to attend. He was clearly following Harper’s lead. Baird even took to Twitter. “Almost half of all of all Commonwealth heads of government are not attending the #CHOGM summit (23/51) lowest number in years,” he tweeted on November 13. In a subsequent tweet he wrote: “Thanks to @pmharper’s principled leadership, Sri Lanka has been unable to use the #CHOGM summit to whitewash its human rights record.”

And in a lead editorial on November 14, the New York Times praised Harper’s boycott. “To their credit,” the Times noted, “Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada and India’s prime minister, Manmohan Singh, announced they would not attend.” Now, Canadian values inform foreign policy elsewhere, too.

More recently, on the interim nuclear deal with Iran, Baird said Canada was “deeply skeptical” of the six month agreement negotiated by the P5 plus one (The US, Britain, France, Russia and China, plus Germany) of reduced economic sanctions in return for modest concessions on uranium enrichment, delaying a new heavy water facility and allowing more international inspections.

“We think past actions best predict future actions,” Baird said. “And Iran has defied the United Nations Security Council, it has defied the International Atomic Energy Agency. Simply put, Iran has not earned the right to have the benefit of the doubt.”

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On November 25, the day after the deal was announced, Baird told the House of Commons during Question Period: “We will support any reasonable measure that actually sees Iran take concrete steps back from its nuclear program. Regrettably, we do not have a lot of confidence or a lot of trust in the regime in Tehran.”

While at the end of the day, it is difficult to envision Canada not supporting its G7 partners and NATO allies, neither is Canada simply going along to get along. Again, it’s a principled position.

And in early December, Baird visited Ukraine and drew opposition criticism for meeting with protesters in Kiev’s Independence Square. In question period on his return, Baird defended the decision. “I am very proud to promote Canadian values, to promote a citizen’s right to peacefully protest, and I’m very proud to have not only met with government representatives when I was in Ukraine, but I’m very proud to have travelled to [Independence Square] to meet with opposition leaders and hear the voices of the people of Ukraine who are pushing for democracy and freedom in their country.”

On the other hand, Harper has made principled decisions that I do not think are in the best interests of Canada, such as eliminating the long form census. The new procedure ultimately provided us with inadequate data but nevertheless this government acted on the principled belief that they were protecting the privacy of Canadians. They believe that the government should not force Canadians to answer questions that they see as inappropriately personal. Although I do not agree with this policy, the principled process is the same.

Principle will be supported by the public because politics is about interests and principle drives interests that make sense. In the case of Israel, Canada has accepted the principle that it can respect both the Israeli and Palestinian interests, even if they conflict. Canada has accepted the principle that Israeli interests are ethical and legitimate. They are driven by values and history. It is these principles that are the backbone of Harper’s support for Israel.

As a political strategy, supporting Israel signaled that policy is now established by those who are elected, continuing the concentration of power in the executive branch and the Prime Minister’s Office started 50 years ago. It established that things are different in Ottawa. The civil service and the media are still recovering.

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The Harper government has changed Canada’s approach to international relations in myriad ways, from our position on Israel to our policy on Iran to the recently unveiled shift to economic diplomacy. Critics say that what John Baird has called a shift to “conviction politics” is actually the abandonment of a legacy of middle-power multilateralism built over decades. Former ambassador Jeremy Kinsman argues that it’s not too late for the government to articulate a foreign policy agenda that speaks to our values and again provides a multilateralist model for the world.

What’s happened to Canada?” is the question David Emerson kept getting asked abroad even while he was foreign affairs minister. The impression recently channeled by Louise Arbour is that Canada is “largely absent from the international scene,” or worse, seen as an international spoiler. The editor of a big audience European publication wrote to me: “In the past Canada has been held up as a shining beacon on the world stage. However, that reputation appears increasingly tarnished.”

Conservatives retort that part of what’s “happened” is that the world is more competitive than cooperative. Stephen Harper’s brash approach to foreign affairs has put Canadian economic interests first, and has otherwise chosen a “principled foreign policy” over Canada’s traditional role as honest broker.

For Harper’s latest foreign minister, John Baird, it is a change to “conviction politics.” In a 2003 speech to Civitas, Harper pressed “conservative insights on preserving historic values and moral insights on right and wrong,” especially in “the great geopolitical battles...against modern tyrants” that he depicted as “battles over values.” It was the year he urged Canada to support the US-UK invasion of Iraq 2003 as “an issue of moral clarity.”

In The Longer I’m Prime Minister, Paul
Wells suggests the value Harper cares about most is smaller government, a skepticism about big government plans that extends to large international issues, especially multilateral plans that could constrain national sovereignty, such as concerted action to combat climate change.

Joe Clark sees Canadians as “multilateralists by talent and by instinct, but also by interest.” Indeed, Canadians have placed international cooperation at the heart of foreign policy for six decades, seeking remedies and safeguards for the threat of nuclear war, glaring economic disparity between North and South, apartheid, or the fateful conflict between Arabs and Israelis. Canadians built new alliances, including with civil society, which advanced human security norms for universal justice, through the International Criminal Court, and a responsibility to protect civilians at risk of mass atrocity.

Our generally multilateral methods were invested in a Canadian reputation, even an internationalist brand, of helpful world citizenship. We were in our minds good guys with no record of colonial conquest or aggressive intentions, a developed country apt to care about the underdeveloped.

Our generally multilateral methods were invested in a Canadian reputation, even an internationalist brand, of helpful world citizenship. We were in our minds good guys with no record of colonial conquest or aggressive intentions, a developed country apt to care about the underdeveloped.

Canadians were valued as leaders, chairs, drafters, mediators, and peacekeepers because we could work with others, not because we were delusional about the UN’s weaknesses, which are the weaknesses of our world. We always knew the alternative of no UN would be worse.

The calculus seems dubious. Among Canadians with university degrees, the EKOS poll last October 31 shows that the Conservatives are 21 points behind the Liberals (Liberals 42.1 per cent; NDP 26 per cent; Conservatives 21.0 per cent). The eight point Conservative lead among Canadians without university degrees won’t get them back above 30 per cent nationally.

A changed world does call for changed diplomacy, though. The multilateral system is arguably less productive as new poles of power jostle for position amidst a relative decline in US and EU influence following the neo-liberal economic model’s car crash in 2008, political dysfunction since, and two punishing expeditionary wars.
Whether the world is multipolar or even zero-polar, the content of international relations is shifting from relations among states to relations among peoples within those states, now networked and connected by ubiquitous communications tools creating a shared awareness and aspirations.

Everywhere, people are questioning their relationship to governments, seeking, even in China and Cuba, the empowerment to influence decisions that affect their lives.

Free elections are a goal in most places, but the words heard most are “fairness,” and “dignity.”

The Arab Spring has been ragged. That the revolution of Tahrir Square has failed to produce a functioning democracy confirms that it takes time to build inclusive democratic capacity. It’s not a process to be downloaded. Compromise has to be learned. That the nonviolent mass protest movement in Syria got hijacked by an armed uprising enabling the dictator to stomp down is a variation of an old story of authoritarian repression that in the long term will fail.

John Baird’s “dignity agenda” claims to address some of these trends. There have been some innovative approaches to Internet outreach to civil society in places like Iran. Sadly, in Canada itself, NGOs are regarded as adversaries. Government transparency and parliamentary oversight on which we used to mentor transiting democracies have been dumped. Joe Clark suggests it’s all part of Harper’s “suspicion” about other peoples’ motives, at home or abroad.

On Iran, Baird’s position is extreme. There is every reason to criticize the human rights regime in Iran, but to refuse to recognize the possibility of change is obtuse.

Critics in Canada and abroad see “domestic politics and ideology written all over” our policy on Iran, as noted by Steve Saideman, presuming it is linked to seeking recognition as the most loyal ally of Israel. Surrounded by 350 million Arabs and threatened by a potentially nuclear Iran, the Jewish state needs friends. In My Promised Land, Ari Shavit recounts the country’s story in terms that will move every friend of Israel, which includes almost all Canadians. But Shavit warns that Israelis need to confront the “moral, demographic, and political disaster” that is the military occupation of Arab lands beyond the 1967 borders, and the continued expansion of Israeli settlements. Tom Friedman writes in the New York Times, “If Israel doesn’t stop the settlement madness, denying the Palestinians a West Bank state, it will fit the caricature of its worst enemies.”

Helping Israelis find an equitable solution rather than cheering is what friends are for. US Secretary of State John Kerry is shuttling regularly to the area and American military specialists are detailing plans to help ensure Israeli security after withdrawal. Once, Canada provided the Israelis useful expertise on truce verification. Under the Oslo accords, Israel accepted a working group on refugees only because Canada agreed to chair it. Today, we’re out of it.

We have folded a lot of tents, especially on the environment. The bilateral relationship with the US is one we can’t fold. Figuring out how to share a continent with a close ally, friend, and superpower who could always power-drive our interests to the side-lines meant we had to lock as much decision-making as possible into a network of rules-based institutions, to govern the border, shared waterways, air quality, and especially trade flows and disputes.

