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VANCOUVER VS VLADIVOSTOK: CANADA'S FORGOTTEN FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS

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JCSP 41

Exercise Solo Flight

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES
JCSP 41 – PCEMI 41
2014 – 2015

EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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“Canada’s purpose is no longer just to go along and get along with everyone else’s agenda. It is no longer to please every dictator with a vote at the United Nations, and I confess that I don’t know why in the past attempts to do so were in Canadian national interests... Now we know where our interests lie, and who our friends are, and we take strong, principled positions in our dealings with other nations – whether popular or not.”

- Prime Minister Stephen Harper¹

¹ Photo taken from Matt Babiak, “Harper: Putin has to be opposed very strongly,” Ukrainian Policy, Posted 6 March 2015, <http://ukrainianpolicy.com/harper-putin-has-to-be-opposed-very-strongly/>; Quote taken from Jean-Christophe Boucher, “The Responsibility to Think Clearly about Interests: Stephen Harper’s Realist Internationalism, 2006–2011,” in *Canada in the World: Internationalism in Canadian Foreign Policy*, ed. Heather Smith and Claire Sjolander, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013), 61.

INTRODUCTION

Before a sellout crowd at Roy Thompson Hall in Toronto in April 2015, celebrated author and journalist Vladimir Pozner reminded the audience that for the past 100 years, the longstanding strategy of isolation and non-engagement toward the Russian Federation has been ironically misaligned with western interests at several points in history. It was the West's policy of Soviet isolation, he contended, that drove Moscow into signing the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression pact with Hitler. In an ironic twist, it was later Winston Churchill who admitted that the Soviets "broke the back of Nazi Germany."²

One cannot help but wonder if isolationism and mistrust, which has long characterized the West's relationship with Russia, is appropriate in the contemporary context. Following its 2014 military intervention in Crimea, the Kremlin again found itself a target of isolationist foreign policy in western circles. Buoyed by a Ukrainian diaspora numbering more than 1.2 million Canadians, the Harper Government quickly sided with its closest western allies and emerged as the staunchest critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin's actions. Consequently, Canadian-Russian relations now rest in a deep diplomatic and economic freeze.

Although Canada's foreign policy response was swift and clear, there is no consensus on its effectiveness and suitability to Canada's interests. As political journalist John Ibbitson puts it, the Ukraine crisis has "divided the Canadian foreign policy establishment."³

² Vladimir Pozner, (speech, Munk Debates, Toronto, Canada, April 10, 2015).

The Harper Government's policy on how best to respond to Russian military aggression is in line with the thinking of the University of Toronto's Aurel Braun, a political scientist who advocates compellingly for tougher sanctions, making the case that the West should make painful sacrifices, signaling in no uncertain terms that "it will no longer truckle to Putin's clumsy bullying."⁴ Similarly, Fen Hampson of the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) called Prime Minister Stephen Harper's foreign policy stance "a principled step in the right direction."⁵ On the other hand, senior diplomats such as Christopher Westdal, the former Canadian ambassador to both Ukraine and Russia, argue that Canada should not pander to ethnic minorities at home but instead be "quietly seeking to build bridges with Moscow in an effort to diffuse the crisis."⁶

Whether Canada is charting the best course for itself in its policy toward Russia merits further analysis and discussion. This essay begins with an analysis of Canada's national interests with respect to Russia. Next, it outlines Canada's foreign policy towards Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, in the multilateral (Western) and unilateral senses. It then assesses Canada's foreign policy response to such actions, asking whether the government has acted in line with the goals it had set out for itself. This paper concludes that Canada's policy response to Russian expansionism poses risks to the Canadian economy and threatens the stability of the region and global security

³ John Ibbitson, *Harper's Foreign Policy: Ukraine and the Diaspora Vote*, issued 19 March 2014, <https://www.cigionline.org/blogs/john-ibbitsons-blog/harpers-foreign-policy-ukraine-and-diaspora-vote>.

⁴ Aurel Braun, "Tougher sanctions now: Putin's Delusional Quest for Empire," *World Affairs Journal* 177, no. 2. (July/August 2014): 42.

⁵ Ibbitson, *Harper's Foreign Policy*.

⁶ John Ibbitson, "Harper's handling of Ukraine the latest outrage for old-school observers." *The Globe and Mail*. last updated 20 March 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/harpers-handling-of-ukraine-the-latest-outrage-for-old-school-observers/article17586559/>.

more generally. Rather than continuing its current policy, Ottawa would benefit from pursuing a more cooperative policy with Moscow.

