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## Tea on the Nile

By Nick Coghlan



Photos : Nick Coghlan

*The fleet of the Blue Nile Sailing Club*

When you're living in the middle of the Sahara Desert and the government is an Islamist military dictatorship, it can be a challenge to find fun things to do.

The work could be quite interesting. As the sole Canadian diplomat resident in Khartoum (Sudan), I had in 2000 a vicious civil war to report on, that had cost two million lives and had been running for 17 years. And after 9/11, it fell to me to look after journalists who had come to see where Osama bin-Laden had got started. I would show them the chemists' shop where he'd once had an office, and we'd go out and

meet his ex-cook, who'd tell us how Osama loved Basmati rice and liked to play with small children. For good measure we would throw in a visit to the site of the al-Shifa pharmaceuticals factory that had been destroyed by American cruise missiles in 1998. The custodian would show us a piece of rocket motor on which you could make out the word 'Boeing.'

But terror-tourism became tedious with repetition. For relaxation there was nothing better than getting out on the river, for Khartoum is located at the junction of the Blue with the White Nile.

Back in the 1920s, when this was a British garrison, it occurred to the Colonel of the Regiment that a good way of keeping the young officers out of trouble might be to establish a sailing club. The first problem was that there were no boats. Indeed, there was hardly any wood to be had either, the nearest forest being 2000 km to the south. But there was a large pile of galvanised iron that had had been hauled up laboriously from Cairo in case one of the garrison's old gunboats needed repairs. A reputable yacht designer was commissioned – Morgan Giles – and the result was the Khartoum One Design. This is a steel 18ft sloop based on a Sharpie, with buoyancy tanks, a retractable centerboard, a Bermuda-rigged mainsail and a jib. Starting in 1932, about fifty were built.

The clubhouse of the Blue Nile Sailing Club (established in 1926) is similarly ironclad: *H.M.S. Melik* ('King' in Arabic). *The Melik* is one



HMS Melik, clubhouse of the sailing club and veteran of the Battle of Omdurman (1898)

of four gunboats that were ferried in pieces past the six cataracts of the Lower Nile. They were re-assembled in situ as British forces approached Khartoum in 1898, seeking revenge for the earlier killing in the capital of General Charles Gordon by the messianic figure known as the Mahdi. *The Melik* played a part in the Battle of Omdurman, where its deck-mounted machine gun was used to devastating effect, inspiring Hillaire Belloc's short poem:

***Whatever happens,  
We have got  
The Maxim Gun  
And they have not***

The Khartoum One Design fleet would race twice a week in winter just before sunset, then there would be a longer race on Friday mornings (the Islamic weekend). For the Friday races we would often beat down the Blue Nile to its junction with the White and run back against the current with a usually strong northerly behind us. Jenny and I were a little nervous the first time we took a boat out on our own. The current of one to two knots would inevitably take us downstream in the direction of Cairo (about 3000km and six sets

of cataracts) and, while the wind would tend to bring us back, late evening calms were not uncommon.

It was also clear that, should we capsize, then righting a heavyweight like the Khartoum might be challenging. The Commodore, a genial and very large man in a flowing white djellabiya that sometimes would catch in his tiller when going about, was nonchalant when we very cautiously inquired if the club had life-jackets:

*'No, no Mr Nicholas, Miss Jenny...do not worry about that. Our Nile is warm.'*

But he hesitated.

*'There is one thing... If you do capsize, please to do so on the Blue Nile, not the White. You see, there are crocodiles on the White. And... er... do not stand on the bottom of the river. There is, how do you say, Bilharzia? It is a worm; it is not good.'*

We were generously allocated a boat of our own. The arrangement for temporary residents was that you were welcome to fix-up one of the ancient dinghies – being steel they were robust – as long as you bequeathed it once you left. About one third of the members were expatriates. Our Sudanese fellow-members would offset the

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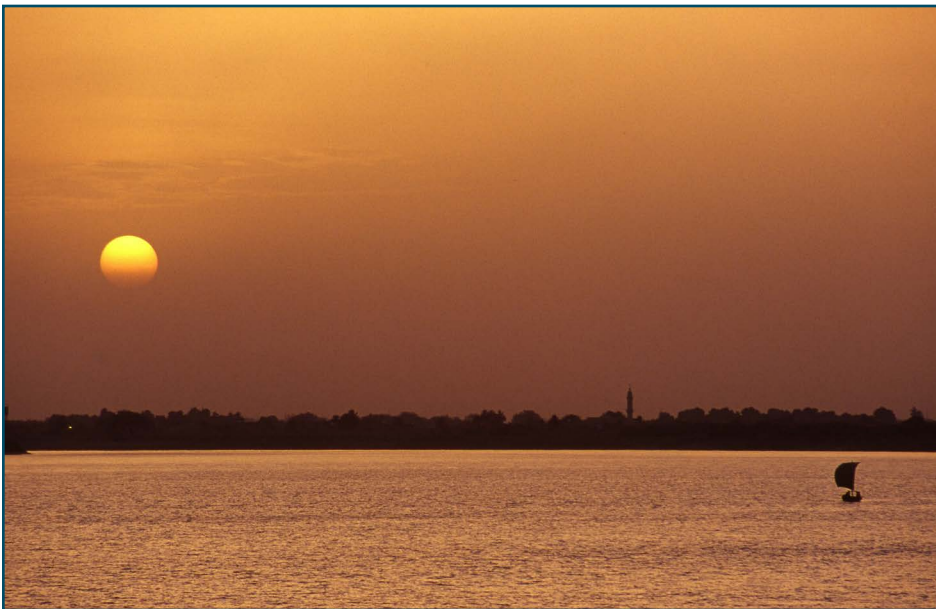
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*Sunset on the Nile at Khartoum*

cost of rehabilitation by seeking sponsorship – from Pepsi, or maybe the local cooking-oil company – and displaying their logos. We contented ourselves with a sparkling paint job in Canadian colours (red and white), a maple leaf on the bows and the grand name *Canada One*.

Racing around the buoys on weekday evenings was often a robust affair and we rarely did well. In theory the usual racing rules applied, but in reality the terms ‘Starboard!’ or ‘Water!’ were taken to mean ‘Get out of my way!’, and were held to be binding as long as you got in there first.

The club employed two ‘boat boys’ who filled in as skippers or crew when numbers were short. Farouk was in his eighties, Mohammed Bahar a few years younger but impaired by a severely crooked back. On the race course they were demons. Of course, they knew every eddy, every wind shadow, the location of every sandbank. A common ploy was to lead trusting ‘khawajas’ (foreigners) over such a shoal, having surreptitiously hauled up their 1-meter centerboard without our seeing. On one memorable occasion we were thus stranded directly in front of the grand Republican Palace where Gordon had been speared

to death. It was strictly forbidden to loiter around here. The AK-47-carrying soldiers who began shouting and gesticulating at us, as Jenny stepped out to lighten ship and move us off the bottom, gave us some cause for concern.

We twice snapped our wooden mast in Chinese gybes but by next race-day Farouk had spliced the joint together again, just making the mast a little shorter. Dents resulting from

collisions would simply be hammered out. One foreigner took things more seriously. On leave in the UK, he strolled into a venerable sail-maker’s on the Solent, anticipating a little quiet one-upmanship:

*‘I’d like a new mainsail for my dinghy, please.’*

*‘Oh yes sir, what class might that be?’*

(Smugly) *‘A Khartoum One Design...’*

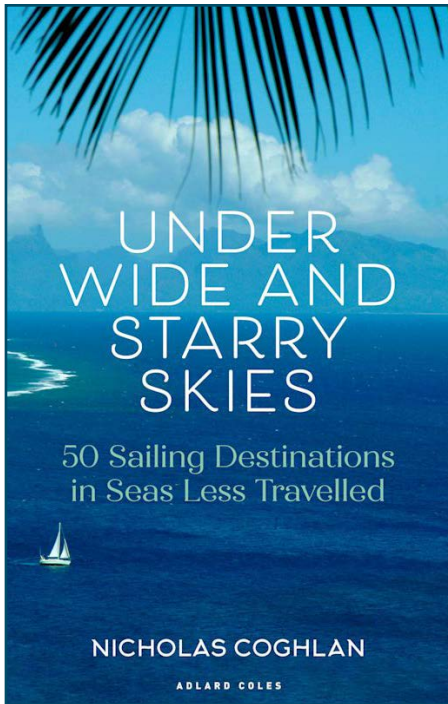
(Coolly) *‘Of course sir... Hmm, I do believe Mr. Giles sent us a set of drawings, but I must say I don’t think we’ve cut one of those for a while... 1945 maybe? When do you need it?’*

Most clubs have their own historic annual races. One of ours, described in the Club Rule Book, was to Gordon’s Tree. Long ago felled, it grew at the point on the White Nile where in 1885 the relieving British force sighted smoke in Khartoum and knew they were too late to save the General. At a skippers’ meeting prior to this race we were all asked to take note of the fact that a particularly aggressive hippopotamus had been seen in the grounds of the Hilton, where the Niles meet; he (or she) was ‘to be avoided.’ Another race involved



*Readying Canada One for launch; (R) Farouk and Mohammed Bahar*





*Nick's latest book, from which this article is taken*

swimming to and from your dinghy; this favoured the expatriates, as very few locals knew how to swim. But the highlight was the overnighter to Alkwasir, a small uninhabited island eight miles up the Blue Nile; the name means 'fierce beasts.'