The US, of course, has many close friends and suitors, but valued the range of Canada’s international networks that we could sometimes deploy usefully in a constructive way when US superpower status was a disqualification. Former US secretary of State James A. Baker said Canada usually “gets it right,” even when the US didn’t, such as on the wars in Vietnam and Iraq.

Brian Mulroney’s ability to negotiate an FTA (and an acid rain pact) with the US and yet take a quite different and prevailing tack on apartheid is an example. Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and Bill Clinton all valued the contacts Canadian prime ministers had. Pearson deployed Blair Seaborn to talk to the North Vietnamese and Lyndon Johnson agreed to the Auto Pact. Pierre Trudeau broke from the pack to open relations with the Chinese. Richard Nixon, advised by Henry Kissinger, followed.

The necessity for Canada’s prime minister to have an excellent personal relationship with the US president is not discretionary. Instead of building one, Harper lines us up with Obama’s right-wing critics, valorizing Bibi Netanyahu’s take over Obama’s on the wisdom of the laboriously crafted temporary agreement with Iran, or earlier on a G8 statement on the occupied West Bank territories. When we ought to be coming up with ammunition for the president to use against US decriers of the oil sands, evidence that Canada is working for abatement of carbon, Harper instead loudly called Obama’s politically fateful decision on the Keystone XL pipeline a “no-brainer,” promising we “won’t take no for an answer,” whatever that means.

Where does the Harper government get it right?

Going for greater world economic stature by diversifying economic partnerships beyond the US has always made sense. The Comprehensive Eco-
Policy

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But economic diplomacy is nourished by influence, by our international standing earned from our primacy on international issues of peace, security and governance other governments care about.

It’s not too late for the government to articulate an agenda for foreign policy that speaks to our values and our economic well-being and again shines a plausible “beacon” to the world community. Canada’s reputation for pluralistic fairness and economic well-being make us in BBC polls the second most “popular” country, after Germany. But we have to trust others again, including our own diplomats who represent our diplomatic legacy. It is an asset to deploy, not to be sneered at.

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President Obama and Prime Minister Harper at a press conference following their first bilateral meeting on Parliament Hill in February 2009. The necessity of a good relationship “is not discretionary,” observes Jeremy Kinsman. PMO photo

Economic and Trade Agreement with the European Union is a big deal, more than a good one for the economy. It is a building block for the construction of a common economic home between North America and the EU, based on our massive inter-investment and shared democratic and economic governance, however imperfect. It is not “against” Asia, where we absolutely must also succeed in a pivot of our own, but it will strengthen North America’s competitive position.

Foreign policy needs to be a dual track: we need strategic partnerships based on mutual economic interests, as with China, but at the same time we need to insist on the right to express our society’s solidarity with the rights of civil society and human rights defenders governed by multiple international covenants. The two tracks can be mutually reinforcing if done well.

That’s where the Ed Fast “all hands on deck” to mobilize “all” Canadian diplomatic resources behind Canadian private sector companies gets it wrong.

First, Canadian diplomacy has always been economic.
The “Global Markets Action Plan” announced by Trade Minister Ed Fast last November 27 is a timely reminder of how central economic diplomacy is, and has been, to Canada’s foreign policy.

For a country with trade as its lifeblood—roughly one third of our GDP and one in five jobs linked to exports—Canadian diplomacy has always been heavily invested in trade. Since Confederation and the introduction of Sir John A. Macdonald’s National Policy, which protected Canada’s infant industries and also saw the construction of two great railway projects to link the country from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, economics has dominated our history and our engagement with the world.

Trade as a Driver of Foreign Policy
Derek Burney and Fen Osler Hampson

The Harper government recently unveiled an economic diplomacy push that will emphasize enhanced trade in Canada’s engagement with other countries. For the plan’s critics, it represents yet another shift away from development and diplomacy toward business in this country’s international relations. Burney and Hampson argue that not only is economic diplomacy not new; it has been the centerpiece of Canada’s key achievements in recent decades.
The year 2014 marks the 20th anniversary of the formal ratification and coming into force of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which was negotiated and signed on December 17, 1992 by President George Bush, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Mexican President Carlos Salinas. Preceded by the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement, the inclusion of Mexico with NAFTA produced a global economic juggernaut. Together the three NAFTA members today have a combined GDP of roughly $18 trillion US. That’s huge by any measure and makes North America’s market the world’s biggest, exceeding the European Union’s total nominal GDP of $16.6 trillion and more than doubling China’s GDP of $8 trillion.

However, Canada’s economic future cannot rest on trade and investment with its NAFTA partners alone. From an all-time high of 87 per cent of total world trade at the beginning of this century, Canada’s trade with the United States has shrunk to slightly above 70 per cent and is projected to fall further to 65 per cent as we lose market share to China and Mexico. The most recent casualty of the flagging US-Canada economic relationship is the auto sector which, since the time of the Auto Pact, ranked first or second in terms of Canadian exports to the US. Those heady days are long gone and there is little prospect that they will return. An elevated Canadian dollar, tougher competition from abroad and the skewed terms of the 2009 bailout of General Motors and Chrysler have sharply weakened Canada’s position in the US auto market.

Much of the emphasis of the Harper government’s new plan is therefore on trade promotion, harnessing our diplomatic assets more systematically to seize market opportunities for Canadian firms in dynamic emerging economies, notably those in Asia where much of current global growth is occurring and where our future prosperity lies.

The objective is to seek commercial gains for Canadian companies by promoting exports, attracting needed inward investments and safeguarding outward investments. ‘Meat and potatoes’ diplomacy has been the standard for Canada’s Trade Commissioner Service during its illustrious 118-year history. One nagging problem is that we have too few companies active in global markets. That is why the goal of encouraging SME’s (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) is particularly welcome.

This emphasis on more focused trade promotion is hardly revolutionary and certainly not, as some persistent critics of this government lament, a signal that other instruments of Canadian foreign policy will be diminished or downgraded.

This emphasis on more focused trade promotion is hardly revolutionary and certainly not, as some persistent critics of this government lament, a signal that other instruments of Canadian foreign policy will be diminished or downgraded. Canadian diplomats and many of their embassy colleagues have often been their country’s chief trade promotion officers, more so than those from countries that are not as dependent on trade for their livelihood. That is as it should be but there is nothing that suggests that this emphasis is, or should be, exclusive of all others. Our diplomats can walk and chew gum at the same time. Knee-jerk critics of the new plan should put away their slings and arrows. There is no real target here.

Although negotiating free trade agreements, first with the US and then with Mexico, was a central pillar of the Mulroney government’s foreign policy, that did not prevent the prime minister from playing a leadership role in combating apartheid and supporting Nelson Mandela’s remarkable transition role in South Africa. Nor did it prevent the PM from negotiating the Acid Rain Accord with President Bush, and supporting the reunification of Germany and the independence of Ukraine.

Trade is actually one component of our foreign policy in which our scope both for relevance and influence is actually commensurate with our comparative advantages, hence our voice and leverage in trade negotiations. As the saying goes, we must “play to our strengths.” While trade promotion has a prominent, supporting role to play in assisting Canadian firms abroad, it is the history of successful trade negotiations that has given Canada the essential foundation to promote, enhance and protect our economic interests around the world.

The Free Trade Agreement with the US, NAFTA and, most recently, the CETA with the European Union are also significant diplomatic achievements that involved many of Canada’s top diplomats.

From the early post-war period, senior Canadian diplomats were at the forefront of major multilateral trade negotiations beginning with the launch of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) in 1947 running through subsequent rounds and culminating with the creation of the WTO (World Trade Organization) in 1994. The Free Trade Agreement with the US, NAFTA and, most recently, the CETA with the European Union are also significant diplomatic achievements that involved many of Canada’s top diplomats. All of these agreements delivered tangible gains to the Canadian economy with benefits for producers and consumers alike and with rules governing trade that enabled us to compete more effectively in global markets.
Negotiations are now underway primarily with Korea, Japan and India as well as under the broader Asia Pacific umbrella of TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership), priorities that link directly to the thrust of the “Global Markets Plan”. If successful, these negotiations would give Canada privileged access to markets with significant prospects for growth. They also offer the added advantage of diversification. The more diversified our exports become the more competitive and efficient we will be in a rapidly globalizing economic environment.

The ability to negotiate trade agreements that serve the national interest is the hallmark of economic diplomacy and Canada’s record on that score is second to none. Reciprocal openings for trade in our own economy that flow from trade agreements promise dual dividends—lower prices and broader choices for our consumers and more competitive and productive domestic industries.

It is well to remember, as well, that it is the size of our economy that enabled Canada to gain a seat at the G8 and G20 summits considered by many to be the high table of global diplomacy. Our stable fiscal performance through the financial debacle has given us one of the few credible voices on macro-economic issues at the most recent, annual sessions of these groups.

In an increasingly uncertain world, it is essential that a middle power like Canada deploy all of its combined instruments of foreign policy—trade, aid, political and security—coherently and selectively and in a manner that will serve our national interests. Trade negotiations and trade promotion may seem ‘grubby’ to some but they have been and will continue to be key elements of our foreign policy tool kit, bringing tangible dividends to our economy, helping to establish clearer rules of law for trade and providing strong, predictable safeguards for exporters and investors alike.