PART 1: CANADA'S VODKA-FLAVOURED NATIONAL INTERESTS

Unlike the Russian Federation, whose national priorities and foreign policy positions are meticulously catalogued and clearly stated within the government's *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, Canadian national interests are subject to political inference and persistent re-interpretation. Historian Jack Granatstein highlighted the difficulty in determining what exactly constitutes Canada's national interests, proposing that Canada should "at last begin to define its national interests,"⁷ while international relations expert Jean-Christophe Boucher posited that Canadian national interests are a source of much debate among scholars.⁸

Since Canada has no existing stand-alone document explicitly setting out Canadian interests and charting Canada's position in foreign relations, this paper will apply the methodology of Boucher.⁹ Boucher argues that without a foreign policy white paper, Canada's national interests must be drawn from key strategic documents, platforms and speeches. Moreover, according to Boucher, Prime Minister Harper's

⁷ Jack Granatstein, Lecture, *The Importance of Being Less Earnest: Promoting Canada's National Interests through Tighter Ties with the U.S.*, (Toronto: CD Howe Institute, 2003), 2.

⁸ Jean-Christophe Boucher, "The Responsibility to Think Clearly about Interests: Stephen Harper's Realist Internationalism, 2006–2011," in *Canada in the World: Internationalism in Canadian Foreign Policy*, ed. Heather Smith and Claire Sjolander, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013), 60.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

interpretation of foreign policy is pragmatic; Canada's foreign policy is supposed to align with its national interests.¹⁰

What follows are highlights of key Canadian national interests as they relate to Russia, drawn from *de facto* sources, including the *Canada First Defence Strategy* (CFDS),¹¹ recent electoral platforms of the Conservative Party, speeches, foreign policy statements by the Prime Minister, as well as DFATD and other governmental websites proposing *strategies* for Canada's future.¹²

Canada's Interest in Economic Prosperity

With trade representing an estimated sixty percent of Canada's economy, few would contest that Canada is a *trading* nation. The pursuit of economic prosperity through trade is a foremost national interest under the Harper Government and formed the backbone of its "Here for Canada" election platform of 2011, and is clearly expressed in the Speech from the Throne published the same year, entitled *Stability, Prosperity and Security*.¹³

Russia is implicated in Canada's pursuit of economic prosperity because its economy has rebounded significantly since Moscow renounced communism almost a quarter century ago. DFATD has stated that the creation of jobs and economic growth is

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Boucher, *The Responsibility to Think Clearly About Interests*, 68.

¹² Government of Canada. Speech from the Throne. *Here for Canadians: Stability, Prosperity, Security*. Issued 3 June 2011, http://www.speech.gc.ca/local_grfx/docs/sft-ddt-2011_e.pdf.

¹³ Conservative Party of Canada, Election Platform, *Here for Canada: Stephen Harper's Low-Tax plan for Jobs and Economic Growth*, last accessed 13 April, 2015, http://www.conservative.ca/media/2012/06/ConservativePlatform2011_ENs.pdf.

the “top priority”¹⁴ of the government, and the strategy of bolstering trade relations with “key countries like Russia”¹⁵ is vital to Ottawa’s execution of this strategy.

The expansion of Canadian businesses into foreign markets is another method by which Canada furthers its economic prosperity.¹⁶ Diplomatic support for the expansion of Canadian businesses into Russian markets is articulated in the Global Markets Action Plan (GMAP), where Russia had until recently been classified¹⁷ as an “emerging market” of relevance to Canada.¹⁸

Canada’s economic interest in Russia also has a northern dimension, as Ottawa demonstrates a clear interest in advancing economic prosperity via trade through its Arctic links. *Canada’s Northern Strategy* (2009) – Canada’s current approach to developing the Arctic – describes the North as a region that represents “enormous economic potential”¹⁹ for the country. The *Northern Strategy* aims to build new trade ties with other Arctic States, setting the conditions for sustainable international

¹⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, News Release, *Closer Economic Ties with Russia Will Create Jobs and Opportunity for Canadians*, issued 2 June 2011, http://www.international.gc.ca/media_commerce/comm/news-communiques/2011/153.aspx?lang=eng.

¹⁵ *Closer Economic Ties...*

¹⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, *Trade*, last modified 9 April 2014, <http://www.international.gc.ca/commerce/index.aspx?lang=eng>.

¹⁷ Author’s note: As of April 2014, Russia was removed as a priority market under the Global Markets Action Plan as a result of sanctions applied against it. See Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, Global Markets Action Plan, last modified 19 February 2015, <http://international.gc.ca/global-markets-marches-mondiaux/markets-marches/index.aspx?lang=eng>.

¹⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, *Global Markets Action Plan*. Last modified 19 February 2015. <http://international.gc.ca/global-markets-marches-mondiaux/markets-marches/index.aspx?lang=eng>.

¹⁹ Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, *Canada’s Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future*, last Modified 18 May 2011. <http://www.northernstrategy.gc.ca/cns/cns-eng.asp>

development in the region, as part of a broader strategy to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.²⁰

Achieving Regional Security: The Arctic

The True North is our destiny, for our explorers, for our entrepreneurs, for our artists. And to not embrace its promise now would be to turn our backs on what it is to be Canadian.