We would set off in the late afternoon and it would be a leisurely



*Racing Canada One on the Nile, St Matthew's Cathedral in the background*

run down-wind as the sun sank and the call to prayer would be heard from minarets all over Khartoum. There would be blue woodsmoke in the air from the dozens of brick-making kilns that lined the banks. Once away from the city, the only sound was the rhythmic chugging of ancient Lister diesel pumps,

taking water from the river to the adjoining fields. As the light faded we'd pull our heavy boats up on the sandy beach of the island. A few people might bring tents, but most of us would sleep out: it never rained in winter.

There'd be a bonfire and then the expats would come into their own, especially the diplomats. As we were among the very few people in the country with legal access to alcohol, there was a quiet expectation that we would bring along the 'tea' (the euphemism for Johnny Walker Red Label). Once that was exhausted, it would be on to the local homemade 'araki' (date-based firewater); next morning's long beat home could seem very tedious to some.

It was only on these morning sails back from Alkwasir, in fact, that we expats could beat our Sudanese friends. For we were more experienced, you see, when it came to tea drinking. ■

*Nick Coghlan is an ex-Canadian ambassador and experienced sailor. He is the author of several books, with more to come.*



*Khartoum One Designs hauled out at Alkwasir island*

# De la retraite... à la retraite via l'enseignement

Par Pierre Guimond

Lors de la première édition du Bulletin, en novembre 2020, j'avais fait part aux collègues de la façon avec laquelle s'était effectuée ma transition entre notre « monde d'avant » (ie la carrière) et celui de l'académique qui m'avait amené à l'Université Laval en 2017. Huit ans après, il est temps pour moi de tourner la page de cette plus récente expérience professionnelle, mais non sans en faire un court bilan et projeter vers l'avenir l'importante mission que nous avons, comme retraité, de « passer au suivant ».

J'écrivais donc en 2020 que l'École d'hiver sur la pratique des relations internationales que j'ai mise sur pied à l'Université Laval (<https://www.esei.ulaval.ca/etudes/ecoles-dete-dautomne-et-dhiver/ecole-internationale-dhiver-sur-la-pratique-des-relations-internationales>), avec le collègue Daniel Caron, était devenue alors un projet de retraite pour moi et un projet de vie pour les étudiants.

Nous basant sur les critères de recrutement à Affaires mondiales Canada, Daniel et moi avons convaincu le directeur de l'École supérieure d'études internationales (ESEI) qu'il fallait que les étudiants de deuxième cycle en études internationales puissent ajouter à leur formation académique sur le « quoi » des relations internationales une formation sur les compétences nécessaires pour celles et ceux qui veulent se consacrer au travail diplomatique (ou d'autres « métiers de l'international ») : en somme savoir + savoir-faire + savoir être. Ainsi, à des têtes « bien formées » sur les grandes dynamiques internationales, nous voulons ajouter des définitions et exemples sur le « comment » de ce travail qui fut le nôtre.



*Carrefour international Brian-Mulroney, Université Laval*

Cela fut fait à travers un programme intensif d'une semaine (durant la « relâche » des autres) mené par une trentaine de conférenciers traitant, pour l'édition du printemps 2025, de sujets aussi variés que les communications (formation et pratique de rédaction de notes de breffage, suivies de simulation de briefing oraux, les relations entre diplomates et journalistes et la rédaction de communiqués de presse), les relations internationales entre les divers peuples du Canada, les compétences interculturelles (théories et atelier avec des intervenants de situations minoritaires), les compétences des praticiens du développement international, la gestion de crise, la diplomatie scientifique, le protocole, les négociations commerciales et la promotion commerciale, diplomatie et religions, l'exemple wallon de relations sous-étatiques, etc. Les étudiants ont particulièrement apprécié la tenue d'un cocktail « de réseautage » avec des contacts locaux du domaine international; d'ailleurs, leur « performance » durant cette activité leur méritait

5% de la note finale du cours.

La semaine se terminait par une négociation d'une journée d'un contentieux diplomatique bilatéral avec médiation d'une organisation multilatérale régionale.

Le thème général de ce cours venait manifestement répondre à un besoin en ce que de trente étudiants lors de la première livraison du cours, nous sommes rapidement passés à plus de soixante participants dont un peu plus de la moitié étaient des étudiants de deuxième cycle. Dès le début, le ministère québécois des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie a trouvé dans le cours une façon de contribuer à la formation professionnelle jusqu'alors déficiente de ses jeunes agents; je me plais à croire que cela a aussi contribué à l'idée de créer, peu de temps après, un « Institut de la diplomatie du Québec » afin d'augmenter et de rationaliser la formation des fonctionnaires québécois œuvrant à l'international. <https://www.quebec.ca/nouvelles/actualites/details/linstitut-de-la-diplomatie-du-quebec-la-premiere-cohorte-complete-son-parcours-41182>



Au fil des ans, sont venus s'ajouter d'autres « non-étudiants » à la cohorte de participants en commençant par des jeunes diplomates accrédités par des pays tiers à leur mission respective aux Nations-Unies à New York (à l'initiative de Louise Blais, alors à PRMNY), ou même d'agents d'AMC pour qui une semaine passée, en français, au-delà de la ceinture de verdure, semblent avoir fait le plus grand bien (l'édition 2025 du cours a même accueilli un ERP de BMAKO pour qui c'était la toute première expérience sur l'amplitude de la diplomatie canadienne). La présence sur les bancs d'école de ces jeunes professionnels permettait non seulement à ceux-ci de se renseigner sur les bonnes pratiques dans l'ensemble des métiers couverts, mais aussi de renseigner les étudiants de l'UL sur les « choses de la vie » dans le monde du travail.

Nous avons également pu profiter d'un programme du gouvernement du Québec voulant favoriser les relations pancanadiennes pour développer des échanges, « en français », entre étudiants du même domaine et avec les mêmes ambitions provenant de la Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, de la Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, des universités de Moncton et de Simon-Fraser en plus de la Balsillie School of International Affairs. Le réseautage avec des professionnels et entre étudiants a fait de l'École d'hiver LE lieu de rencontre entre praticiens et aspirants diplomates ... pour au moins une semaine par année.

Tel qu'indiqué plus tôt, malgré toutes ces belles expériences et rencontres avec nos successeurs potentiels dans le monde de la diplomatie et les dizaines de collaborateurs-formateurs venant d'AMC, du MRIF ou d'autres agences fédérales et provinciales, le temps est toutefois venu pour moi de passer à autre chose.

Que retirer de cette expérience à

propos de ces étudiants, de leurs aspirations et de leur potentiel ?

Essentiellement, ils sont (presque) comme nous à leur âge. Certains sont très ambitieux et ont déjà presque un plan de carrière (un peu naïf) fait de plusieurs expériences professionnelles diverses. A l'autre bout, d'autres sont en études internationales sans trop savoir précisément vers quoi aller mais parce qu'ils aiment comprendre ce qui se passe dans le monde; j'avoue avoir été plutôt dans cette dernière catégorie lors de mes propres études universitaires... Ils sont bien conscients, toutefois, que contrairement à l'expérience de plusieurs d'entre nous, le monde est passablement plus complexe qu'à notre époque avec ses guerres chaudes trop près de nous, la déconfiture du système international politique et commercial et une morale internationale qui bat de l'aile.

Si la performance des étudiants à l'École d'hiver reprenait, un peu comme nous à AMC lors de nos évaluations annuelles, un graphique de la courbe de Gauss, j'ai noté que généralement (et comme ailleurs dans les sciences sociales) les filles sont meilleures que les garçons et que si la communication orale et écrite des étudiants préalablement formés à l'étranger (principalement France et Afrique) était meilleure, les niveaux d'analyse et de synthèse des Québécois étaient généralement très bons.

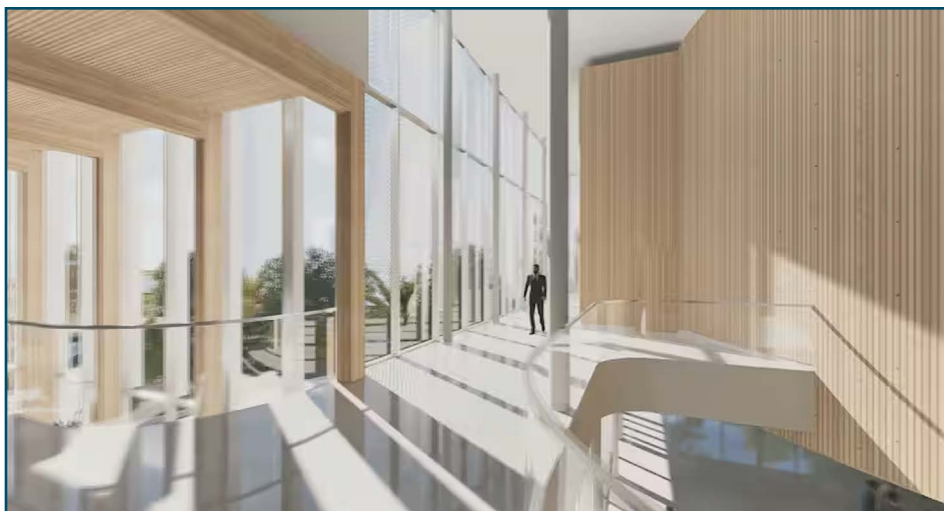
Si l'École d'hiver se voulait (et continuera de l'être sous la gouverne de mon successeur comme chargé de cours Robert Keating, ex-sous-ministre du MRIF) principalement un lieu de formation très concret sur la façon de faire la diplomatie (rédaction de notes de breffage, breffages oraux, négociation d'un différend bilatéral, etc.), je suis heureux que l'ESEI ait agit dans le sens de mes recommandations pour développer encore davantage la formation « professionnelle » du deuxième cycle (en parallèle au programme de recherche menant

à des études plus avancées et à l'enseignement).