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The ability to negotiate trade agreements that serve the national interest is the hallmark of economic diplomacy and Canada’s record on that score is second to none.
Every prime minister since Sir John A. Macdonald has sought to leave their personal imprint on Canada’s foreign policy, yet only a handful can credibly claim to have changed our country’s role in the world. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has an opportunity to be among them—but it is an opportunity he must still seize.

Harper’s decision to embrace, endorse and espouse the doctrine of economic diplomacy, to marshal all of the nation’s diplomatic assets to open new markets for Canadian companies, may represent a seismic shift in how we conduct our international affairs—but it risks being dismissed as empty rhetoric unless or until it is matched by equally bold action.

To that end, if the prime minister is truly committed to leveraging our foreign policy for domestic prosper-
ity and to transforming Canada from a trading nation into a global trading power, he should devote the balance of his time in office to a single goal: Free trade with China.

The negotiation of a comprehensive economic trade agreement with China is the logical and natural extension of the particular type of economic diplomacy advocated by the Harper government. If successful, it would secure preferential access for Canadian goods, services and investment to the greatest potential market in the world.

While the recently announced Global Markets Action Plan does identify China as a priority market, it is only as one of 80 countries so recognized—a fact which invariably brings to mind Harper’s stinging indictment of his predecessor, Paul Martin: “If you have hundreds of priorities, you have no priorities.”

It is true that Canada has myriad interests in a multitude of markets, but the onus is nevertheless on the prime minister and his cabinet to narrow our national focus on a primary priority market—just as they did this past year with regards to the European Union.

There will undoubtedly be some who will argue that the government has already pivoted to the Pacific. To them, the ongoing free trade talks with Korea, India and Japan—supplemented by the Trans Pacific Partnership—are sufficiently ambitious to ensure that we maintain our competitive advantage.

While those opportunities are unquestionably important to Canada, both collectively and on their individual merits, they are not without limitations. Nor are they substitutes for securing greater access to the world’s second largest economy.

Canada experienced a major setback when the United States concluded its trade agreement with Korea before we were able to do so. By getting a deal after the Americans, we will have already lost out on some of the most lucrative opportunities for our agricultural exports. Korea remains the cautionary tale about the need to seize and secure “first mover” advantage.

The situation with regards to Japan is somewhat similar, at least insofar as our bilateral hopes have to some extent been diluted by the TPP. When Canada launched its negotiations with Japan, it had yet to be persuaded to join the TPP. The full value of what we hoped to gain was based, at least in part, on a far greater degree of exclusivity than is likely now.

Last, but certainly not least, is India. There is little doubt that a comprehensive trade agreement with India would be a coup for Canada. The size, scope and scale of the Indian market are massive, and governed by political, legal and financial models not dissimilar from our own.

While some have expressed hope that a deal can be signed by the end of 2014, that deadline could be impacted by India’s national elections this coming spring. It is not clear what the outcome of those elections could be, though most predict another coalition government. If the talks drift into 2015, they could be further delayed by the federal election in Canada.

Finally, all three of those negotiations were launched before the Harper government committed itself to what International Trade Minister Ed Fast described as a “sea change in the way Canada’s diplomatic assets are deployed around the world.” If the shift to economic diplomacy does not engender new priorities, it is simply a shift in tactics, not strategy.

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There are already those who contend that the fanfare surrounding the unveiling of the Global Markets Action Plan was much ado about nothing. They claim that the changes announced were not changes at all, but, rather, the re-packaging of policies which have largely been adhered to in practice since the early 1980s.

If the prime minister wants to prove those critics wrong, he will need to do more than promote the great work being done by the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service. He needs to commit both his government and the country as a whole to a foreign policy initiative that is as bold and provocative as his proposed change in strategic direction.

Without question, Stephen Harper deserves more credit than he has been given for the successful negotiation of the Canada-EU trade agreement—a singular achievement which promises to benefit every region of the country. Part of the problem may have been that the merits of the deal were so clear and indisputable that they didn’t inspire much in the way of energetic debate.

There are a number of stakeholder groups and constituencies within Canada who would vigorously oppose closer economic collaboration between Ottawa and Beijing—but it is a discussion deserving of debate.

Free trade negotiations with China, however, would require as much deft diplomacy on the domestic front as they would at the bargaining table. There are a number of stakeholder groups and constituencies within Canada who would vigorously oppose closer economic collaboration between Ottawa and Beijing—but it is a discussion deserving of debate.

For their part, the Chinese have made repeated overtures signaling an interest and desire to
Policy delivers Canada's decision makers
It would be rare for foreign policy discussions to start with etymology, but in the case of Ukraine’s current political crisis, nothing could be more apt. The name “Ukraine” comes from an archaic Slavonic term meaning “borderland”. And that’s precisely what Ukraine has been through most of its history: the frontier between modern, democratic Europe with its Western values, and the russophone, Orthodox, sphere to the north and east, with its autocratic and imperialist traditions.

Russia’s separate identity and history began in the early 12th-century, when Prince Yuri Dolgoruky—a second-son scion of Kiev’s ruling dynasty—went north with an army to the sparsely-populated Suzdal lands, set up an ar-

Canada’s Place at Ukraine’s Euromaidan

Yaroslav Baran

The mass protests in Kiev’s European Square (“Euromaidan”) are merely the most contemporary manifestation of a tragic and blood-soaked history: a strong Russian ruler in the north with long arms, attempting to weaken the integrity of a Ukrainian state to the south. For Canada, the response to the protests is about more than the 1.25 million citizens who claim Ukrainian roots. That is why John Baird was met with mass chants of “Thank you, Canada!” when he ventured onto European Square.
chipelago of strongholds, and eventually established the new fort of Moscow. From his new northern base, Prince Yuri—nicknamed “Yuri Long-Arms”—embarked on a lifetime quest to reach back down and manipulate the traditional capital of the Kievan, proto-Ukrainian, medieval state. His tactics ranged from occasional sacking and pillaging of Kiev to attempts at installing puppet aristocrats to keep the Grand Prince of Kiev politically weak. And so it all began.

Yuri Long-Arms’ descendants became the first ruling dynasty of Muscovy—the kings who would eventually (with Constantinople under constant attack form the Turks) relocate the mantle of Caesar (“Czar”) in an effort to appropriate the East Roman Emperors’ divine sanction mythology, and bring it north: for the new caesars, the Russian Czars.

Fast forward 900 years, and the mass protests on European Square (“Euro-maidan”) are merely the most contemporary manifestation of a tragic and blood-soaked history: a strong Russian ruler in the north with long arms, attempting to manipulate the affairs and weaken the integrity of a Ukrainian state to the south. And while military prowess was the traditional tool (from the Yuri to the Czars to the Bolsheviks) the methods du jour, in the post-Soviet era, tend to be economic.

Ukraine’s domestic energy industry remains underdeveloped, while its industrial supply chains were deliberately constructed during the Soviet era to force economic integration among Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan. Under such circumstances, a series of well-chosen wheel turns and lever pulls from Moscow could cripple Ukraine’s economy and cost it billions of Euros in a matter of weeks.

This is precisely what happened in the lead up to the Vilnius Summit—the high-level meeting between EU delegates and Ukrainian President Victor Yanokovich, which was ostensibly to be a final decision point and signing ceremony for Ukraine’s entry as an associate-class member of the European Union. Vilnius was to be one foot into the EU for a post-Soviet country the size of France and sitting on the edge of Europe.

But the modern-day Czar President Vladimir Putin extended his long arms once again to quietly, yet firmly, demonstrate the consequences of Ukraine’s move closer to the West. Ukraine’s globally-coveted chocolates were decreed to no longer meet Russian food safety standards. Ukrainian manufactured vehicle parts—always integral to the heavy-manufacturing supply chain—were no longer deemed safe for Russian conditions. Border checkpoints sprang into action with unprecedented documentation reviews causing several-day queues for exporters trying to get their goods out the door. And the coup de grâce: Moscow declared it was time to renegotiate natural gas rates for 2014—at non-preferred rates, of course.

For Yanukovich, there was no decision to make. The European market may be much larger and wealthier than the Russian market, but the prosperity it represented for Ukraine was a future prosperity—a hypothetical one. European integration would also require political and economic reforms that would be unwelcome by the oligopolist clans dominating Ukraine’s political and economic life.

A Russian deal, on the other hand, would be immediate, would reinforce trade and supply lines already in place, and would stave off considerable discomfort in the short term. It could also be done without disrupting the post-Soviet château clique power structure which underlay Yanokovich’s political fortunes as well as the immense personal wealth he is reputed to have amassed since becoming president. Moreover, Yanukovich hails from the heavily russified industrial south-east, where Russian tends to be the home language and Russian pop culture is readily consumed. Culturally, a middle-aged Russianophobe industrialist from Donetsk or Dnipropetrovsk, and a young, educated, and west-leaning student from the western metropolis of Lviv, may as well be from different planets.