– Prime Minister Stephen Harper²¹

For Canada, the Arctic represents future and promise. Notwithstanding the implicit significance of the Prime Minister’s yearly visits to Canada’s north, several government documents – including DFATD’s *Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy*, as well as *The Canada First Defence Strategy* (CFDS) – make it clear that security in the North is a paramount foreign policy priority and national interest. The Arctic region is “fundamental to Canada’s national identity,”²² and “the geopolitical significance of the region and the implications for Canada have never been greater.”²³

By virtue of the international strategic importance of the Arctic, Canada has also iterated its desire to cooperate with key Arctic states such as Russia and to preserve the integrity of its Arctic Council partnerships. DFATD assurances that Canada will respond whenever “positions or actions are taken by others that affect our national interests, undermine the cooperative relationships we have built [with Arctic states], or

²⁰ *Canada’s Northern Strategy...*

²¹ *Canada’s Northern Strategy...*

²² Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, *Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy*, last modified 3 June 2013, http://www.international.gc.ca/arctic-arctique/arctic_policy-canada-politique_arctique.aspx?lang=eng.

²³ *Ibid.*

demonstrate a lack of sensitivity to the interests or perspectives of Arctic peoples or states.”²⁴

No single state can lay claim to the Arctic’s resources, and the North occupies an enduring place in Canada’s environmental conscience. Canada has a vested interest in setting the international conditions for sustainable development in this region of impressive potential and national value. The array of vital natural resources – precious metals, commercial fishing stocks as well as abundant oil and gas reserves – require their environmentally responsible harvest and exploitation. *Canada’s Northern Strategy* reflects such thinking, stating that Canada envisions the Arctic as “a stable, rules-based region with clearly defined boundaries, dynamic economic growth and trade, vibrant Northern communities, and healthy and productive ecosystems.”²⁵ Canada’s interest in furthering the sustainable development and protection of the Arctic is discussed within the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental forum where Canada and Russia engage in dialogue on Arctic challenges and opportunities.

Canada also has clear defence and security interests in the Arctic. In the 2011 Conservative Party election platform, the Government stated that a main foreign policy priority was to “defend Canadian sovereignty by strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces and by defending Canada’s interests in the Arctic.”²⁶ The *Canada First* document, which in many respects formed the basis for the Conservative Party’s 2008 election platform on defence policy,²⁷ acknowledges that Canada’s north is likely to see

²⁴ *Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy.*

²⁵ *Canada’s Northern Strategy...*

²⁶ Boucher, *The Responsibility to Think Clearly About Interests...*, 62.

²⁷ Boucher, *The Responsibility to Think Clearly About Interests...*, 62.

an increased volume of commercial shipping traffic and economic activity due to warming of the earth and changing weather patterns. Retreating ice cover, it says, “has opened the way for increased shipping, tourism and resource exploration, and new transportation routes are being considered, including through the Northwest Passage.”²⁸ Foreign shipping and resource exploitation “could also spark an increase in illegal activity, with important implications for Canadian sovereignty and security.”²⁹ Almost as if to reassure its citizens that the Government is keeping with the national interest of Arctic security, DFATD states that Canada “is in control of its Arctic lands and waters and takes its stewardship role and responsibilities seriously.”³⁰

Promoting International Stability

Since the fall of the Berlin wall, the global security picture has evolved significantly. Conflicts are no longer frozen by Cold War tension. Increasingly, Canada is witness to regional tensions abroad, as well as humanitarian disasters. The *Canada First Defence Strategy* acknowledges this challenging and complex global security environment and prioritizes Canada’s three most important defence policy priorities: (i) defend Canada, (ii) defend North America and (iii) contribute to international peace and stability. *Canada First* stipulates “Canada's prosperity and security rely on [achieving] stability abroad.”³¹ In other words, the assurance of Canada’s domestic security – safeguarding Canadians’ way of life and maintaining a prosperous economy – relies on

²⁸ Department of National Defence, *Canada First Defence Strategy*, last modified 27 August 2013, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about/canada-first-defence-strategy.page>.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy*.

³¹ *Canada First Defence Strategy*.

global threats being addressed “at their source.”³² The promotion of international peace and stability is therefore another fundamental Canadian interest.

Rarely, if ever, does Canada act unilaterally when it aims to achieve international stability. Rather, as *Canada First* states, Canada acts in partnership with its Western allies as well as the United Nations. Operations are “conducted under the auspices of the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.”³³ While Canada regards both institutions as vehicles through which it can advance its interest in international stability, the same is not true for Russia. The Kremlin’s foreign policy is explicit in saying that it perceives itself as a target of NATO and on the receiving end of Western interference. Nevertheless, it also advocates a role for the United Nations³⁴ – where it holds a veto on the Security Council – as the choice forum for global stability dialogue and action.

As a Great Power, Russia commands significant attention with respect to Canada’s global security thinking and priorities. Even if it lost the Cold War, Moscow still wields significant power and influence, and has earned global respect as a well-connected nuclear and military power. Moreover, not only does Russia have the capacity to influence the global security scene, it also lies within (and in close proximity to) high-profile and conflict-prone regions, namely the Middle East and Asia. While the Middle-East contends with religious and ethnically-rooted violent uprisings and transnational

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation* – Art 32, issued 12 February 2013, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D.

terrorism, Asia is fast becoming an especially important source of trade wealth for Canada.