Ainsi, avec la rentrée universitaire 2025, un tout nouveau programme de maîtrise en études internationales est offert par l'ESEI selon quatre spécialités : commerce international et investissement, développement international, sécurité internationale et diplomatie. Un « profil de sortie » a été élaboré afin de préciser les compétences essentielles que les étudiants doivent acquérir à la fin de leur programme. Ce profil de sortie détermine non seulement les habiletés et aptitudes dont la personne diplômée doit être dotée au terme de sa formation, mais aussi les valeurs qu'elle doit incarner : en somme, seront donc enseignés à notre École supérieure les valeurs fondamentales d'ouverture d'esprit, d'éthique, de respect, d'intégrité et de transparence, tout autant que des compétences disciplinaires comme une approche globale, un sens critique, de la rigueur analytique, l'inclusion, l'adaptabilité et l'engagement citoyen. Interdisciplinaire, cette formation exige aussi des étudiants qu'ils suivent pendant ces deux ans des cours en science politique, droit international, économie et gestion internationale en plus d'effectuer un stage professionnel.

Ainsi, les cours passent de plus en plus d'études classiques (macroéconomie, institutions internationales, relations internationales du Québec et du Canada) vers des cours interdisciplinaires (repenser la sécurité globale, représentation visuelle des droits humains, genre et violence globale) et des séminaires/écoles d'été-hiver sur des thèmes plus pointus comme notre École d'hiver, celle sur le droit de l'Union européenne ou celle sur la Francophonie du 21<sup>e</sup> siècle, par exemple.

Donc, dans ce contexte et alors que notre École d'hiver porte, comme



indiqué ci-dessus, sur le « comment » de la diplomatie, l'ESEI a également trouvé important de créer, à ma suggestion, un nouveau cours un peu plus théorique sur la diplomatie d'aujourd'hui. Ainsi, notre collègue Roxanne Dubé planche présentement à mettre en place pour 2026 un cours sur la « Diplomatie moderne et les métiers de l'international : fondements, compétences et pratique ». D'autres cours du genre sont encore envisagés pour les sessions suivantes, dans l'esprit de la création du Carrefour international Brian-Mulroney.

En effet, l'arrivée en scène au début des années 2020 de l'ex-premier ministre Brian Mulroney à l'université Laval a créé une nouvelle énergie pour son internationalisation tous azimuts. Poursuivant son appui philanthropique à la formation des jeunes débuté au Brian Mulroney Institute of Government de l'Université St-FX, notre ancien grand patron voulait en effet faire quelque chose pour l'institution qui lui avait donné sa formation d'avocat au tournant des années 1960 et dont son seul regret (constaté plus tard) était qu'il n'avait pas suffisamment étudié « l'international ». Le Carrefour international Brian-Mulroney est en voie de se matérialiser grâce aux quelques 87\$ millions de dons venant des gouvernements fédéral et du Québec et de donateurs privés (ce à quoi,

d'ailleurs, il est toujours possible à tous de contribuer de façon tangible afin que nous puissions poursuivre le rêve de monsieur Mulroney voulant « qu'un jour le ou la secrétaire général.e des Nations Unies soit un diplômé de Laval » : voir <https://www.dprd.ulaval.ca/cibm/> pour votre don).

La réflexion tenue à Laval sur cette évolution de la formation en études internationales n'est pas étrangère aux efforts entrepris par notre collègue Stéphane Jobin à la direction générale de l'Institut canadien du Service extérieur. Ainsi, en plus de consultations régulières tenues par Stéphane et son équipe avec des institutions d'enseignement post-secondaires de façon individuelle pour identifier les compétences et connaissances essentielles pour les futurs représentants du Canada à l'étranger, des rencontres de groupe ont lieu annuellement à Gatineau pour réfléchir ensemble aux transformations du contexte mondial et aux moyens de mieux préparer les diplomates de demain (ex. quelles sont les compétences et connaissances essentielles pour les futurs représentants du Canada, quelles sont les meilleures pratiques dans les approches pédagogiques actuelles et leurs défis, etc.). L'ESEI participe activement à ces discussions tenues entre pairs et avec le ministère.

C'est donc avec cette histoire et dans ce contexte, que je tire ma révérence

de mon engagement formel à la formation formelle des étudiants de l'ESEI. Je demeurerai toutefois actif, comme diplomate en résidence à l'UL, en appui au travail de Roxanne et de Robert Keating et comme conseil auprès de la gestion de l'ESEI. Je profite d'ailleurs de l'occasion pour inviter les collègues du Forum à considérer un tel « travail », à Ottawa, Québec, ou ailleurs au pays.

D'ailleurs, afin de compléter cette formation formelle des étudiants, l'ESEI est à mettre sur pied un « Cercle des délégués et ambassadeurs » où se retrouveront des diplômés et amis de l'Université œuvrant ou ayant œuvré sur la scène internationale afin d'appuyer et d'inspirer les étudiants à devenir des spécialistes de haut niveau. Structuré autour du mentorat permettant de partager les expériences et expertises, ce programme a également comme ambition de créer un prix visant à encourager les initiatives étudiantes liées aux dialogues démocratiques. ESEI/Sasa Glusac ([sasa.glusac@dprd.ulaval.ca](mailto:sasa.glusac@dprd.ulaval.ca)) pourra répondre aux questions des intéressé.e.s sur ce programme.

En espérant qu'un jour AMC voudra (comme je l'ai suggéré au SM Morrisson lors d'une rencontre virtuelle avec les membres d'AmbCanada l'an dernier dans le cadre de la Transformation) considérer l'avantage qu'il pourrait trouver à exiger des candidats au recrutement de ses agents une formation spécifique et dédiée en études internationales comme celle offerte à l'ESEI (et d'autres offertes au Canada) qui viendrait s'ajouter aux critères de compétences qui forment présentement le centre des exigences de la sélection de nos prochains diplomates. ■

On peut bien rêver.

*Pierre Guimond, après 39 ans à l'emploi des gouvernements du Québec et du Canada, il s'essaié maintenant à la retraite en restant diplomate en résidence à l'université Laval.*

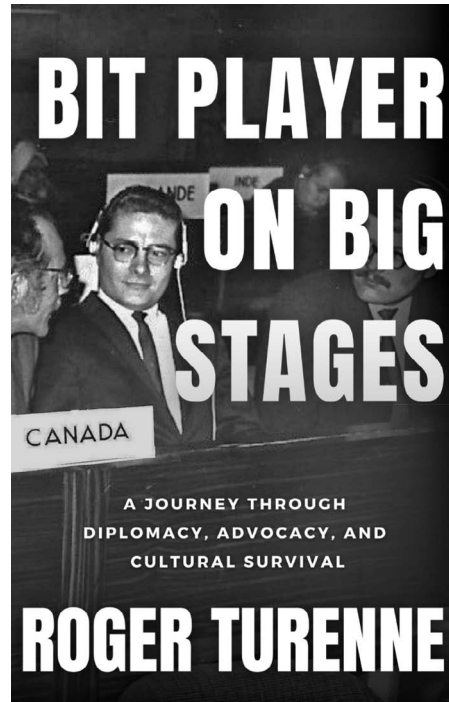
# My Rumble in the Jungle

By Roger Turenne

On October 30, 1974, on a steamy hot tropical night, at 4 a.m. in Kinshasa, there occurred what was described by some as the greatest sports event in history or, at the very least, the greatest boxing match in history, the George Foreman/Muhammad Ali confrontation. Folks back home thought how lucky I was to be right there on the spot, watching history being made. Did I avail myself of this unique privilege? Nope! I had no interest in boxing, much less spending all night in a stadium with 60,000 sweaty and screaming Zairois. For weeks, the streets of Kinshasa had reverberated with the cry: “Ali, boma ye!” (Ali, kill him!). I did not welcome the announcement that the fight would take place in Kinshasa. Even if only a handful of Canadians were to show up, I feared most of them would end up requiring consular assistance.

One morning, a couple of months before the fight, the ambassador called an urgent meeting of all embassy staff in his office. He asked if anyone had recently given a media interview concerning the fight. No one could recall having done so, including me. Then the ambassador started reading an article which had appeared in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* the day before, on the subject of the Foreman/Ali fight. As he kept on reading, the content sounded more and more familiar, and then he got to the explosive sentence: “A spokesman for the Canadian Embassy in Kinshasa said he was hoping no Canadians would show up for the fight because he didn’t want to spend the next day getting them out of jail.”

Yikes! That was me! The quote was from a conversation I had had some weeks earlier with a travel writer from the *Globe and Mail* who was on his way to South Africa to



write about all the wonderful tourist attractions to be found in the land of apartheid. His trip was entirely paid for by the tourism branch of the South African government. On the way, he had decided to do a stopover in Kinshasa for a few days as a simple tourist.