But the more immediate problem in Ukraine is not that the president chose to bow to Putin’s pressure rather than signing an EU agreement supported by a clear majority of his countrymen. The current crisis is the mass protest in response—a mass protest that, in December, grew in energy, and danger, by the day—and whether there is a way out of this impasse.

What started as a modest but significant protest over the EU-Russia debate grew into a virtual general strike in Kiev due to the violent crackdown on the early, modest manifestation.

What started as a modest but significant protest over the EU-Russia debate grew into a virtual general strike in Kiev due to the violent crackdown on the early, modest manifestation. As with most other political controversies, it’s not the act, it’s the response, that matters most. President Yanukovich’s decision to unleash the riot police on peaceful protesters catalyzed a much larger and much more volatile civil unrest that is now demanding his resignation as an entry-level concession.

This was the explosive situation into which Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird walked on December 4 with his decision to personally attend an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) meeting in Kiev while virtually all other “FM”s had opted to send deputies or junior representatives. Baird could easily have chosen to hide behind official safety concerns, boycott spin, or the diplomatic convenience of sending junior reps “to send a political message”. No. John Baird made the bold decision to go to Kiev himself. Because Canada can do for Ukraine what no other country can do. And Canada has always had an interest as no other countries have had.

John Baird made the bold decision to go to Kiev himself. Because Canada can do for Ukraine what no other country can do. And Canada has always had an interest as no other countries have had.

Canada boasts some 1.25 million citizens who claim Ukrainian roots. The post-war era saw a massive wave of immigration—many from DP camps—of Ukrainians who maintained not only their language and culture, but also
their political awareness and involvement. They supplemented an earlier wave of turn-of-the-century economic refugees that settled the prairies and opened up the West. And this critical sequence of waves gelled the Ukrainian-Canadian community into a political force, woe to be ignored now in Canadian politics.

This is why we have official multiculturalism—the brainchild of Ukrainian-Canadian Tory Senator Paul Yuzyk. This is why we had Ray Hnatyshyn as governor-general at the end of the Cold War. And this is why Canada, under Brian Mulroney in 1991, was the first Western country to recognize Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union—breaking ahead of the NATO flock with whom Canada normally takes such steps in concert.

And this is why John Baird was met with mass chants of “Thank you, Canada!” when he ventured onto European Square.

This is why Canada matters to Ukraine, why Canada is paying attention, and why Canada’s foreign policy vis-à-vis Ukraine remains bold and principled while the US has largely checked out, the UK concedes the lead to Europe, and Germany and France weigh their own pros and cons of poking the Russian bear.

Unlike the Orange Revolution, there is no obvious exit from what is now an extremely tense situation. In 2004, the mass Orange Revolution protests demanded a re-election following widespread Yanukovich-camp electoral irregularities. But it all happened right after a presidential election, so even Yanukovich had a face-saving out: “Fine. Do the election all over again. I have nothing to hide.” This time, however, we are 14 months away from the next election—practically mid-term. There is no room for an electoral compromise, and little mood to engage between a hardline old-guard president and the mass protests demanding, finally, and end to the russo-oligarch establishment that has controlled most of Ukraine’s post-independence reality.

In the news cycle, the dogs bark and the caravan moves on. Late December became a time for year-enders and holiday cheer. In sum, ideal conditions were emerging for a crackdown or at least a thirty-silvers deal with Moscow that few outside Ukraine would notice.

And indeed, this came to pass with a pre-Christmas deal in which Moscow raided its pension fund to offer Kiev $15 billion in bond purchases as well as a sweetheart deal on the critical natural gas that fuels its economy—in classic Cold War style. You can side with the West, along with its outrage, press releases and reprimands, or you can side with us—your old friend, who comes with a big bag of cash and an even bigger bottle of vodka to wash it down and forget the consequences.

The West was indeed snookered in a Cold War manoeuvre that, in hindsight, seems obvious in its slow-motion replay. But the West also has assets capable of the understanding, the tactics, the context, and the principle required to countermove in this ongoing high-stakes game of chess. Once of those assets is Canada, and another is John Baird.

And in the immediate term, if nothing else was practically gained by John Baird’s bold personal foray into the Kiev fray, it will have left one critical indelible reminder: that even as the rest of the world checked out for the holidays, Ukraine’s democracy movement still had Canada watching its back.

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In vivid contrast to the high drama over the fiscal landscape south of the border, including the baffling government shutdown in October, Canada’s budget backdrop has continued to quietly improve. With broad Canadian economic trends producing few surprises in 2013—growth was modest, as widely expected at the start of the year—Ottawa’s finances have mostly unfolded as per the budget plan. A better-than-expected starting point for the deficit partly spilled into the latest projection, but only a small part. This year’s deficit is now projected to narrow only slightly to $17.9 billion (or 1 per cent of GDP) from $18.9 billion for FY12/13, and from the initial projection of $18.7 billion. The government booked a one-time allowance of $2.8 billion in the current fiscal year for the Alberta floods, partially offset by a $0.7 billion boost from the General Motors

Ottawa’s Fiscal Update: Getting from A ($18 billion) to B (Zero) in Two Short Steps

Douglas Porter

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty’s November fiscal update was filled with positive news. Indeed, ratings agency S&P reaffirmed Canada’s AAA rating the day after the announcement. The budget projections—if they unfold as predicted—could open the door for much-welcomed tax relief and also provide a platform for the next federal election in 2015. But the finance minister has staked the government’s reputation on meeting the balanced budget target within the next two years, and there are still hurdles ahead.
stock sale. Excluding special factors and contingency reserves, the underlying deficit in the current fiscal year would be closer to $14 billion, a decent improvement given the sluggish underlying GDP growth in both real (1.7 per cent) and nominal (3.0 per cent) terms. Ottawa is now expecting a larger surplus two years hence ($3.7 billion), (see Chart 1) and trimmed next year’s deficit outlook by $1.1 billion to $5.5 billion—which is certainly within striking distance of balancing the books a year early, especially considering a $3 billion contingency

**CHART 1: BUDGETARY BALANCE AFTER MEASURES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual Balance</th>
<th>Projection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010: -55.6</td>
<td>2009-2010: 3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011: -33.4</td>
<td>2010-2011: 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012: -26.3</td>
<td>2011-2012: 5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013: -18.9</td>
<td>2012-2013: 5.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Finance

**CHART 2: FEDERAL DEBT TO GDP RATIO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual Debt-to-GDP Ratio</th>
<th>Projection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006: 34.1</td>
<td>2005-2006: 33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008: 29.2</td>
<td>2007-2008: 30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010: 33.1</td>
<td>2009-2010: 27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011: 33.1</td>
<td>2010-2011: 26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012: 33.2</td>
<td>2011-2012: 25.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Finance; Statistics Canada
reserve is built into the figures.

While there were no major new revelations in the mid-year update, there were some notable tidbits. The debt/GDP ratio is expected to hold steady at 33.1 per cent in FY13/14, marking the fifth consecutive year of an essentially flat profile on this key metric. The goal is to cut it to 25 per cent by 2022 (see Chart 2). Ottawa also included very long-term fiscal projections, which see the debt/GDP ratio dropping to zero by 2039, despite the demographic challenges from slowing labour force growth and rising health & pension costs.

On balance, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty’s update was rife with seemingly positive news, including the strongest employment and income growth in the G7 since 2006 (see Chart 3). Indeed, ratings agency S&P reaffirmed Canada’s AAA rating the day after the announcement. The budget projections—if they unfold as expected—could open the door for much-welcomed tax relief and also provide a platform for the next federal election in 2015. However, the finance minister has also arguably staked the government’s reputation on hitting the balanced budget target within the next two years, and there is still work to be done and hurdles ahead.

On the domestic front, the stubbornly sizeable discount on Canadian oil prices and ongoing uncertainty on the prospect of new pipelines casts serious doubt on the outlook for resource revenues (which drive Ottawa’s bottom line through firmer nominal GDP growth and corporate profits), not to mention growth in Alberta and Saskatchewan (the recent star performers). External risks for Flaherty’s forecast include the fact that inflation is probing the low end of the comfort range in Europe and the US after years of persistently sluggish activity, and lingering questions over how the emerging markets will react to the recently announced tapering of QE3—the third round of quantitative easing under which the Federal Reserve has been buying back bond at the rate of $85 billion per month—in the year ahead. In a nutshell, the global recovery remains fragile, and Canadian exports have essentially been flat for more than a decade.

In terms of what Ottawa can control, there is also still some wood to chop. The federal government will need to find more efficiencies than simply freezing the operating budget, which will save $550 million in the current fiscal year and $1.1 billion in FY14/15. As well, the aging population will gradually exert rising budgetary pressures. Canada is dealing with a transition from 5.4 workers for every person over 65 as recently as in 2000, then down to 4.6 in 2012, and headed for 3.6 by 2020. Health care outlays are another concern, although the unilateral announcement on these outlays by Flaherty in December 2011, after meeting his provincial colleagues,
gives Ottawa some certainty on this front. Recall that upon the expiration of the 2004 Health Accord in 2014, health transfers to the provinces will continue to grow 6 percent annually for three years, and then in line with the economy after that, with a floor of 3 percent.