It is clear that Russia has the capacity to influence Canada's stated interests in promoting international stability, economic prosperity, as well as regional stability in the Arctic. The next section illustrates the essence of Canada's foreign policy towards Russia, particularly following Russia's expansion into the Crimean peninsula in March of 2014.

PART 2: CANADA'S POLICY RESPONSE TO RUSSIA

Although the Harper Government's articulation of Canada's national interests has been *ad hoc*, Canada's foreign policy position towards Russia since Moscow's invasion of Crimea has been utterly clear. The Harper Government condemns any Russian intervention in Ukraine, as it represents an unacceptable violation of Ukrainian territorial integrity and international law. This section highlights the main aspects of Ottawa's position, which will be categorized in terms of (i) Canada's multilateral (Western) response and (ii) Canada's unilateral response.

Canada's foreign policy actions and statements to date, titled *Canada's Response to the Situation in Ukraine*, are showcased on DFATD's website. Incremental and iterative policy measures - affecting Canadian relations with Russia in diplomatic, military, as well as economic spheres – are date-stamped and have been clearly

catalogued by the Harper Government ever since tensions arose between Ukraine and Russia in 2013.³⁵

Though it has evolved somewhat in the past year, the essence of Canada's foreign policy towards Russia has changed very little since Russian military aggression began last spring. On March 1, 2014, Prime Minister Harper characterized Russia's military intervention as illegal under international law and a clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. Canada has also issued Moscow an ultimatum: in November, 2014, Prime Minister Harper vowed, "Whether it takes five months or 50 years, we're not going to drop the subject until Ukrainian territory is returned to Ukrainians."³⁶ DFATD continues to call on Russia to follow through on its Geneva commitments to de-escalate the crisis.³⁷

As has been the case with nearly all matters affecting international stability, Canada's first official response to the Ukraine crisis was articulated multilaterally. On March 2, 2014, Canada, in conjunction with its G7 partners, the European Council and the President of the European Commission, condemned Russia for reneging on its obligations under the UN Charter and its 1997 basing agreement with Ukraine. Ottawa further asserted that it was "prepared to assist Russia in addressing security or human rights concerns that it had with Ukraine through direct negotiations, and/or via international observation or mediation under the auspices of the UN or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe."³⁸ One day later, with these

³⁵ Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, *Canada's Response to the Situation in Ukraine*, last modified 26 Feb 2015, <http://www.international.gc.ca/international/ukraine.aspx?lang=eng>.

³⁶ CBC News Online. *Stephen Harper heads home after headline-grabbing G20*. last updated 16Nov, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/stephen-harper-heads-home-after-headline-grabbing-g20-1.2836872>.

³⁷ *Canada's Response to the Situation in Ukraine*.

same allies, Canada undertook an immediate review of all multilateral interactions with Moscow and announced that it would suspend preparations for the G8 meeting in Sochi which was scheduled a few months later, in June of 2014.

On the day of Russia's incursion into Crimea, Canada announced it supported the deployment of military observers from the UN and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to report on military activities in Ukraine. Canada, along with its NATO allies, continues to support initiatives that will help Ukraine and counter the threat posed by Russia's military in the region. The Harper Government refutes the notion that NATO's expansion caused Moscow's aggression in Crimea and condemned Russia's military escalation implicitly through a joint statement issued by Anders Fogh Rasmussen on March 2, 2014.³⁹ In the words of the Prime Minister, Russia's incursion was a "long-term serious threat to global peace and security and [Canada is] always prepared to work with our allies in NATO and elsewhere to try and bring whatever stability we can to the situation."⁴⁰ A month later, Ottawa's deployment of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) units and personnel to Op REASSURANCE (still ongoing at the time of this writing) enabled Canada to manifest its solidarity with its NATO allies. For the Prime Minister, the deployment served more strategic security concerns in Central and Eastern Europe and was in response to "what really is expansionism and militarism on the part of Russia under the presidency of Mr. Putin."⁴¹

³⁸ Stephen Harper. *Statement by the G-7 Nations*. issued 2 March 2014, <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2014/03/02/statement-g-7-nations>.

³⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Statement to the media by the NATO Secretary General*, last updated 3 March 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/eu/natohq/opinions_107682.htm?selectedLocale=en.

⁴⁰ Thibedeau, Hannah, "Canada to send 6 CF-18s for NATO operation in Eastern Europe," *CBC News*, last updated 18 April 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/m/touch/news/story/1.2613636>.