Even though he was an experienced professional traveller, he still got into trouble. This was Kinshasa after all. He had to fight for his luggage at the airport, he got robbed, ended up in a decrepit hotel, and on it went as he described his tale of woe. He had called me at the embassy to ask for advice on some item. At no time did he even hint that I was being interviewed or, indeed, that he would be writing an article in connection with the forthcoming fight. I did commiserate with him and told him that his experiences were not at all unusual, giving examples of the kinds of problems foreign visitors frequently encountered. When he asked me if I was looking forward to the fight, I

jokingly and unthinkingly said the above. I didn’t think anything of it and soon forgot that conversation.

When the *Globe and Mail* article appeared, the Zairian ambassador to Ottawa happened to be in Kinshasa. His staff immediately faxed him a copy and, seeing a major crisis in the offing, he went straight to our embassy to get an explanation. He was deeply worried because if President Mobutu were to see this article, he might well react by breaking off diplomatic relations with Canada and possibly take it out on him on the grounds that he was doing a terrible job promoting Zairian interests in Canada.

Ambassador Schioler was taken aback, had not seen the article, and told his opposite number that he would immediately get to the bottom of it. The staff meeting was then called, and I had to fess up that I was the guilty party. I explained the circumstances and profusely apologized but still got some very dirty looks.

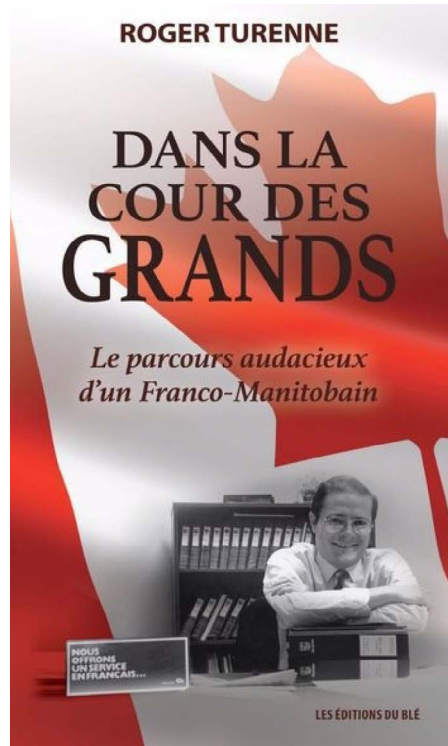
Given the extremely high stakes, we had to act quickly, but how? It was clear that an apology to the Zairian foreign ministry would not be enough. It was consular officer Richard Howard who came up with a plan. Richard was at the end of his posting and was due to return to Canada the following week. He hated Kinshasa with a vengeance and counted the hours rather than the days until his departure. He had reserved his flight out months in advance and had chosen Swissair because he felt it would have a better chance of leaving on time. He proposed to take the fall for the interview and that we tell the Zairian ambassador that he was being immediately sent back home as punishment. The Zairian ambassador could then claim that his rapid and vigorous intervention resulted in the guilty officer being expelled from the country, and the Canadian



Embassy issuing an apology. Richard, for his part, considered it a mark of honour to be expelled from that godforsaken country.

My embarrassing gaffe turned into a very useful life lesson in dealing with the media. Until then, I had had little experience with the media. From that day forward, I simply assumed that I might be quoted if within earshot of a journalist, unless I made it explicitly clear that the conversation was off the record. The lesson served me well, as in later years I would give hundreds of media interviews under various guises.

As it happened, the morning after the fight, I didn't have to get any Canadians out of jail because as far as we knew, no Canadian showed



up. Most observers, and even some in Ali's own entourage, expected the fight to be one-sided, with Foreman emerging triumphant. When I got up the following morning, I knew right away there had been an upset by the ear to ear grins on the faces of our servants. Ali, boma ye! ■

*Roger Turenne served for 14 years in External Affairs from 1967 to 1981, with assignments in Paris/UNESCO, Kinshasa and Stockholm. He has recently published memoirs in English and French (not translations, but two different books) : .*

*Dans la cour des grands – Le parcours audacieux d'un Franco-Manitobain (les Éditions du Blé à Winnipeg) and Bit Player on Big Stages – A Journey through Diplomacy, Advocacy, and Cultural Survival, (Sutherland House, Toronto).*

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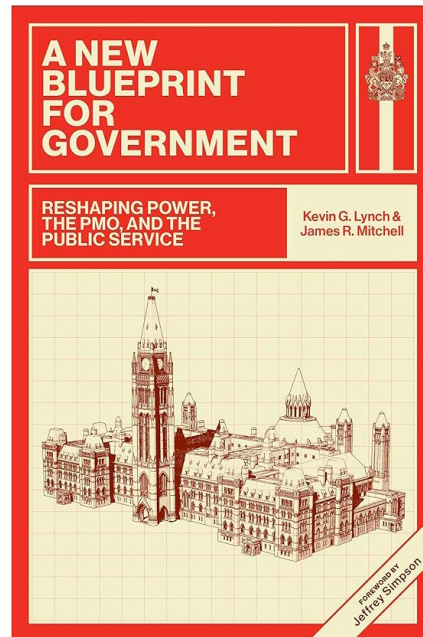
# Restoring the Balance: How to fix our Systems of Governance for the 21st-Century

By Jim Mitchell

*This essay is adapted from the book “A New Blueprint for Government: Reshaping Power, the PMO, and the Public Service” by Kevin Lynch and Jim Mitchell, published October 27 by the University of Regina Press.*

For Canadians, this is a time of change and uncertainty. Even before the “Trump shock”, Canadians were feeling that their standard for living was being undermined by weak growth, the surge in inflation and the high prices it has left behind, and the challenges of finding affordable housing and accessing healthcare. They wonder why the federal government has such difficulty in delivering core government services and protecting their hard-earned tax dollars from fiascos like ArriveCan. They’re asking, when the government is growing so rapidly and government debt is doubling, why are basic services so slow – where is the money going, and what are all the newly hired bureaucrats doing?

Canadians are a pretty commonsensical lot. They know that protecting our prosperity and sovereignty will require significant policy changes in areas such as trade, defence, security, policing, immigration, fiscal policy, and productivity. But to be successful, change also requires a rethinking of *how* the government of Canada itself operates. Restoring efficient and effective government is absolutely necessary if we are to deal with the enormous challenges facing this country today.



Our system of Westminster government has served us well for 150 years. It has worked because it combines an effective political executive (the Prime Minister and cabinet) supported by a non-partisan public service, with strong democratic accountability to an elected legislature. The system works best when there is balance among these various elements, and works least well when the balance is missing.

The problem is that today our system is not working as it should because, in many different ways, things are *out of balance*. What we have today is an ever-stronger political executive, together with an ever-weaker legislature. This is a recipe for a diminished democracy. An executive in which power and authority are increasingly concentrated in and around the Prime Minister is an executive that has become less capable of dealing with the myriad of complex issues, problems, and opportunities facing a modern government. A legislature that lacks the tools to hold the executive meaningfully to account

is a Potemkin legislature, one that is only pretending to democratic utility. These imbalances are compounded by our increasingly powerful judicial system in which the courts have taken on a policy-making role that in Westminster theory belongs to the legislature and the executive.

What are the imbalances that should worry us the most, and what should be done to correct them?

- ***The first is the power imbalance between cabinet and PMO.*** Cabinet should return to its traditional role as the decision-making body in government. Ministers should be empowered again with clear authority and accountability, and PMO should return to its traditional role of supporting the PM, not trying to run the government.
- ***The second is the imbalance in roles and responsibilities between public servants and political staff.*** Each has its proper role in providing advice to ministers. Public servants should be encouraged to speak truth to power, and political staff should stay out of operations.
- ***Third, the government’s relationship to Parliament has become unbalanced.*** Parliamentary committees should be treated as a serious element of the governing process. They need greater independence and more resources.
- ***Fourth, many of our core federal institutions are no longer fit for purpose.*** The public service has grown by 40% over the past decade. It must become leaner, more productive,



and better equipped for today's digital age. The RCMP, which currently devotes most of its effort and resources to provincial and municipal policing, should be focussed on its federal role of combating transnational criminal gangs, international terrorism, cyber crime, money laundering, and cross-border drug smuggling. We need strategic investments in our military, diplomacy and intelligence services.

- ***Fifth, we seem to have lost any focus on productivity and growth.*** We are in a productivity crisis; yet nowhere has there been a focal point for tackling stagnant living standards and sputtering growth. Regulatory systems have become barriers to growth rather than supporting smart growth.
- ***Sixth, and this is something that is most evident to Canadians, the government needs to dramatically up its game in service delivery.*** It's not the policy announcements that really count – it's the implementation.
- ***Finally, we have a growing problem of fiscal imbalance.*** In recent years, fiscal anchors have been abandoned, fiscal forecasts have lost their credibility, fiscal spending has galloped ahead of the economy, and the national debt has more than doubled. The November 4 budget will be a key test of whether the government is prepared to tackle these fundamental problems.

Canada is under-performing, and these weaknesses in how our national government works are a significant factor in that under-performance. But Canada is not broken. These problems are correctable, with political leadership, determination and public support. In this dramatically changing world, the status quo is simply not a viable option, either for government or for the private sector. If we are to grow and prosper as a country, we have to

do things differently – focus on results, be bolder in our aspirations and invest more in the future.