Moreover, there is the broader question of whether aiming for a balanced budget within two years is even the appropriate goal for fiscal policy at this juncture. While shrinking government deficits are all the rage globally, persistently weak growth suggests the emphasis should be elsewhere, especially if the world economy stumbles anew in 2014. Countries with a strong credit profile, such as Canada, could stand ready to support growth if need be. Long-term interest rates remain at exceptionally low levels, which is precisely the time when the public sector could be making long-term investments if global growth fails to revive notably in the year ahead. Canadian governments did increase infrastructure spending through the recession, but the initiative has faded almost everywhere with the intense focus shifting to balancing the books. Given persistently weak underlying activity and the notable absence of a growth driver, the economy can use any small boost it can get and perhaps a little less focus on restraint. At the very least, redirecting spending toward infrastructure would be a positive step.

The fiscal update had little impact on the GDP forecast (see Chart 4), although the potential for tax cuts in 2015 or beyond would certainly be a positive for the medium-term growth outlook. Any significant firming in Canadian economic growth over the next few years remains contingent on better US growth. If the latter doesn’t evolve as we expect, the correct policy prescription is not more restraint, but likely less, whether through tax relief or infrastructure spending. From a bond market perspective, shrinking deficits and restrained growth will contain the upward move in long-term yields, following a year in which some yields jumped by a full percentage point in the summer on merely the prospect of Fed tapering.

Bottom line: Ottawa has managed to keep its finances on the straight and narrow through a prolonged period of sluggish growth. Exceptionally low borrowing costs and fewer spending pressures than faced by the provinces have helped. The federal government should manage to balance the books within the self-imposed two-year deadline of 2015, albeit with its fiscal reputation on the line. Whether this is the appropriate goal for fiscal policy remains open for debate and highly dependent on how the global economy unfolds in the next two years. Next stop—Budget 2014.

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Defining Leadership In a Changing World

Robin V. Sears

The 20th century produced a pantheon of great and complex leaders, from the commanding eloquence of Churchill to the breathtaking grace of Mandela. In an era of caution, incrementalism and marketing-driven politics, how do we define leadership and measure greatness?

Anniversaries of events surrounding great leaders always provoke unkind comparisons with the performances and personas of their successors. The mists of time erase their weaknesses and bathe their achievements in the nostalgic glow of golden memory. The 50th anniversary of John F. Kennedy’s assassination evoked such a mood. It is especially strong as his tragic fall is usually rolled into the equally painful deaths of his brother, Robert, and of Martin Luther King Jr. only a few years later. The ache of missed opportunity that their being snatched from us so suddenly engendered remains.

We choose to forget that Kennedy got not a single historic piece of legislation passed, waffled on both Cuba and Vietnam, and, perhaps like Barack Obama, was somewhat better at moving audiences than at driving government. Robert Caro’s magisterial, soon-to-be five volume audit of Lyndon Johnson’s life has forced those of us old enough to remember hating him for the war in Vietnam to step back and reconsider his accomplishments. Assessments of great leadership are rarely set in stone. The judgments of history force painful edits of the reputations of both the mighty and the maligned. The lens of one’s own experience affects one’s vision of greatness. For the Polish, Winston Churchill’s acquiescence to the murder of tens of thousands of their countrymen by quiet agreement with Josef Stalin at Yalta will forever mute the colours of...
his reputation. Canadians and Australians who know of Churchill’s role in deerring the appalling and meaningless sacrifice of their young men at Gallipoli in the First World War and in Hong Kong during the Second World War, will never see him as grateful Englishmen always will.

Yet, there are standards and there are standard-bearers, and we are right to demand adherence to those tests and to mark our leaders against them. It is hard, in Canada, the United States, Europe, Africa, and in much of Asia, to look at today’s important government and business leaders and see men and women who are the equals of the greats of their own nations’ histories.

The rationalizations are many: great and testing times deliver greatness to otherwise ordinary leaders. Peace is rarely a maker of great leaders; conflict is. Good times require merely good leadership. But those are simply rationalizations of failure.

Would South Africa not be a better and happier place now if Nelson Mandela had served more than a single term as its president? Mandela’s recent passing reminded the world that a one-time prisoner, jailed for 27 years, became the father of his country and the democratically elected president of a free South Africa. And it reminded Canadians of Brian Mulroney’s campaign of conscience against apartheid and to free Mandela. Released from prison in early 1990, Canada would be the first country he visited after his release, and Parliament the first one he would address.

Part of the reason, as Churchill acidly put it, is that, “It is hard for a nation to look up to leaders whose ears are to the ground.” Today’s marketing-driven political and corporate leadership style emphasizes incremental change, cautious initiative, and ears firmly attuned to the latest focus group research.

Can one see a single Churchillian gene or speck of Margaret Thatcher DNA in David Cameron? Does Angela Merkel’s hesitant physicist-housewife leadership rank her anywhere near Konrad Adenauer, Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt, or Helmut Kohl? It is preposterous to mention François Hollande’s name in the same sentence as Charles de Gaulle’s or François Mitterrand’s.

The respected students of leadership—scholars like Warren Bennis, Peter Drucker, Antony Beevor, Doris Kearns Goodwin—all agree that leaders are made and not born. Yes, your odds at the brass ring are better if you are English-speaking, tall, handsome, white, male, and eloquent. But Martin Luther King was only 5-foot-6, Lee Kuan Yew is not eloquent, Indira Gandhi was far from handsome and none of them is white Greatness is available to all. So why is it so scarce today?

Part of the reason, as Churchill acidly put it, is that, “It is hard for a nation to look up to leaders whose ears are to the ground.” Today’s marketing-driven political and corporate leadership style emphasizes incremental change, cautious initiative, and ears firmly attuned to the latest focus group research.

Another crippling contribution to the scarcity of leadership is the decline of deference, the slow erosion of faith in institutions and in society itself, the apparently endless rise of social anomie and disengagement in much of the developed world among the young. In the 1960s, we thought it so very clever to wear buttons that read, “What if they gave war and no one came?” The underlying message of our cynical stance was, “No leader deserves your trust. Don’t listen to them.” And it’s less than a lifetime ago that such a breakdown in confidence led to the bloodiest chapters in an already bloody 20th century.

Not to be credited is the finger wagging at traditional journalism, video games, and the impact of digital technologies and contemporary social media. “Nobody reads anymore, young people don’t care, and we are rotting our collective minds with salacious trivia,” is the trope of many a grumpy aging progressive, ironically joined by knuckle-draggers like Bill O’Reilly. The same was said about coffee houses three centuries ago, gin houses two centuries ago, and opium dens in the 19th century. Each of those generations was marked by dozens of great leaders despite the frivolous temptations of their era.

Nor can the argument that good times merely require basic management be given any credence today. The list of causes, issues, and countries desperate for strong principled leadership remains too long to even contemplate such a weak excuse for mistaking management for leadership.

It is hard to think of a more incremental and cautious exponent of manager-as-leader than our current prime minister. Stephen Harper’s career has been built on the avoidance of anything big, potentially divisive, or transformational.

Whether it is carbon limits or reducing income inequality or a solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict, leadership will involve strong persuasion about some unappealing changes. Rosalynne Carter put it well: “A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don’t necessarily want to go, but ought to be.” Given her insight, it must have been painful to see her husband fail at it.

It is hard to think of a more incremental and cautious exponent of manager-as-leader than our current prime minister. Stephen Harper’s career has been built on the avoidance of anything big, potentially divisive, or transformational. This leadership strategy has worked beautifully for him and for his new party, but it is hard to see history being impressed by his contribution to transforming Canada’s weaknesses into strengths, to taking us where we ought to be. In fairness, in negotiating the Canada–Europe Trade Agreement, he has delivered on a big idea, possibly a transformational one.

Obama risks harsh judgment for the opposite shortcoming: promising much and failing to perform. The fiscal crisis that was the healthcare rollout was not only a failure of management, but a failure of real political leadership. Obama’s achievements in energizing and engaging disaffected black, His-
In Warsaw in December 1970, West German Chancellor Willy Brandt kneels at the monument to those murdered by German soldiers during the uprising by Polish Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943. (courtesy, Robin V. Sears).

Obama’s achievements in energizing and engaging disaffected black, Hispanic, and young Americans by the millions now risks being seen merely as proof of eloquence. Eloquence can be the foundation of great leadership, but not its content.

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Leadership is not always about a conscious strategy of change, methodically executed. Sometimes it is framed by an incident or an inspiration born out of character and experience. When West German Social Democratic Chancellor Willy Brandt ventured on his first trip to Poland—in front of the survivors of a people more savagely crushed more often by his German forefathers than any other—he knew the expectation of history on him in that moment.

On that cold, grey afternoon in December 1970, Brandt slowly approached the Monument to those who had been murdered by German soldiers in the uprising of Polish Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943. It is distant history today, but was only 27 years in the past then. He was surrounded by a mix of local officials and ordinary citizens, many of them old enough to have witnessed the atrocities. In the famous photograph of that day, you see on the assembled faces combinations of doubt, shock, and even happiness as they witnessed the unbelievable.