⁴¹ Thibedeau, *Canada to send 6 CF-18s for NATO operation...*

Unilaterally, Canada continues to advocate coercive measures that will isolate Russia, politically and economically. These coercive aspects of Canada's policy seek to isolate and deter Russian aggression through the application of diplomatic, economic and military pressure. On March 3, 2014, Canada announced that it intended to reconsider all planned bilateral interaction with the Kremlin. To this end, Canada boycotted the Arctic Council meeting in Moscow last April.⁴² The Harper Government also announced a series of economic sanctions against Russia. These sanctions impose an asset freeze on belligerent officials termed "designated persons," and they restrict business with Russian financial and energy sectors.⁴³ The *Special Economic Measures Act* identifies persons suspected to facilitate the Russian military deployments against the Ukrainian government,⁴⁴ while the *Freezing Assets of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act* also freezes assets of former leaders and senior officials believed to have misappropriated state funds.⁴⁵

The supportive measures of Canada's policy seek to dampen the negative effects of Russian aggression on Ukraine in the economic, political and military dimensions. On its own, Canada has pledged aid to Ukraine for various purposes, including crisis response and emergency humanitarian assistance (UNHCR, ICRC, WHO), as well as initiatives for judicial reform, elections, and free media.⁴⁶ As an added counterbalance to

⁴² Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada. *Canada Takes Principled Stand on Arctic Council Meetings*, issued 15 April, 2014, <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/arctic-arctique/news-communications/2014/04/15a.aspx?lang=eng>.

⁴³ Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada. *Canadian Sanctions Related to Russia*, last modified 18 February 2015, <http://www.international.gc.ca/sanctions/countries-pays/Russia-Russie.aspx?lang=eng>.

⁴⁴ Department of Justice Canada. *SOR/2014-58, Special Economic Measures (Russia) Regulations*, last modified 19 Feb 2015, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2014-58/index.html>.

⁴⁵ Department of Justice Canada, *SOR/2014-44, Freezing Assets of Corrupt Foreign Officials (Ukraine) Regulations*, last modified 19 Feb 2015, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/F-31.6/index.html>.

Russia's economic sanctions on Ukraine, Canada has pledged \$400 million in financial support.⁴⁷ Canada has also contributed unilateral military support to the Ukrainian government with the aim of expanding the capability of the armed forces of Ukraine by delivering non-lethal military supplies and equipment.

Having laid out Canada's policy as it relates to Russia, as well as having established Canada's national interests, it is possible to scrutinize the appropriateness of the Harper Government's foreign policy. The following section analyzes the degree to which this government is achieving or betraying its own stated priorities.

PART 3: POLICY ASSESSMENT

We have failed to determine what is truly critical to us, we fall back on our self-professed values, greatly overrating their importance, and, as a result, we fail to base policy on our national interests.

– J.L. Granatstein, on Canada's foreign policy⁴⁸

Risks to Economic Prosperity

Regardless of its moral or legal underpinnings, Canada's policy of restricting trade and commerce with Moscow poses risks to its stated desire to advance its economic prosperity.

⁴⁶ Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada. *Ukraine - International Development Projects*, last modified March 7 2015. <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cidaweb/cpo.nsf/fWebCSAZEn?ReadForm&idx=00&CC=UA>.

⁴⁷ Stephen Harper. "PM announces additional support for economic stabilization and development in Ukraine," issued 2 March 2014, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2015/01/28/pm-announces-additional-support-economic-stabilization-and-development-ukraine#sthash.1pqIs6AL.dpuf>.

⁴⁸ Granatstein, *The Importance of Being Less Earnest...*, 2.

Those subscribing to the idea that the severing of economic ties with Russia occurs at little cost to Canada would have reason for saying so. Based on the latest parliamentary report of Canada's Economics and International Affairs Division, exports to Russia represented only 0.4% of Canada's total trade in 2012 (ranking 18th), having increased only a tenth of a percentage point in the preceding five years.⁴⁹ Yet, basing Canada's foreign policy on these statistics alone would be ignorant of the more strategic aims of the economy and of Canadian enterprises that need to outthrust other competitors in a lucrative marketplace. The removal of diplomatic support for the expansion of Canadian businesses into Russia within the *Global Markets Action Plan* does just this – preventing their access to an “emerging market.”⁵⁰ A harmful side effect of this barrier to business is that Canadian firms are prevented from building valuable ties that take time to establish, particularly those with other commercial firms as well as government agencies at all levels. The *Canada and Russia* report echoes this necessity, stating, “success in Russia requires a long-term perspective because it is only over a course of time that one gets to know clients and partners, cultivates personal relations with partners and with the appropriate government authorities.”⁵¹

Canada has contrasting interests in Russia, particularly in the economic realm. At one level, reports dating back to 2010⁵² see the Russian economy as a priority market that

⁴⁹ Library of Parliament of Canada, Publication 2014-66-E, *Trade and Investment Report. Canadian Trade and Investment Activity: Canada-Russia*, issued 15 July 2014, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/LOP/ResearchPublications/2014-66-e.pdf>

⁵⁰ Government of Canada, *Global Markets Action Plan*, last modified 19 February 2015, <http://international.gc.ca/global-markets-marches-mondiaux/markets-marches/index.aspx?lang=eng>.

⁵¹ Senate Canada. Report. Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. *Canada and Russia: Building on Today's Successes For Tomorrow's Potential*, issued March 2010, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/sen/committee/403/fore/rep/rep01mar31-e.pdf>.

⁵² *Ibid.*

will enhance Canadian economic prosperity. And indeed, a number of Canadian businesses are already benefitting.