These problems with how the government operates and its inability to get things done are not new. What is new is the urgency created by a more uncertain and volatile world, by the erosion of trust in our main trading partner and ally, by disruptive technological change, by geopolitical tensions between the world's only superpowers, and by the threatening forces of populism and nationalism. In these circumstances, the status quo becomes a bigger risk, inertia has a greater cost, and business as usual is a prescription for failure.

Political self-interest should be a big motivator for change. And the attacks on our economy and sovereignty by Mr. Trump significantly amplify the political imperative for change. The public wants problems solved, not press releases that herald good intentions. Citizens want better service delivery. Business wants a competitive environment. Investors want policy coherence and stability. And everyone wants safety and security in a troubled world.

These potential forces of change should be buoyed by the fact that renewal is possible. It does not require constitutional amendments or complex legislative and electoral reforms. What it does take is the will and commitment by political parties to eschew excessive centralization and to embrace the values and the necessary balances of the Westminster system.

Good governance benefits all Canadians. We should never take it for granted. Yet today our governance processes are not living up to what Canadians expect and demand. Now is the time for a reset – a rebooting — of how government operates in Canada and for renewing the public service. That's in everybody's interest.

Making this happen is the challenge facing our national government and indeed the whole country. It's time for change. ■

*Jim Mitchell has worked as an academic, a foreign service officer, a senior public servant, and a consultant. He served 17 years in government, first as a diplomat and then as a senior official in the Privy Council Office and the Treasury Board Secretariat.*

## Honorary Presidents of the Canadian Foreign Service Alumni Forum

We are pleased to announce that the following three distinguished individuals, long associated with Canadian foreign policy and the foreign service, have accepted our invitation to become honorary presidents of our association: Rt Hon. Joe Clark, former Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and H el ene Laverdi ere, former colleague and former foreign affairs critic of the New Democratic Party

We thank our new honorary presidents and invite them to any meeting or gathering of the Forum anywhere in Canada.

## Pr esidents honoraires du Forum des anciens du Service ext erieur canadien

Nous sommes heureux d'annoncer que les trois personnalit es suivantes, figures embl ematiques de la politique  trang ere canadienne et du service ext erieur, ont accept e notre invitation   devenir pr esidents honoraires de notre association : Le tr es honorable Joe Clark, ancien premier ministre et secr etaire d' tat aux Affaires ext erieures. L'honorable Lloyd Axworthy, ancien ministre des Affaires  trang eres, et H el ene Laverdi ere, ancienne coll gue et ancienne porte-parole de l'opposition en mati ere d'affaires  trang eres du Nouveau Parti D mocratique.

Nous remercions nos nouveaux pr esidents honoraires et les invitons   toute r union ou rencontre du Forum, partout au Canada.

# Il neigeait sur la Khyber Pass

Par Jacques Paquette

En janvier 1984, les Soviétiques sont en Afghanistan depuis quelques années. Les camps de réfugiés afghans peuplent une partie des alentours de Peshawar au Pakistan. On y retrouve principalement femmes, enfants et vieillards. Les moudjahidines sont pour leur part regroupés en secret dans certains coins près de la frontière pakistano-afghane. Ces mêmes moudjahidines avec qui l'Occident avait une alliance stratégique pour combattre les soviétiques.

Basé à l'ambassade à Islamabad, j'avais quelques amis afghans qui s'étaient réfugiés au Pakistan durant ces temps troubles. Un de ces amis avait établi un magasin de tapis afghans à Islamabad, lui qui avait été élevé dans un commerce semblable à Kaboul. C'est par son entremise que j'ai rencontré des moudjahidines au Pakistan.

Un jour, on m'avait dit que des moudjahidines organisaient, à l'occasion, des parties de bouzkachi dans la région de Peshawar. Le bouzkachi, jeu traditionnel afghan, peut regrouper de nombreux joueurs, généralement répartis en équipes de dix joueurs. Une carcasse décapitée, traditionnellement celle d'une chèvre, est lancée sur le sol au milieu du cercle des cavaliers. Au signal, les cavaliers se ruent vers la carcasse et tentent de la ramasser, ce qui nécessite une grande force. Le cavalier muni de la carcasse doit atteindre une zone déterminée alors que les autres tentent de la lui enlever. C'était anciennement un jeu très agressif et dangereux mais même aujourd'hui, il demeure très spectaculaire.

Moi qui cherchais des activités uniques pour la venue de ma belle-sœur et son copain, je me suis dit

que ce serait fantastique si nous réussissions à assister à une partie.

Avec nos visiteurs, nous nous sommes donc rendus à Peshawar où nous avons soupé avec des connaissances afghanes de notre ami. J'en ai profité pour m'enquérir sur les parties de bouzkachi. On s'entend, il s'agit d'un événement très occasionnel avec peu de préavis mais mes hôtes me donnent une idée de l'endroit où j'aurais peut-être une chance de voir une partie.

La ville de Peshawar en 1984 était beaucoup plus petite que ce qu'elle est devenue aujourd'hui avec à l'époque une population de 630,000 habitants (2.5 millions en 2025). Elle est la capitale de la province de la Frontière-du-Nord-Ouest (appelée depuis 2010 Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa). Elle était alors constituée de trois parties : la vieille ville, le cantonnement britannique (maintenant appelé cantonnement de Peshawar), et la zone résidentielle moderne qui incluait l'université. A cette époque, Peshawar était une ville d'intrigues avec de nombreux espions tentant d'amasser autant d'information que possible sur les manœuvres contre les Russes en Afghanistan et où les attentats n'étaient pas rares.

A l'ouest du quartier universitaire de Peshawar, on pouvait voir de nombreux camps de réfugiés afghans non loin d'un canal aux eaux douteuses. Au milieu des années 1980, il y avait jusqu'à 3.5 millions de réfugiés afghans au Pakistan. La route vers la Khyber Pass passait tout près de ces camps. A quelques kilomètres en dehors de la ville, il y avait un barrage (check point) où, à certains moments, il pouvait être difficile pour les occidentaux de passer sans autorisation spéciale.

En d'autres termes, en ces temps de tensions politico-militaires, il n'était pas facile de se rendre à la Khyber Pass.

Pour tenter d'aller voir une partie de bouzkachi, on m'avait dit qu'il fallait se rendre à quelques dizaines de kilomètres au sud-ouest de Peshawar par une route secondaire. C'est ainsi qu'un beau matin, dans ma Toyota Cressida, je me dirige sur la route principale puis, à la vue du barrage, j'emprunte une petite route secondaire vers la gauche. Je roule pendant un certain moment. Les indications que l'on m'avait données sont plutôt imprécises. A un certain moment, selon les directives, je sors de la route pour m'engager vers le nord dans un champ rocailleux. C'est sec et poussiéreux et rien n'y pousse mais le terrain a l'avantage d'être carrossable pour une voiture. Nous avons roulé pendant une quinzaine de minutes pour bien se rendre compte qu'il n'y a rien à voir. Pas de bouzkachi!

Nous croisons une petite route secondaire qui va vers le nord que nous décidons d'emprunter. Cette route rejoint finalement la route principale qui mène vers la Khyber Pass. C'est alors que je me rends compte que je me retrouve de l'autre côté du fameux barrage de contrôle. Sans hésiter, je décide de tourner à gauche et prendre la direction de la Khyber Pass. Advienne que pourra.

De Peshawar à Torkham (à la frontière afghane), il y a environ 55 km. Il devait donc nous rester une quarantaine de km à parcourir en montagne.

La Khyber Pass est mythique à plus d'un titre. Au cours des siècles, elle a été témoin de nombre d'invasions d'un côté comme de l'autre. Elle a été un acteur important lors des trois guerres anglo-afghanes (1839-1842, 1878-1880 et 1919). C'est d'ailleurs en lien avec les guerres anglo-afghanes que les Britanniques ont investi dans les infrastructures en pavant la route en 1879 et en construisant une





voie ferrée au début du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle reliant Peshawar et Landi Kotal, à quelques kilomètres de la frontière afghane. Les Britanniques n'ont jamais réussi à vaincre les Afghans et la Khyber Pass est un mauvais souvenir pour eux mais ils y ont établi l'infrastructure qui a survécu jusqu'à ce jour.

La route était à ce moment relativement tranquille surtout occupée par des camions de marchandises aux décorations excentriques. Durant le parcours, nous avons traversé quelques check points secondaires qui ne semblaient préoccuper personne et avons aperçu quelques batteries anti-aériennes. La Khyber Pass dans son ensemble peut être aussi étroite que 16 mètres par endroits mais aussi large que 1,600 mètres à d'autres endroits.

Au quart du trajet, en passant à la hauteur du fort Shahgai, construit par les Britanniques en 1927, nous avons été émerveillés de voir le

fameux train qui relie Peshawar à Landi Kotal. Une locomotive à vapeur, en attente devant le fort, semblait figée dans le temps depuis le début du siècle.

La route qui serpente dans le col, se trouvait devant nous, offrant un spectacle que tous ont gardé précieusement en mémoire car c'est l'image que tous ont en tête lorsqu'ils pensent à la Khyber Pass.)