The leader of the hated German nation fell suddenly and without warning to his knees, his hands clenched in front of him, head abjectly bowed, his pained gaze unbroken by a single word. He remained there in absolute silence for what seemed to observers like an eternity.

He said later, “An unusual burden accompanied me on my way to Warsaw. Nowhere else had a people suffered as in Poland. The machine-like annihilation of Polish Jewry represented a heightening of bloodthirstiness that no one had held possible.”

He was deeply apprehensive about the visit and the balance he needed to walk between German anger at his being too apologetic and, as he said, his “memory of the fight to the death of the Warsaw ghetto.” He felt he “had to do something to express the particularity of the commemoration at the ghetto monument. On the abyss of German history and carrying the burden of the millions who were murdered, I did what people do when words fail them.”

No, he did what only a brave and thoughtful leader would do at such a moment.

Brandt also understood that bombastic leadership is merely a sad imitation of the real thing. The Donald Trumps and Silvio Berlusconis and similar belowers in Canadian politics can never aspire to true leadership because they fail the test of authenticity. One proof of authenticity in leadership is the willingness to take private risks, with no prospect of public acclaim, because that is the only way forward.

Fifteen years after that Warsaw moment, I was witness to that side of Brandt’s leadership in an opulent Kremlin office in front of the recently elevated Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. I was a staffer to Brandt in his role as President of the world’s largest federation of political parties, the global partnership of hundreds of labour and social democratic groups—the Socialist International. He was heading a delegation of European leaders to meet the surprising new Soviet Communist Party general secretary. We didn’t know then that he would change the world, but his style and candour in those meetings told everyone this was a transformational leader.

It was the time of Soviet dissidents, refuseniki, and of international campaigns on their behalf. Many progressives around the world would regularly pound the Soviets, partly as proof of their own anti-communist credentials, partly because it was popular to do so, and always got great domestic media coverage. The British, the French, and the Italians were the most cynical at this. They had begun to attack Brandt for not being more robust in his public critique of the Soviet Union. I began to get worried about the impact of his silence. They and I should have known better.

This was Nobel Peace Prize winner Brandt, after all, the man who had devised the only successful strategy for dealing with the
Soviets and their dreadful East German clones, if you judge success as winning freedom for those persecuted most viciously. His Ostpolitik strategy, grease by billions in German marks and covert American dollars, won the release of many Soviet and East German dissidents—simultaneously undermining both systems through the corruption of key officials, happy recipients of these secret payments. (It is a chapter of the Cold War that will not be written fully until more of those involved have passed on, so secret and illegal were some of the schemes.)

As the nervous political staffer, I was increasingly insistent as the visit to the Soviet Union entered its final hours that Brandt should offer a crumb of criticism to the media about the Soviet dissidents. To my final plea, he looked at me dismissively, and simply said, “Watch!”

Sulkily, I did, until the closing minutes of the final meeting with Gorbachev. Brandt rose, crossed the room, and shook the Soviet leader’s hand, for an uncomfortably long time. I had glimpsed his hand as it came out his pocket; I was stunned. Brandt had palmed a tiny envelope.

As he turned to leave, he said quietly, “Sir, it would do me a great honour if you were to inquire about some of the names on that list.” Three months later, several of the dissidents were quietly released. Brandt never mentioned his action, and was never credited for it. And I was grateful once again for my schooling at the feet of this incredible leader.

Improbable as it may seem to his critics, John Baird is another international player who understands the difference between public declamation and private entreaty. He has made similar efforts on behalf of today’s refusniki, the oppressed gay men and women in Russia and the Middle East. But he understands, as well, that it is a subject that he cannot discuss and still hope to be useful to them.

So, whither Canada in the business and governmental leadership stakes? We have had strong, courageous prime ministers, both of the high profile/big vision type and of those whose successes were more often offstage. We have had Canadian corporate and trade union leaders who were indisputably best in class.

Sadly, however, in every field, many of those Canadian leaders work on behalf of organizations and companies based elsewhere. Two Canadians, Lynn Williams and Leo Gerard, spent much of their careers running one of the largest and most well respected international unions, the United Steelworkers Union in the US. Several Canadians play key roles in running Silicon Valley firms. Some of our best academics lead American and Asian institutions.

Our run of national leaders, from Lester Pearson and Tommy Douglas, to Ed Broadbent, Bob Stanfield, and Pierre Trudeau, to Brian Mulroney and Jean Chrétien, has been impressive. We have had premiers of world statesman-level competence and skill in Peter Lougheed, Allan Blakeney, and Bill Davis. Today, not many Canadians outside Saskatchewan know of the skill and potential of Brad Wall—a great premier in a province that has had more than its share of greats—but they will.

The seminal leader of the advertising business in the post-war era, David Ogilvy, founder of the agency that still bears his name in 120 countries, liked to say that good clients create good agencies. He might have added that great clients demand grand ideas well executed.

Perhaps the same is true of democratic leadership: voters with high expectations, who demand big change and big solutions to critical problems are likely to get better leadership than those who accept the trivial or the insultingly picayune—see, for a sorry example, changing the tax code to reward gym memberships.

Given the Mackenzie King-like small change, delivered seriatim in small packages to small numbers of voters in the past seven years, it will be a shock to some Canadians to return to the scale of vision of a Pearson, a Trudeau or a Mulroney.

We need to do a better job of demanding leadership capable of tackling it.

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During the years when I was Pierre Trudeau’s press secretary, a major scandal hit and I was in the thick of it. Pierre Trudeau’s wife, Margaret, had left 24 Sussex for Toronto, where she hung out and smoked dope with the Rolling Stones, then New York where she partied at the best discos. It was international news and I was regularly awakened at home in the middle of the night by European tabloids wanting a quote or reaction, and sad Canadian journalists assigned to cover her, asking where she was.

I could satisfy neither, since the boss’s total silence on the breakup of his marriage completely shut his aides down as well. Only his loyal executive assistant at the time, Robert Murdoch, knew what was happening, and he still doesn’t talk.

I had one tense discussion about the media’s apparent “right to know” with the eminent CBC-TV journalist, David Halton. I still believe that what I told him should apply to any and all political scandals: the burden of proof rests on the media and opponents to prove that what happens in one’s private life seriously affects his or her ability to carry on in a leadership role.

This lens was applied to B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell when he was arrested in 2003 in Hawaii, charged with drunk driving. Despite vocal calls for his resignation, and the classic accusations of lack of judgment that ostensibly made him unfit to carry on,
he survived handily, and became the symbol of the highly successful Vancouver Olympics. Trudeau’s unwillingness to fuel the media’s insatiable curiosity about his marriage kept the Margaret story where it belonged, he remained in office and went on to become the most eligible bachelor in North America—again.

Now, a different standard applies both south of the border and in Toronto. In the US, sex scandals involving the likes of Anthony Weiner and David Petraeus have quickly iced careers. Weiner’s “sexting” suggestive photos of himself to several women caused a media frenzy, his eventual resignation from Congress and a humiliatingly quixotic New York mayoral bid. And just as the Toronto Police are involved in exposing Rob Ford’s questionable activities, so the FBI exposed Petraeus’s extramarital affair with his biographer, leading to both being hounded mercilessly by the media and his exit as Director of the CIA.

Still, Rob Ford is trying to live by my test. It remains to be seen how effectively. He is arguing that despite the circus surrounding his private life, it is business as usual for him. He boasts about what he has accomplished for the city, and vows to continue what he was elected to do—save taxpayers money. But, it has to be admitted that Mayor Ford has expanded forever the definition of political scandal, and in doing so become an unlikely global celebrity. By his admission, he’s been “in a drunken stupor” and “extremely inebriated,” to say nothing of his use of crack cocaine, or his admission of drunk driving.

The ability to expose private lives of public figures has grown to horrific proportions. In some cases, disqualifying degrees of malfeasance or stupidity are exposed, but in many more, behaviour that should never have been anything but private is judged amid blurred lines and lack of context.

These salacious morality plays that so disastrously distract from the business of government have become a sad feature of our current public life here and in all western democracies. They are greatly exacerbated by the availability of citizen video and ubiquitous and irresponsible social media. The ability to expose private lives of public figures has grown to horrific proportions. In some cases, disqualifying degrees of malfeasance or stupidity are exposed, but in many more, behaviour that should never have been anything but private is judged amid blurred lines and lack of context.

The victim positioning works with some, depending on where the narrative leads. Everyone loves a redemption story (see Bill Clinton). For when you really analyze what has happened in Toronto, barring a criminal conviction, what is trumping Ford is not so much how he has run the city, but the international soap opera and embarrassment to Toronto which he has caused. He and his brother Doug are counting on it not lasting another six months.

It has to be admitted that Mayor Ford has expanded forever the definition of political scandal, and in doing so become an unlikely global celebrity. By his admission, he’s been “in a drunken stupor” and “extremely inebriated,” to say nothing of his use of crack cocaine, or his admission of drunk driving.