Canada's foreign policy contradicts several the Senate recommendations made in a 2010 report, *Canada and Russia*, which branded Russia as "a worthwhile market [with] a range of opportunities for Canadian businesses with a long-term perspective."⁵³

However, for Canadian businesses to adopt a long-term perspective and exploit these Russian opportunities, they must first invest in establishing cooperative and fruitful bilateral relationships among commercial firms as well as agencies at all levels of government. The *Canada and Russia* report echoes such thinking, stating, "Success in Russia requires a long-term perspective because it is only over a course of time that one gets to know clients and partners, cultivates personal relations with partners and with the appropriate government authorities."⁵⁴

On the other hand, isolating Russia economically through sanctions is seen by many, including some of Canada's allies, as the most effective means of effecting change in Russia's aggressive global behaviour. Those sanctions, of course, come at a cost to Canadian economic prosperity. Owing to their retaliatory nature and their restricted access to an economy of 140-million, Canadian exporters have suffered, as have certain

⁵³ Senate Canada. Report. Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. *Canada and Russia: Building on Today's Successes For Tomorrow's Potential*, issued March 2010, 33. <http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/sen/committee/403/fore/rep/rep01mar31-e.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Senate Canada. Report. Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. *Canada and Russia: Building on Today's Successes For Tomorrow's Potential*, issued March 2010, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/sen/committee/403/fore/rep/rep01mar31-e.pdf>.

sectors of the Canadian economy.⁵⁵ Business developments between the Canadian provinces and territories are rapidly developing with Russia in such areas as agriculture, infrastructure and northern development, as well as in the energy sector.⁵⁶ For example, Canada's reluctant sanctioning of Russian oil giant Rosneft – a 30 percent stakeholder in Exxon Mobil operations in Alberta⁵⁷ – hardly matches the national prosperity interests of a country whose “energy ambitions are in a dangerous losing position.”⁵⁸

Canada's sanctions against Moscow are a source of even greater concern when considered in their more potent, Western collective. As the Prime Minister stated, they are applied and intensified “in “coordination with [its] EU and U.S. partners.”⁵⁹ This strategy serves its aim in weakening Russia's economy: according to the latest *Economist Intelligence Unit*, Russia's real GDP growth is expected to fall by 4 percent in 2015.⁶⁰ Some experts would applaud this approach. Noted scholar Aurel Braun advocates a western strategy of making “painful [economic] sacrifices in order to bring in effective sanctions against Putin and disabuse him of his delusional and dangerous

⁵⁵ Author's note: The most significant impact will be on the agriculture industry, as Canadian exporters face losses of approximately \$600 million a year. The Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME) projects that sanctions imposed on Russia could affect the trade of wheat, barley, commercial jets, energy and farm equipment. See Barrie McKenna and David Hains, “Canadian businesses brace for more Russian import bans,” *The Globe and Mail*, last updated 8 August 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/canadian-food-exports-feel-brunt-of-new-wave-of-russian-sanctions/article19966813/>

⁵⁶ The Embassy of the Russian Federation in Canada. *Press Release: Russian-Canadian Relations Today*, last accessed 11 March 2015, <http://www.rusembassy.ca/node/599>.

⁵⁷ Russian Times Online, “Canada adds Russia's Rosneft, Rostec CEO to Sanctions List,” *The Russian Times*, last updated 18 February 2015, <http://rt.com/business/233343-canada-russia-sanctions-ukraine/>.

⁵⁸ Terence Corcoran, “The End of Canada's Oil Superpower Pipe Dreams,” *The Financial Post*, Last updated 7 Jan 2015, <http://business.financialpost.com/fp-comment/terence-corcoran-the-end-of-canadas-oil-superpower-pipe-dreams>.

⁵⁹ Stephen Harper, *Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada announcing additional sanctions*, issued 17 February 2015, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2015/02/17/statement-prime-minister-canada-announcing-additional-sanctions>.

⁶⁰ Economist Intelligence Unit. *Russia Country Report*, last accessed 2 May 2015, <http://country.eiu.com/russia>.

imperial ambitions.”⁶¹ Others, like American scholar Samuel Charap, are convinced otherwise. The Senior Fellow for Russia and Eurasia at the International Institute for Strategic Studies posits that the West’s economic sanctions ought to be mindful of more strategic, unintended consequences that they elicit, namely their undermining the higher-dividend aim of integrating Russia into the global, western-led economy - undoing years of progress towards this objective. Furthermore, he the non-western allies conceivably “learned the hard lesson that hard-won institutional [economic] integration.”⁶² As New York University’s Stephen Cohen put it, degrading the Russian economy and infrastructure will only lessen the prospect for rebound and distance Canadian economic interests from its policy.⁶³

Cost of Weakening the Arctic Circle of Trust

Canadian foreign policy towards Russia jeopardizes not only its strategic economic interests, but it also undermines its strategy for the North.