Landi Kotal, dernière ville avant la frontière juchée à 1072 mètres d'altitude, était renommée pour être une ville de contrebande. Ses marchés favorisaient le « libre-échange » du temps. Passé cette ville, tout en hauteur sur la route, à quelques kilomètres de la ville frontalière de Torkham, on pouvait apercevoir la frontière afghane. Nous nous sommes arrêtés. Il ne fallait pas pousser trop loin notre aventure et notre chance. Nous avons pris une photo de nous avec en arrière-plan la frontière au bas de la

vallée. Un gardien pakistanais, qui semblait trouver le tout assez rigolo et probablement n'ayant pas vu de touriste depuis fort longtemps, a été heureux de se joindre à nous pour la photo. C'est à ce moment qu'il est tombé quelques flocons de neige. On s'est dit qu'il faudra un jour écrire un roman intitulé « *Il neigeait sur la Khyber Pass* ».

Le retour s'est fait sans encombre. Rendus près de Peshawar, nous avons été soulagés de noter que le barrage de contrôle ne visait que les véhicules qui se rendaient à la Khyber Pass, alors que de notre côté, aucune barrière ne nous coupait le chemin.

## Épilogue

De retour à l'ambassade, je me suis empressé de conter mon aventure qui m'avait permis de me rendre à la Khyber Pass. Un collègue a été ravi d'entendre mon histoire car il attendait la visite prochaine de ses parents et





*Le fameux train qui relie Peshawar à Landi Kotal.*

cherchait des activités particulières pour leur séjour. Je lui ai transmis toute l'information dont je disposais sachant que mes directives étaient, au mieux, approximatives.

Quelques semaines plus tard, après la visite de ses parents, je lui ai demandé comment s'était déroulée sa visite de la Khyber Pass. Il m'a regardé d'un air furieux et m'a répondu : « Mal! ».

En fait, il avait bien suivi mes instructions. Il a quitté la route secondaire près de Peshawar pour s'engager dans le champ rocailleux, en espérant contourner au loin le fameux barrage routier. Sauf qu'après quelques minutes à peine, un camion militaire a surgi de nulle part. Des soldats armés jusqu'aux dents en sont descendus, armes en main et lui ont ordonné de s'arrêter

immédiatement. Il leur a indiqué qu'il allait rebrousser chemin mais avant même d'esquisser quelque geste que ce soit, il avait un canon de carabine sur la tempe et avait comme instruction de ne pas bouger.

Ils l'ont escorté jusqu'à la route principale et a été invité à quitter pour Peshawar immédiatement. La plaque diplomatique de la voiture lui a certainement évité un traitement moins indulgent.

J'ai tenté une blague en disant qu'il avait espéré justement avoir des activités inoubliables pour ses parents mais son regard noir m'a clairement laissé entendre qu'effectivement, ses parents n'étaient pas prêts à oublier cette aventure. Même sans avoir vu un bouzkachi, ou encore la mythique Khyber Pass. ■

*Jacques Paquette a été au MAECI de 1982 à 2000 et a poursuivi sa carrière dans d'autres ministères, prenant sa retraite en 2017 comme sous-ministre adjoint principal à EDSC.*



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# Patricia Marsden-Dole: One of a kind

By Anne Charles

Paddy Marsden-Dole was never sure of her birthdate. It depended on which source she chose to believe, Feb 16 – her mother, Feb 17 – the government of Alberta, Feb 18 – the government of Canada. More often than not, she chose Feb 18,th because aging was not on Paddy’s agenda.

Paddy was born in Alberta, educated in British Columbia, schooled by the Sisters of St. Anne at the Little Flower Academy and then UBC. After graduation she spent a year at the college of Europe in Belgium. From there she went to London where, in response to her mother’s urging to “get a job”, and not really knowing what to expect, she wrote the Foreign Service exam. When interviewed she showed up - by her own description - in knee high white boots and a short skirt (very 1960’s London) and was hired. The new look!

Family, Faith and Friends were Paddy’s life blood through thick and thin. Her immediate and extended family were her constant pride and joy. Her Faith guided her integrity and underscored her wide range of interests in her retirement motivating her efforts to improve the life of seniors. She was considerate of others, kind, thoughtful and loyal.

No matter how successful one is in their career, there are periods of ups and downs. Not everyone easily accepted the new look. And it was the support of colleagues and friends greatly treasured who provided the intellectual stimulation and exchange of ideas that she needed intrinsically to feed her spirit all her life.

Until 1969, there had been no women hired into the Trade Commissioner Service of the Department of Industry Trade and Commerce, whatever their standing



Official Departmental photo from the Department of Trade and Commerce, 1969, of the new recruits sitting with the deputy minister, Jake Warren.

in the national exams. By this time, the Status of Women Report had been released and the government could not ignore its findings. Paddy Marsden and Lucille Lee were hired. At the end of the training year, Lucille Lee resigned; she had married and had been posted to Milan but her husband could not find a job. So, after her training year, Paddy became the first woman FSO Trade Commissioner, and, for the next two years, the only one.

Paddy’s first assignment was to India, not a cushy assignment particularly during the India-Pakistan conflict. Gar Pardy remembers it well. “Paddy arrived in New Delhi in the summer of 1971. It was her first overseas assignment, and she told us at the time she was in India to sell snow blowers to the Indians. At one level the idea was strange even from the land of snow, but with forty-degree days with tarmacs having trouble remaining intact, it seemed an idea out of touch with Indian reality. Nevertheless, Paddy persisted, and soon the Indian army was interested

as they were still coping with the aftermath of the war with China ten years earlier, fought at heights and at temperatures higher and lower than in Canada. I am told that even today, an occasional Canadian looking vehicle can be seen moving snow in India’s northern regions.”

She was then cross-posted to an immigration assignment in London. Paddy credited that experience as enabling her to fully appreciate the challenges of her later assignment as Deputy High Commissioner to India. And while in London, the High Commissioner Jake Warren, who knew talent when he saw it, moved her to be his assistant.

It was in London that she married the love of her life Paul Dole, and Paul played a very important role in her success. Paul was an Australian, a dreamer and an accomplished raconteur, who made Paddy the centre of his life. He made her laugh; his eclectic interests expanded her world. He organized her social life and brought her a wide range of friends.



*Paddy Marsden-Dole*

At the time they were married and for about the first 15 years of their marriage, the male spouse was an oddity. There was no support mechanism at posts such as the Diplomatic Wives Associations that could assist with acculturation and socialization of a male spouse. And the colleagues did not really know how to relate to a male spouse. Paul's temperament was such that his outgoing curious personality enabled him to make friends, so Paddy did not have to face the wrenching choice many of her successors had to make between marriage and career.

What was striking throughout Paddy's life was the breadth of her interests. In addition to international affairs, international politics, the whole gamut of Canadian foreign policy and Canadian democratic institutions, she read widely, she loved music, and she took up painting in the last years. She was committed to social action and to her community, and nothing demonstrated it more than the "golden years" of her life. She was open to new experiences and willing to take risks both professionally and personally from very early in her career, whether it

was an assignment to immigration in London, or her secondment to Agriculture Canada.

Sydney tested Paddy's adaptability and resilience. Australia of the 1970s was very much a man's world and a chauvinistic one. She was assigned the Agriculture sector and embraced it. She went out to the farmers, actively supported the Canadian farm machinery manufacturers, and won the respect of her clients on both sides of the Pacific.

Paddy was very energetic, with an infectious enthusiasm, a pathfinder. Her professional reputation was that of a collaborator, an innovative and creative problem-solver, steady, focused and determined. She was cerebral, and ferociously curious about current events near and far right up to the very end of her life. She also had a lively, quirky sense of humour that could appreciate the absurd.

She was practical though not domestically inclined. She could make a rice dish if pressed but more often than not when asked to bring a dish to a gathering of friends brought a Loblaws loaf of bread and later a Portuguese Vinho Verde. Her gifts were practical - a shoehorn for her to put on her shoes when she visited your house, spikes for poles to walk on ice in winter - even if you did not have poles, and once a two-step stool, which was truly useful!

There was no maternity leave in the early years, so when Paddy had her first son Gregory, she took annual leave and then brought Gregory to the office and put him in a drawer. When she had to feed him, she put a sign on her door for privacy! When Thomas was born in Cleveland, there was still no maternity leave (paternity leave was not even in the lexicon!).

Throughout the 1970s there were very few women in the business world, which was culturally male irrespective of the country. However, Canadian society was changing; economics was forcing the change,

and women were entering the labour force and staying in it. In the early 1980s, TCS merged with External Affairs and the range of opportunities expanded for Trade Commissioners. And then the Minister of External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, asked: where are the women?

Paddy was offered a Head of Mission assignment but wisely argued for the position of Deputy High Commissioner to India. This gave her hands-on experience of the management of a complex diplomatic mission. It also gave her time to season. In 1991 she was appointed a High Commissioner to Tanzania and in 1994 Ambassador to Portugal.

Throughout her career there were many memorable moments, but the one which she was most proud of was her Creoula project, celebrating the historical links between Portugal and Newfoundland and Labrador, in no small measure due to her deep family roots in Newfoundland. This project included a cultural exchange between the children of fishing families on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, which culminated in an unforgettable cross-Atlantic journey on a four-masted fishing vessel, the Creoula, the last of the Portuguese White Fleet. For this project she was inducted as a Commander of the Order of Prince Henry the Navigator by the Government of Portugal.