Add to this the absolute obsession of major mass media with these prolonged outings of public figures, and the willingness of aides whose advice has been ignored to fuel the fire with “what the butler saw”, and we have what I consider a real threat to the ongoing sound management of civic society. The low opinion so much of the public has for politicians is enhanced, voter turnout reduced, a churlishness replaces any real interest in public affairs or respect for office holders, and fewer and fewer seek public office.

In the permanent state of war that characterizes contemporary partisan politics, real debate over policy solutions to glaring social and economic problems is replaced by personal attacks, media exposure of personal failings, and a general meanness in our public discourse.

We are a long way from my conversation with David Halton some 35 years ago when, in fact, the media and the opposition left the personally beleaguered Trudeau alone. Scandals certainly are more lurid and more widely covered and discussed than they used to be. And it’s not likely to get better. Canada will come of age in the sex scandal department soon, and our public life will be further diminished.

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I have been fortunate to have been able to spend an important part of my life directly involved with research that would benefit humanity. This ranged from the invention of a drug to combat lethal viral infections to synthetic developments that enabled the biotechnology revolution and provide the means that others continue to use to make advances in the treatment of gene based disease.

In the broad area of health research there is a great deal of activity in Canada. It represents about a $6 billion investment. The Canadian Institute for Health Research alone invests about $1 billion annually. The investment is more than providing a playground for researchers—it has the potential to lead to social, economic and health benefits for Canadians. And Canadi-
ans seem to feel this is an important area in which to invest their tax dollars, with surveys suggesting that 90 per cent respond that they consider health research either important or very important.

But while we have been very successful in basic research with, for example, major developments in treatment and diagnosis of cancer, particularly breast cancer, we are little better in this area than any other in terms of translating research developments into social and economic benefit. Overall, Canada falls near the bottom in comparison to OECD countries in this critical area. What is even more discouraging is that licensing and creation of spin-offs is actually in decline.

And in the actual practice of health care in Canada as many as 30 per cent of all health interventions may do harm.

So we have a couple of major challenges in health research in Canada—how can we ensure that research developments translate into greater economic and social benefits? And how can we enhance our research efforts in terms of better delivery and management of health care? For example, one of the major causes of death in Canada is mistakes within the health care system—incorrect prescriptions or dosage, incompatible treatments, infection, and mistakes in surgery. Great research advances are neutralized if they are used improperly.

I recognize that Canadian research has had great success in protecting Canadians. From CIHR funded basic research we have had Canada take the lead in dealing with the SARS and H1N1 pandemics. And basic research allowed us to respond to the threatened shortage of medical radioisotopes when the Chalk River reactor broke down.

But I want to spend my time on the two challenges I raised a minute ago. It appears to me that Canadian health care and Canadian health research share one major flaw—both suffer from the silo syndrome.

In reviewing the 2004 Health Accord, my Senate Committee, Social Affairs, Science and Technology, heard repeatedly that there is sufficient funding in the health care system in Canada to deliver a first-rate health care system. But we are not doing that. Rather, we have a system fraught with multiple professional silos, often conflicting and at best simply not collaborating. And we have no system for identifying best practices wherever they occur and disseminating them across the system. And, we lack the traditional motivation for innovation—competition. I won’t even touch on the issue of “provincial jurisdiction”, a guarantor of silos if ever there was one.

And in the research world it appears that silos prevail in spite of some recent initiatives underway to change the system. There are silos among the research disciplines; there are silos between clinicians and researchers, social scientists and biological scientists, doctors and nurses. And there are silos between the public and private sectors. Our IT initiatives seem to be in a world of their own, separate from the needs of practitioners and every other need except the need to “protect privacy”.

I want to suggest that the key to our future in health care is collaboration. In health care delivery alone, the number of deaths and major hospital errors seem to be directly linked to the silos in health care delivery. Not only do the silos exist but those we look to for solving individual patient issues—the practitioners, largely doctors and nurses, are not trained as scientists—they are not good at connecting the dots.

We must change the whole process of health care delivery and make it patient oriented—bring a collaborative approach to identifying, treating and managing the patient’s issues.

So my first major point is that we must change the whole process of health care delivery and make it patient oriented—bring a collaborative approach to identifying, treating and managing the patient’s issues.

And we must bring a truly collaborative approach to research into both major health issues and health delivery. This is particularly true in major disease areas. My own view is that we need major new directions in how we approach, for example, cancer as a disease and its treatment.

Finally I think the federal government has an unprecedented opportunity to use its offices to bring the parties together to identify and disseminate new best practices in health delivery. And I think Health Canada must move, and move with some dispatch, to eliminate barriers to successful health research and health related industry success in Canada. Nowhere is this more evident than in our fragmented approach to clinical trials in this country.

I don’t want to leave you with the impression that I think that all is wrong in these areas in Canada—not at all. We have, historically, and currently, one of the finest collections of researchers per capita in the world. We just need them to work with one another, across disciplines, in synergy to a far greater degree. And we need them embraced in a culture of translating their results into social and economic benefit. We need to demolish the silos and we need our federal bureaucracy to assume a higher level of interaction with all the players with bringing benefit to Canadians as the primary objective.

As we approach one of the most exciting periods in history in translational knowledge application in human health, the age of genetic application and personalized medicine, we need new management approaches to the health care system and we need a major culture change in the world of health research and its application.

Kelvin K. Ogilvie, Chair of the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, is a former president of Acadia University. He is the inventor of Ganciclovir, a drug used worldwide to fight infections when the immune system is weakened.

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Never Underestimate an Underdog

Malcolm Gladwell


Review by Mike Coates

Malcolm Gladwell’s latest book, David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants, is a must-read for political and business junkies. As in his previous books, The Tipping Point, Blink, and Outliers, Gladwell demonstrates his knack for organizing seemingly simple principles into something more thought-provoking.

Don’t get me wrong, though—Gladwell is no philosopher king. Indeed, since The Tipping Point, which I’d argue was a truly prophetic precursor to the explosion of social media, his books have been rather thin. In Blink, he told us that the best decisions are the ones we make without thinking, and in Outliers, he reminded us that practice makes perfect—two very basic lessons. But however simple the takeaway message, his stories are always insightful and uplifting, and his use of research clever.

David and Goliath is Gladwell’s best work since The Tipping Point. His central thesis is that the victorious underdogs in politics, business, and life are often the products of challenging backgrounds. It’s these difficult circumstances that make these individuals inherently stronger than others—they’re conditioned by the school of hard knocks.

Gladwell’s best example of this phenomenon is the biblical story that inspired the book’s title. Goliath, an experienced soldier in the Philistine army, prepared for battle outfitted in heavy armour and wielding weapons of close combat. He and his Philistine leaders were clearly expecting to meet a fellow warrior of similar size and experience. Instead, Saul, the king of the Israelites, sent a young, practically unarmed shepherd’s son, David, to face the giant in battle. Now, David may have been young, but he was an experienced “slinger” in Saul’s army—slinging was a common method of immobilizing enemies in those days. Hurting down a hill to meet Goliath, and whirling a slingshot that could launch a projectile with the force of a firearm, David was able to strike the giant down with pinpoint accuracy before the weighed down Philistine could even move. The underdog was victorious because the favourite failed to anticipate that his opponent would fight by different rules—rules that were best aligned with his own abilities.

Gladwell’s book is full of such stories: A ragtag Arab army under Lawrence of Arabia attacked the Turks at Aqaba from behind their defences after crossing 600 miles of brutal desert. A young college student was able to publish more work because he shrewdly chose to attend a less prestigious school, where competition was less fierce. Nineteenth-century impressionist artists avoided displaying their work in the traditional Salon, choosing instead to host their own exhibitions where their unconventional art didn’t face the scorn of the establishment. The dyslexic school boy who studied hard and was not demotivated by failure went on to become the CEO of Goldman Sachs. It’s uplifting stuff.

If there is a lack in David and Goliath, it’s that this book doesn’t teach you the ABCs of defeating a superior opponent. The circumstances that Gladwell writes about are largely predetermined. There are no rules for self-help—only stories of the character conditioned by the inner strength of the underdog.

But there is one overarching lesson that Gladwell offers that everyone engaged in competitive pursuits should heed. That is to study your opponent. David knew, after all, how Goliath planned to fight.

But there is one overarching lesson that Gladwell offers that everyone engaged in competitive pursuits should heed. That is to study your opponent. David knew, after all, how Goliath planned to fight. Many strategists, from Sun Tzu to Clausewitz, have written about the importance of obtaining intelligence. Gladwell takes this to a new level by emphasizing the creative use of intelligence. Too many so-called “strategists” are unable to think outside the box. By looking at every situation unconventionally, it’s possible to uncover an opponent’s weaknesses or determine how best to undermine their strengths. According to Gladwell, if you change the rules of the game by fighting on your terms, even an underdog can win. Gladwell’s world view has also been informed by his own experience as a Canadian growing up next to the United States; as a David next to a Goliath.