Recognizing that Canada’s foremost partner in the Arctic is the United States,⁶⁴ Russia is a legitimate stakeholder in the North, and thus any barriers that hamper constructive Arctic dialogue will only weaken Canada’s interests in the region. Indeed, over half of the four million Arctic inhabitants are Russian, and as much as 20 percent of

⁶¹ Aurel Braun, “Tougher Sanctions Now: Putin’s Delusional Quest for Empire,” *World Affairs Journal* 177, no. 2 (July/August 2014): 35.

⁶² Samuel Charap and Bernard Sucher, “Why Sanctions on Russia Will Backfire,” *The New York Times*, last issued 5 March 2015, <http://nyti.ms/1KqJrXD>.

⁶³ Stephen Cohen (speech, Munk Debates, Toronto, Canada, April 10, 2015).

⁶⁴ Sneha Duggal, “US Appears Set to Differ Arctic Council Agenda from Canada,” *Embassy Magazine*, 6 November 2014, <https://www.cigionline.org/articles/us-appears-set-differ-arctic-council-agenda-canada>.

Russia's GDP is generated north of the Arctic Circle.⁶⁵ As Wilfred Greaves of the Munk School of Global Affairs' states, "If we're serious about talking about the Arctic as a region, you cannot ignore Russia and you cannot marginalize Russia."⁶⁶ Though Canada-Russian tensions in the Arctic Council have eased somewhat since last fall,⁶⁷ Canada's move to marginalize Russia in this institution nonetheless stands at odds with key strategic interests.

Given Russia's position as a principal Arctic stakeholder, sustainable development is another key area that demands constructive diplomacy on the part of Canada. Both states share an abundance of navigable waterways, as well as plentiful and lucrative natural resources. Yet, the Russian government warned that strained diplomatic relations with Ottawa may undermine cooperation on key Arctic issues including fisheries, shipping, and the environment, and could erode Russia's open support for sustainable development in the Canadian Arctic.⁶⁸ In their 2014 book *Brave New Canada: Meeting the Challenge of a Changing World*, Derek Burney and Fen Hampson question Canada's ability to effectively respond to environmental emergencies along its northern border.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Andrea Charron, Joel Plouffe and Stephane Roussel, "The Russian Arctic Hegemon: Foreign Policy Implications for Canada," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 18, no. 1 (July 2012): 43.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Author's note: Senior Canadian representation at the Arctic Council confirmed that relations with Russia have been more cooperative, but warned that much depended on the way that the situation with Russia has evolved. See Duggal, *US Appears Set to Differ Arctic Council Agenda...*

⁶⁸ The Embassy of the Russian Federation in Canada, *Press Release: Russian Ambassador to Canada Alexander Darchiev gave an interview to the Embassy Magazine*, issued 29 January 2015, <http://www.rusembassy.ca/node/952>.

⁶⁹ Derek Burney and Fen Osler Hampson, *Brave New Canada: Meeting the Challenge of a Changing World* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).

A tense relationship with Russia also invites risk to Canada's national interest of Arctic sovereignty.⁷⁰ Russia has openly supported Canada's Arctic sovereignty claims, which require mutual understanding of the opportunities and challenges of Arctic energy and resource development.⁷¹ In no area is this more critical than in oil and gas development. DFATD estimates that the Arctic region harbours an abundance of natural resources, including an estimated 20 percent of the world's petroleum reserves.⁷² Another risk to Canada's Arctic sovereignty is Russia's military, which has increased its engagement in the north in response to the West's isolation. Russian military Arctic exercises have increased, as the Kremlin has boosted its preparedness.⁷³ But Russia's and Canada's militaries are unmistakably mismatched. Canadian foreign policy analysts assert that for this reason, it is not in Canada's interest to militarize the Arctic⁷⁴: building infrastructure in the North is costly and impractical.⁷⁵ Therefore, by isolating Russia and allowing the tension over the Ukraine to project Northwards, Canada's policy jeopardizes its stated desire to preserve stability in the Arctic.

⁷⁰ *Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy*.

⁷¹ The Embassy of the Russian Federation in Canada, *Press Release: Russia's new ambassador faces 'loudspeaker diplomacy' over Ukraine*, issued 29 January 2015, <http://www.rusembassy.ca/node/952>.

⁷² Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada. *Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy*, last modified 3 June 2013, http://www.international.gc.ca/arctic-arctique/arctic_policy-canada-politique_arctique.aspx?lang=eng.

⁷³ CBC News. *Russia launches massive Arctic military drills*, last updated 16 March 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/russia-launches-massive-arctic-military-drills-1.2996776>.

⁷⁴ Robert Huebert, "It's time to talk about Arctic militarization," *The National Post*, last modified 6 June 2013, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/arctic-piece-1-for-monday>.

⁷⁵ Andrea Charron,, Joel Plouffe and Stephane Roussel, "The Russian Arctic Hegemon: Foreign Policy Implications for Canada," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 18, no. 1 (July 2012): 46.

Caging a Bear: International Security Implications for Canada

Beyond the reaches of the far North, Canada's policy towards Russia also poses serious implications for the third fundamental Canadian national interest: the promotion of international stability.