On returning to Canada, she served as Director General of the International Markets Bureau of Agriculture Canada. During a business visit to Chicago, Paddy suffered a brain aneurism. Thanks to the swift action of her colleagues and friends from Agriculture Canada and the Treasury Board, a three-week stay at Northwestern hospital in Chicago saved her life and did not bankrupt the family.

Her final assignment as Director General of the South and South East Asia Bureau brought her career full circle with her Asian experience. Although retirement



slowed her travelling, the challenges continued apace.

When she retired, her first undertaking was to complete a Masters and a PhD at St. Paul's University. Paddy was concerned about seniors, the coming demographic tsunami and the inability of our social support systems to meet the needs as the Baby Boomers reach their 80s. And in true Paddy fashion she set out to raise the consciousness of the Church and their congregations, with her belief of the need for seniors to help seniors. She planned and delivered community consultations through the parishes on aging in an aging society.

With Paul's passing, she immersed herself in her community and her social action activities and her friends. For several years she was an organizer of an annual conference of the Council on Aging of Ottawa. She was the Coordinator of Social Justice Ministry for the Roman Catholic diocese of Ottawa. She was very active in the Centretown Churches

Social Action Committee, the parent organization of the Centretown Community Food Centre. She was a driving force in the organizing Committee for the CCSAC annual Fundraiser for the Food Centre. Ten years ago, she initiated an informal ecumenical dialogue with four local churches, St. Theresa Roman Catholic, St. John the Evangelist Anglican, Knox Presbyterian and First Baptist Churches, which is continuing to this day.

For diversion, Paddy loved music and was a member of the Musica Viva Singers at Centre town United Church and a faithful member of her own Church choir. She was an avid reader and cherished her book club. She was very enthusiastic about her community garden and grew a successful variety of vegetables. She was an active supporter of Fair Vote Canada and maintained her interest in public service by serving on the board of RHOMA and the Ottawa branch of the Federal Retirees

Paddy had only one direction –

forward at full throttle. She was determined, focused and strong-willed, which carried her through the challenges of her career and the last years of her life. She was willing to risk in order to live. Paddy wore the moniker of the “first” very lightly. She was modest about her achievements. She was interested in outcomes. She put her family first. At her funeral, her son Gregory thanked her for giving him and Thomas the gift of living abroad, experiencing new cultures and adventures in the pre-internet world. Paddy's greatest legacy was that she enriched so many lives by her efforts and her example. ■

*Anne Charles joined the Trade Commissioner Service in 1972, and her classmates included two other women, Kathryn McCallion and Nancy Stiles. During her 34 years in the Foreign Service, Anne served 23 years abroad in both Trade Commissioner and Head of Mission assignments. Paddy and Anne were friends for over 50 years, but professionally their paths never crossed. Nevertheless, Paddy gave her the honour of being the godmother of her son Thomas.*



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# The Canada-US relationship: Severely sprained or irretrievably broken?

By Michael Kergin

Photo courtesy of the US Defence Department



*The Canadian Defence Minister, Art Eggleton, meeting with Donald Rumsfeld on 20 November, 2001, with Michael Kergin to Eggleton's left.*

If I were to frame a debate about Canada's relations with the United States, the question might be: "Is the Cda-US relationship broken?". This was suggested by Mark Carney on the night of his election. More recently, he used the term "ruptured". To answer this question, it is important to examine how our relations have developed over time. I would argue that there have been three distinct periods in the evolution of Canada-US relations since World War II. Each one is comprised of three major components: security, the economy, and the politics of engagement.

The first period (1941-2000) was characterized by what I call **creeping interdependence**. In the security sphere, in 1941, Mackenzie King and Franklin Roosevelt signed the Ogdensburg Agreement, which established a joint security pact governed by the Permanent Joint Board on Defence (a high level

civil-military governing board). Over the ensuing four decades, the PJBD spawned an alphabet soup of security agreements between the two countries, such as the DPSA and NORAD, and they authorized the construction of bases and radar sites (DEW, BMEWS) in the Arctic.

Over time, Canada achieved the greatest degree of interoperability with US forces of any country in the world. In the absence of the US Commander of NORAD, the Canadian deputy advises in the event of an attack on North America. The US President thereby relies on a Canadian for decisions potentially triggering a nuclear response. You do not get more interoperable than that! Canada actively participated in US-led operations in Korea, the first Iraq war, and Afghanistan, occasionally having US military personnel serving under Canadian commanders. Not a common practice you could expect for the now named Dept of War!

In the economic sphere, our respective leaders in 1965, Pearson and Johnson, signed the Auto Pact, formalizing an increasingly integrated car manufacturing capacity. This led to the Free Trade Agreement, initialed by Mulroney and Reagan in 1989, broadening trade integration and creating independent panels to adjudicate trade disputes. The FTA was succeeded by NAFTA, taking effect in January 1994 under Chretien and Clinton. By incorporating Mexico into a trilateral agreement, Canada prevented the US from employing a hub and spoke strategy in its trade relations. Outside of the European Union, NAFTA became the most integrated trading system among the world's democracies.

On the political side, close personal friendships between the leaders of Canada and the US were instrumental in accelerating this phase of increasing interdependence. I single out: Joe Clark with Jimmy Carter, Mulroney with Reagan and Bush, and Chretien and Clinton, in this important respect.

The leaders gave top-down instructions to officials to solve irritants and deepen ties. I saw this first-hand forty years ago, when I had the privilege of serving in Mr. Clark's office. This was the period of Canada-US quarterly meetings between Mr. Clark and George Shulz, the US Secretary of State. Shulz often used the metaphor that managing the Canada-US relationship was like caring for a garden. It required constant attention to cull the weeds and fertilize the flowers. This period marked one of the high points in the relationship.



Of course, there were also periods when the personal relations between the heads of government were scratchy (e.g. Diefenbaker/Kennedy; Trudeau-Nixon/Reagan). At those times, the ties between the countries weakened somewhat.

The Second period (2000-2016) began to reverse the earlier trend towards interdependence. 9/11 kicked it off in the security sphere. It is difficult to overestimate the degree of trauma felt by Americans following Bin Laden's terrorist attack of 9/11. A false Boston Globe story that two of the 9/11 hijackers reached the US from Halifax complicated the situation for Canada. I had to debunk this falsehood throughout the five years of my time in Washington. The apparent empty space along the 8000 km northern border was suddenly perceived by Americans as a line of serious vulnerability. The hospitality of Newfoundlanders in opening their homes to stranded Americans on 9/11 was too quickly forgotten.

Despite the ingenuity of the Strong Borders Agreement, concluded months after 9/11 to facilitate the movement of trade and people between the two countries, the common border became increasingly obstructed and sticky. For the first time, passports were required to travel between our two countries. The US Ambassador to Canada of the day summed up the new paradigm: "Security trumps trade". He subsequently wrote a book with the same title.

On the economic side, while NAFTA afforded Canada certain protections, our exports became subject to many more disputes and challenges during the Bush/Obama years. We tried to tend the garden, but the weeds grew out of hand. The softwood lumber agreement was not renewed; Alberta beef continued to be excluded well after the mad cow disease had been eradicated; Canadian wheat was tariffed because of alleged subsidies by the Wheat Board, and PEI

potatoes and lobsters were subjected to restrictions on specious health grounds. Even Alberta oil became the object of intense environmental scrutiny, ending with Obama's cancellation of the Keystone Pipeline. Finally, Trump ripped up NAFTA ("the worst deal ever negotiated"), to be replaced by the somewhat more restrictive CUSMA.

On the political front, initial differences between a Liberal Chretien and a Republican George W Bush were manageable. But a serious breakup occurred over Canada's refusal to join the "Coalition of the Willing" for the second Iraq War. Paul Martin and Bush initially bonded, but Bush felt betrayed by Martin's surprise decision not to participate in the Ballistic Missile Defence programme. As Ambassador in Washington at the time, trust me, I acutely felt the consequences of both decisions.

So, from 9/11, the trend of greater interdependence of two equal sovereign states, which characterized the latter half of the 20th century, began slowly, and then more rapidly, to reverse. This brings us to the **Trump era**, our third period. For the sake of brevity, I will consider Biden's presidency as an interregnum. But I would say that Biden's foreign policy was generally consistent with Canadian interests - in strengthening ties with traditional allies and by coming down against authoritarian regimes. However, Biden maintained Obama's largely trade protectionist approach, doubling down on restrictive policies such as Buy America, blocking the Keystone pipeline, going after softwood lumber. and challenging the dispute settlement panels of the World Trade Organization and the Trump-negotiated Canada-US-Mexico Trade Agreement, or CUSMA.

Turning to **Trump 2.0**, most would agree that the first Trump administration 2017-2021 was a testing ground for his second term in

office. My focus is therefore on the past nine months.

Historians and political scientists will likely debate to what degree Trump's second electoral victory was a consequence of his unique magnetism and salesmanship or was the result of a country buffeted by rapidly changing circumstances, both domestically and internationally. It was probably a symbiotic interplay between both states of affairs. Internationally, the debacle of the occupation of Iraq in 2002, the unseemly withdrawal from Afghanistan, the rise of China, now paired with Russia as an "eternal friend", have shaken American confidence in themselves. The glory days of the "G-1" were well past. Domestically, the rapid transformation of the economy from a manufacturing superpower to an economy dominated by an exclusive techno-financial elite has alienated many of the Reagan Democrats, unwisely termed "deplorables" by Hillary Clinton. They, and a young cadre, inspired by social media and the likes of Charlie Kirk, now form the base of the MAGA movement.