Students of Canadian politics should take notice. Gladwell could well be writing the story of a bookworm and introverted loner who went on to become one of Canada’s most successful prime ministers. Smart strategists continually underestimate him, but by changing the rules of campaigning and appealing to fewer groups of committed voters who reflect values similar to his, Stephen Harper is able to constantly outperform expectations. Whether he’s read David and Goliath or not, Harper surely knows the story.

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The Making of the President, 2012

Mark Halperin and John Heilemann


Review by Lisa Van Dusen

The making of the president isn’t what it used to be. When Theodore H. White owned the campaign chronicling franchise during the 1960s and 1970s, it was before the Internet, before Twitter, YouTube and Instagram; 24-hour news coverage wasn’t even a gleam in Ted Turner’s eye.

In Double Down, White’s heirs, Mark Halperin and John Heilemann, unspool the various threads of the 2012 US presidential campaign without getting tied up in the technicalities of a system that has become overwhelmingly process driven. We re-live the reality that some of the most game-changing moments of the presidential campaign, to coin a phrase, occurred because of technology that wasn’t available to alter the course of history until recently, but we don’t dwell on what that means for democracy.

As with Halperin and Heilemann’s Game Change, the best-selling re-telling of the historic 2008 presidential campaign, Double Down sticks to the campaign narrative. From the “freak show” of the GOP primary process that unfurled a sort of culling of the nutters whereby every freak had his or her implausible day in the frontrunner sun, to the reality-check disaster of Hurricane Sandy in the final days of the general election campaign, this is the story of the story. It is a political junkie’s paradise of the backroom brilliance, incompetence and, on one occasion, vomiting, that went on behind the roller coaster headlines.

For anyone who closely followed the story as it was happening, the re-telling of the Republican primary circus can get a little wearing. There are moments, between Michele Bachmann’s motor coach meltdowns and Donald Trump’s birther barker stunts, when reading Double Down is like having to wade through the police report from a 20-car pileup you wish you’d never witnessed in the first place. But, again, we don’t spend a lot of time here pondering the state of democracy.

In hundreds of “deep background” interviews, blanks were filled in that answer many of the big questions about Mitt Romney’s failed challenge of Barack Obama, including what the hell Romney was thinking during some of the more gobsmacking moments of the campaign.

Double Down’s true value comes through in Halperin and Heilemann’s reporting on the general election campaign. With the preponderance of leaking, the constant stream-of-consciousness Twitter commentary and the perpetual, hyper-tactical cable warfare that characterizes campaigns these days, you would think there would be few surprises left for a book to unearth. But in hundreds of “deep background” interviews, blanks were filled in that answer many of the big questions about Mitt Romney’s failed challenge of Barack Obama, including what the hell Romney was thinking during some of the more gobsmacking moments of the campaign.

Decision by decision, judgment call by judgment call, Double Down lays out just how the 2012 campaign went from being a referendum on Obama’s presidency to a referendum on Romney’s fitness for the presidency. After turning Romney’s business resume against him with the exposing of Bain Capital as a job killing outsourcer, the Obama campaign received the unforeseen, unforced gift of the “47 per cent” video in which Romney effectively wrote off half of the electorate as lazy and entitled during a surreptitiously taped speech at a Florida fundraiser. The shock isn’t that Romney never fully recovered, it’s that he never seemed to grasp the damage.

There are few major bombshells in Double Down. The downside of holding the making of the president franchise these days is that so little goes unreported in real time. That leaves mostly background, colour and the perspective gained by the pollsters, staffers, consultants and principals with the benefit of hindsight. Much has been made of the revelation in this book that certain White House operatives poll-tested Hillary Clinton as a possible replacement for Joe Biden as number two on the ticket ahead of the campaign. Less has been made of the more stunning revelation that the Clintons made it a condition of Bill’s campaigning for Obama that Hillary’s lingering 2008 campaign debt be taken care of.

Less has been made of the more stunning revelation that the Clintons made it a condition of Bill’s campaigning for Obama that Hillary’s lingering 2008 campaign debt be taken care of.

Mostly, Double Down performs the service of humanizing the candidates and the characters that populate both campaigns. After prevailing
against both Hillary Clinton and John McCain in 2008, Obama still can’t muster the situational suspension of disbelief to embrace the gruelingly prepped, overhyped but crucial ritual of the campaign debate. Romney has still never adequately explained why he strapped Seamus to the roof of the family car; he doesn’t always take direction or understand why people don’t understand him, but he loves his America. Romney operative Stuart Stevens didn’t settle for shouting expletives at the television while Clint Eastwood was indelibly upstaging the GOP convention with a rambling, incoherent dialogue with an empty stool; he wisely excused himself and threw up.

Such is the texture that hundreds of hours of deep background produce. Makes you hanker already for the Hillary Clinton-Jeb Bush edition. 

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A Prescription on Foreign Policy and a Polemic Against Harper

Joe Clark


Review by Anthony Wilson-Smith

If a politician wants to be a statesman, as an old adage has it, the best solution is to ‘go abroad.’ Was there ever a better example than Joe Clark? At home, his nine-month stint as prime minister and longer turns as leader of the Progressive Conservative party were marked by political missteps. The most notorious was the inability to count opposition votes in a minority House in 1979 that cost him the PM’s job in the 1980 election.

It is a prescription for how to conduct foreign policy, and a polemic against Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s government. On the first count, it is impressive; on the second, less so.

But Clark, as external affairs minister under Brian Mulroney from 1984 to 1991….there was a statesman! Whether the issue was the end of the Cold War, the Middle East tinderbox, or apartheid in South Africa, Clark seemed as smooth and assured abroad as he was ham-handed at home. The breathtaking self-confidence that served him poorly in domestic politics was an advantage internationally, where the ability to clear one’s throat loudly is a prerequisite to being heard at all. A more important attribute was the sophisticated understanding of diplomacy that Clark developed on the job.

Those qualities—good and bad—are present in Clark’s How We Lead: Canada in a Century of Change.

It is a prescription for how to conduct foreign policy, and a polemic against Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s government. On the first count, it is impressive; on the second, less so.

Clark understands that the world has changed dramatically since he was in government. His world had two superpowers, no social media, less fear of international terrorism, and little consideration of China as an emerging global economic force. More open immigration policies were still under debate, and the benefits of the North American Free Trade Agreement lay ahead. Today, as he writes: “The dynamics of leadership have changed, because the world has changed.”

Clark also sees the weakness in some of his own arguments. The past can appear more golden than it really was—and this may especially be true of Canadian diplomacy. But, he argues, “constructive myths are essential to our future” because they inspire. Similarly, though he criticizes the Harper government for cutting engagement with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) he acknowledges that such organizations can be spectacularly wasteful and ineffective—such as in distressed Haiti, sometimes known as “The Republic of NGOs.”

Those points represent the even-handed side of Clark. Then there is the side that dislikes this government so much that he dismisses substantive achievements. At one point, he declares: “International issues have played virtually no part in the elections won by Stephen Harper, nor in the platforms or (Conservative) prominent policy positions”. He then acknowledges that Afghanistan, China, and the Middle East are exceptions—very large ones, in fact. Add the recent Canada-Europe free trade deal and you have a significant body of international policy engagement by this government. At another point he observes: “A steady economy, a respected military, vigorous trade initiatives and a forward-looking immigration policy are important assets.” But, he continues: “They draw on only part of Canada’s proven capacity and potential as an international citizen.”

Again, those positive achievements are no small things.
It’s also unfair to suggest that the Harper government is so focused on trade ties that it ignores principles—and then to criticize them, as Clark does, when they act on the latter.

That stance has nothing to do with trade—as is also the case with the recent decision to boycott a Commonwealth conference in Sri Lanka because of human rights abuses. Clark can detest present policy stances as much as he clearly does, but should be consistent in his reasons for doing so. There are also traces of barely-submerged ego, such as the startling assertion that “for two decades now, our country has gone silent in debating big ideas.” By no coincidence, two decades ago was when Clark left government.

That said, this is a book worth reading, and to learn from. In 1991, when I was freshly returned to Canada from years in Moscow as a journalist, I sat in on a briefing by Clark in which he provided his analysis of world affairs. His level of knowledge and understanding was remarkable. On global events, it remains that way today. On the domestic front, not so much. That makes him both a statesman and a politician. Fine, but he shouldn’t resent others as much as he does for being the same.

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How Building Alberta will help build Canada’s future.

The Government of Alberta’s Building Alberta Plan demonstrates our commitment to what Albertans told us matters most. Along with investing in families and communities, and living within our means, we’re working to open new markets for Alberta’s resources – which will fuel economic opportunities for the entire country.

We’re already leading the creation of the Canadian Energy Strategy to develop our resources and move them to market. And we will continue to support the proposed Energy East pipeline to Quebec and New Brunswick, and the proposed Keystone XL pipeline expansion to the United States.

We’re also putting new rules in place to ensure that resource development is innovative, responsible and sustainable, with a clear vision of what Canada’s energy future can – and must – be.

Our Building Alberta Plan sets the stage for a stronger and more prosperous future for all Canadians – a future we can build together.

Learn more at BuildingAlbertaPlan.ca
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Certainly.