Canada's decision to isolate Russia through military, economic and diplomatic means comes with a strategic security cost. Russia's capacity as a *bona fide* power within the international security realm is substantial, and even in the face of differences over Ukraine, Russia and Canada share fundamental security interests such as countering transnational threats, including terrorism.⁷⁶ Canada's firm stance against Moscow has resulted in the cessation of joint military training cooperation as well as regular security meetings that had been in place since 2007.⁷⁷ Moreover, in January of 2015, the Russian Ambassador to Canada openly stated that Canada's diplomatic isolation of Russia will further hamper bilateral progress towards anti-terrorism initiatives.⁷⁸ Russia's geography also makes it a potential partner in addressing the stability challenges in the Middle East. In April 2015, for example, the Harper Government admitted that Canadian citizens were evacuated safely from Yemen by two Russian aircraft, even amid tension over Ukraine.⁷⁹

While there is appeal in Moscow being a strategic, active partner in international stability, the Russian region itself is also a security liability for Canada. Russia is not

⁷⁶ Vladimir Pozner, Speech, Munk Debates, Toronto, Canada, April 10, 2015.

⁷⁷ Andrea Janus, "Canada suspends military activity with Russia 'effective immediately,'" *CTV News Online*, issued 4 March 2014, <http://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/canada-suspends-military-activity-with-russia-effective-immediately-1.1713273>.

⁷⁸ The Embassy of the Russian Federation in Canada, *Press Release: Russia's new ambassador faces 'loudspeaker diplomacy'...*

⁷⁹ CBC News, "Canadians taken out of Yemen with the help of the Kremlin, Russian media says," *CBC News Online*, last updated 4 Apr 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/canadians-taken-out-of-yemen-with-help-of-kremlin-russian-media-says-1.3021424>.

immune to its own security challenges, and addressing them will inevitably be more difficult in the face of Western economic and diplomatic isolation. Oksana Anotenko, senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, points out that Russia requires economic resources to simultaneously address domestic and global security challenges. In order to be a viable security actor, Russia also requires alliances and institutions within which it can not only ensure its own interests are respected, but be able to provide security assurances to Western states. Cooperation with the United States and the European Union will assist Russia in “manag[ing] external threats and thus to help create a favorable environment in which domestic security problems could be addressed.”⁸⁰

While Canada’s standing within the security alliance would be undermined if Ottawa were to deviate from the isolationist policy of its closest Western allies, NATO’s eastward expansion threatens to undermine international stability. Even though NATO disputes Russian claims that it exists as a threat to Russia’s borders,⁸¹ it is nonetheless provocative to the Kremlin, and overtly threatens the Eurasian security sphere from a Russian perspective.⁸²

Aside from Canada’s interest in standing with its NATO allies, Canada’s foreign policy towards the Russian Federation has undermined its own stated objective of contributing to the stability to the international security scene, and has compromised its national interests in ensuring its economic prosperity and regional stability in the Arctic.

⁸⁰ Oksana Antonenko, “*Russia and Central Asia...*”, 316.

⁸¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *NATO-Russia Relations: The Facts*. Last updated 4 February 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/eu/natohq/topics_111767.htm.

⁸² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*. Issued 12 February 2013, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D.

CONCLUSION

Through the examination of strategic Governmental publications and Foreign Policy statements, this essay juxtaposed Canada's key national interests with the current foreign policy of the Harper Government towards Russia. This paper certainly does not intend to afford blind forgiveness to Vladimir Putin and ignore his decision to overtake the Crimean Peninsula. Nor does it suggest that Canada would be prudent to abruptly abandon the Western effort to support Ukraine and achieve stability on NATO's Eastern front. Nonetheless, there is strong evidence that Canada's current foreign policy toward Russia contradicts key tenants of Canada's strategy to advance its own interests in a competitive global environment. In areas where cooperation with the Moscow is essential, Canada is setting itself up to weaken its vision of achieving prosperity, and ensuring security and stability in the regional and global contexts.

Though they may be cryptic, Canada's foremost national priorities need not be cast aside by a compulsion to act merely on principle, with seemingly indefinite resolve. The complexity of the Ukraine dilemma demands a comprehensive foreign policy strategy that achieves balance. Rather than continue to lambaste Russia and advocate isolationist measures, the Government of Canada can take a different direction in its relations with Moscow, wherein bilateral discourse can be returned to a more civilized and predictable state. As this paper has demonstrated, there is too much at stake for Canada to do otherwise, and Russia has left the door open for diplomacy. Pursuing a more constructive dialogue would be unlikely to sacrifice Canada's broader multilateral ambition – to stem additional Russian grievances and expansionist ambitions on Europe's eastern front. Although any diplomatic cooperation would be met with domestic

opposition by the Ukrainian-Canadian minority, and risks being perceived as caving to Putin's power, pragmatism should prevail, as should Canada's coherence with its national interests.

Notwithstanding Canada's desire to stand with its NATO allies, there is a compelling case to be made that if Canada truly has a vested interest in promoting the prosperity and security for its citizens, then constructive engagement with Russia – not only the Ukraine – should be Canada's focus.

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