Trump, the master marketeer (remember the "Apprentice") has brilliantly stoked the legitimate resentment of the less-educated against the Democrat-leaning "coastal elites". He has cunningly exploited the working-class' misplaced nostalgia for the 1950's. The leitmotif of Trump's communications strategy stokes a sense of victimhood of America being "ripped off" by its trading partners. His counterpunch is the imposition of the highest regime of tariffs in over a hundred years. Trump extols tariffs as the "most beautiful word in the English language". And, while he is at it: why not call for the annexation of prime real estate close to the continental USA?

Now let me turn to *the Canadian reaction*. The imposition of the highest US sectoral tariffs against

Canada in close to a century and the threat of annexation constitute for Canada a crisis of the most serious nature. Some have called it a challenge of existential proportions. Canadians, therefore, have been forced to reconsider a number of practices governing the country over the past decades. Amongst others: the luxury of inter-provincial tariffs; the sanctity of environmental and indigenous “no go” zones; the over-reach of regulatory complexities; reluctance to invest in essential infrastructure at national level; the comfort of geographically and culturally accessible markets; corporate hesitancy to invest in R and D to improve productivity; and finally, complacency afforded by our North American security.

The new Liberal government has declared that it will undertake bold actions to address these obstacles: to improve productivity, foster greater national unity and adopt a much more robust security posture. The Prime Minister also seeks to deepen relations with distant partners in efforts to wean Canada away from the US, economically and militarily.

Individual Canadians and the private sector appear to be playing their parts, with reports of thirty percent reduced crossings to the US. The Report on Business of the *Globe and Mail* indicated recently that container traffic destined for Europe has increased through the Port of Montreal by twenty percent. And one need only to tune into any talk show to hear the depth of anger and disdain that Canadians have for Donald Trump.

But none of this means that we are about to pull up the drawbridge at the 49th parallel or to engage in a permanent decoupling with the US. Many strands make up the fabric which will continue to bind our two countries.

First, let’s consider our geography. 8000 kms of land, water and airspace



*Michael Kergin addresses the Ottawa branch of the CFSAF on 25 September, 2025.*

will always necessitate cross-border cooperative management, be it security, environmental, economic or the movement of people. Canada cannot be towed away to somewhere more distant from the United States.

Second, official ties at the federal, provincial and municipal levels are intricate and pervasive. Myriads of agreements, accords, and memoranda of understanding defy cataloguing. I recall many years ago that one brave soul in Foreign Affairs (as it was then called) gave up his attempt to compile a registry of all cross-border agreements. Unfinished, the compendium approached the approximate size of the Ottawa phone book.

Third, personal relations do count. Heads of Government can set the tone and move, or block, issues affecting both countries. With humour, Carney has handled Trump well so far. Individual Ministers are in and out of Washington, almost on a daily basis, meeting with their counterparts. Premiers and Governors convene annually through their respective regional groupings. Cross border parliamentary-congressional associations are also playing an important binding role.

Finally, there is what has been termed the “hidden wiring” of the Canada-US relationship – corporate and small business, interest groups of all types, and family connections, which form a webbing which undergird the relationship at its most fundamental

level. With time, the connections made by this hidden wiring may well outlive the deep anger of the moment.

But Canadians, at the personal level, remain conflicted. Recently, a PEW poll revealed that 59 percent of Canadians see the US “as Canada’s greatest international threat”. The same poll, however, also found that 55 percent see the US “as its most important ally”. Go figure!

The divergent trends of today began with 9/11, when Americans felt unexpectedly vulnerable in their homeland (and homeland was not a term that one heard much before the terrorist events of 2001). Canada had suddenly become too upfront and personal. President Trump’s sense of victimhood of America being “ripped off” has accelerated the centrifugal forces that had been building up over this time.

That said, given the multiplicity of Canada-US relations at so many levels, the relationship is not “irretrievably broken”. Damaged, yes. Trust has been significantly weakened. However, in the end, both countries need each other, albeit for different reasons. There is no other possibility but for the Canada-US relationship to endure over the long term, greatly transformed.

How we survive this transformation will depend on our capacity to shake off the complacency of the status quo, of “business as usual”. We will need new ways of managing our domestic economic relationships, while



engaging substantively with non-traditional foreign partners.

I conclude with two predictions. First, for the near future, the US is likely to go down the path of authoritarianism. And we will have to deal with the unpredictability which usually accompanies personal rule. And second, as the US continues to deviate

from its founding principles, our own sovereign independence will only emerge stronger. ■

*A career foreign service officer, Michael Kergin served in Cameroun, Washington, New York (UN), Cuba and finally as Canada's Ambassador to the United States for five years. After retiring from Foreign*

*Affairs Canada in 2005, he taught at the University of Ottawa and was senior policy adviser at Bennett Jones LLP, and was a special adviser to the Premier of Ontario for border management. This article is an edited version of a talk he gave to the Ottawa branch of the Canadian Foreign Service Alumni Forum on 25 September, 2025.*

## Canadian Foreign Service Officers honoured

Congratulations to Don Campbell, Alex Bugailiskis and Jeremy Kinsman on their recent appointments.

The announcement from the Government of Canada in June, 2025, provided the following citations for the appointments of Don Campbell and Alex Bugailiskis to the Order of Canada.

### Donald Wilfred Campbell, C.M.

Donald Campbell is a highly respected advisor in the private and public sectors. His stellar diplomatic career includes service as deputy minister of both Foreign Affairs and International Trade, G8 summit sherpa, and senior negotiator with the United States. A former ambassador to Korea and Japan, he continues to play a central role in Canada-Asia relations.

### Alexandra Bugailiskis, C.M.

Alexandra Bugailiskis had a 39-year career in Canada's diplomatic service. She served as ambassador to Syria, Cuba, Poland and Italy and held executive positions at Global Affairs where she helped shape foreign policies and mentored future diplomats. She is currently

Chair of UNU Institute for Water, Environment and Health.

### Jeremy Kinsman, O.B.C.

Congratulations as well to Jeremy Kinsman, on his appointment to the Order of British Columbia in August, 2025.

The announcement by the British Columbian government cited "Jeremy Kinsman, of Victoria, for his lifelong service in diplomacy and public dialogue, advancing Canada's voice on the global stage." In his acceptance of the honour, Jeremy indicated that "I share this award with the thousands of fellow members of the Canadian Foreign Service who have spent their working lives doing just that."

## Les diplomates canadiens honorés

Félicitations à Don Campbell, Alex Bugailiskis et Jeremy Kinsman pour leurs récentes nominations.

L'annonce du gouvernement du Canada en juin 2025 comprenait les citations suivantes : pour les nominations de Don Campbell et d'Alex Bugailiskis à l'Ordre du Canada.

### Donald Wilfred Campbell, C.M.

Donald Campbell est un conseiller très respecté dans les secteurs public et privé. Sa brillante carrière diplomatique comprend des fonctions de sous-ministre des Affaires étrangères et du Commerce international, de sherpa au sommet du G8 et de négociateur principal

auprès des États-Unis. Ancien ambassadeur en Corée et au Japon, il continue de jouer un rôle central dans les relations Canada-Asie.

### Alexandra Bugailiskis, C.M.

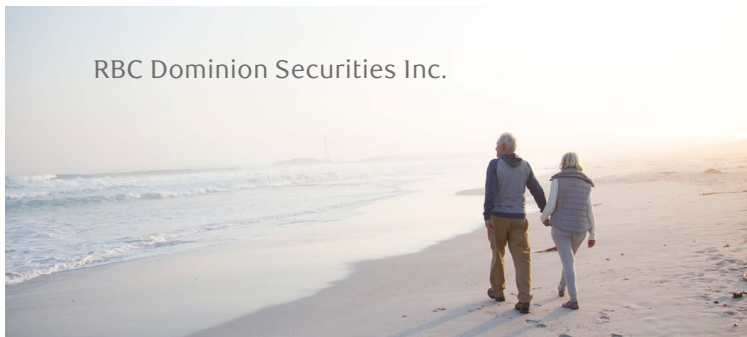
Alexandra Bugailiskis a mené une carrière de 39 ans au sein du service diplomatique canadien. Elle a été ambassadrice en Syrie, à Cuba, en Pologne et en Italie et a occupé des postes de direction à Affaires mondiales Canada, où elle a contribué à l'élaboration des politiques étrangères et a encadré de futurs diplomates. Elle est actuellement présidente de l'Institut de l'eau, de l'environnement et de la santé de l'Université des Nations Unies (UNU).

### Jeremy Kinsman, O.B.C.

Félicitations également à Jeremy Kinsman, nommé à l'Ordre de la Colombie-Britannique en août 2025.

Le gouvernement de la Colombie-Britannique a salué « Jeremy Kinsman, de Victoria, pour son engagement exceptionnel dans la diplomatie et le dialogue public, qui a permis de faire entendre la voix du Canada sur la scène internationale ». En acceptant cette distinction, Jeremy a déclaré : « Je partage ce prix avec les milliers de collègues du Service extérieur canadien qui ont, tout comme moi, fait entendre la voix du Canada. »

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