



Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia

Dispatches

29 October 2021

The Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia provides a forum for the study, promotion and debate of defence and security issues.

Dispatches is a weekly collection of news of interest, including posts to social media by the Institute. Links to articles are checked at the time they are put into *Dispatches* but may be unavailable at a later date or in some countries other than Canada.

Everyone is encouraged to submit links and other content to be included in *Dispatches*. Submissions and feedback are welcome anytime. Email to RUSINSDispatches@gmail.com. Comments to articles can be from members or non-members of RUSI(NS). Any comment in *Dispatches* is the sole opinion of the author and does not necessarily represent the views of the Canadian Department of National Defence or other government department, the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or the Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia.

If you wish to receive *Dispatches* at a different address (i.e., not your work address), please inform RUSI(NS). Past editions of *Dispatches* may be requested by contacting RUSI(NS).

Events:

To list an event in *Dispatches*, email RUSI(NS) by noon Thursday. RUSI(NS) events are by invitation. If you are interested in attending and have not been invited, email RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com. RUSI(NS) events may be cancelled at short notice – email RUSI(NS) if there is a question of an event occurring.

There will be no RUSI(NS) Remembrance Dinner 2021.

1 November, Monday - Naval Association of Canada Speaker's Evening with Vice-Admiral Craig Baines, 37th Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy. 1900 Eastern. VAdm Baines will share his thoughts about the general state of the Navy in terms of operational success, readiness, personnel challenges, and upcoming projects. Register at <https://nac-o.wildapricot.org/event-4461451>.

Georgetown University Wargaming Society (GUWS)
@GUWargaming **Nov 2**, 1200PM EST: For
@GUWargaming, @nickbradbeer will talk about how UCL
developed their own in-house wargames to assist in
engineering the design of the warships. #wargaming
(Failing Faster: Using Wargaming to Educate Warship
Designers
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/failing-faster-using-wargaming-to-educate-warship-designers-tickets-177473697607>)



29 November, Monday – RUSI(NS) Distinguished Speaker Assistant Commissioner Neil O'Rourke, Regional Director General, Canadian Coast Guard Arctic Region, speaking on the region. 1300-1500, via Zoom. Call-to meeting and invitations to follow.

Recent Publications:

Except where otherwise indicated, publications are available on request to RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com.

Canadian Marine Industries and Shipbuilding Association *On Watch*, 20 October edition
https://send.successbyemail.com/prvw_message2.aspx?chno=c7784110-f273-47a3-850a-281371937970

Edmonton United Services Institute President's *ENews*, October 2021.

Macdonald-Laurier Institute Policy Brief "The need for transatlantic solidarity in the face of today's security challenges" 31 August 2021
https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/20210811_NATO_solidarity_Thiele_Sannikov_Waschuk_COMME_NTARY_FWeb.pdf

Military Institute of Windsor *Communiqué*, Volume XXXIX Number 9 October 2021.

Nautical Professional Education Society of Canada Newsletter *Seatimes*, August 2021.

Royal Alberta United Services Institute Research Brief "Iranian–Israeli Drone Warfare, Diplomacy and the Alberta Connection" by LJ Howard, August 2021,
https://rausi.ca/images/edocman/research/Research_Brief_Vol_2_Iss_4_Iranian_Israeli_Drone_Warfare.pdf

Royal Alberta United Services Institute *Dispatches* October 2021
<https://rausi.ca/component/acym/archive/85-rausi-dispatches-october-2021>

Royal Alberta United Service Institute *News* October-December 2021
<https://www.rausi.ca/news/publications>

New: Royal Canadian Military Institute General Sir William Otter Paper "The Korean War—A Naval 'Sideshow' With Major Ramifications" by Ken Hansen, September 2021
https://www.rcmi.org/getmedia/1ba8392b-e1d3-4a44-b9ff-577d2abef930/Ken_Hansen_Otter_Paper_2-21.aspx

[Ed: though Ken is not a member of RUSI(NS) he is active with our Security Affairs Committee.]

Royal Canadian Naval Association Admiral Hose Branch *Scuttlebutt*, October 2021 Edition.

New: Royal Canadian Naval Reserve *Link*, Vol 29, No 1, 2021
<https://issuu.com/lencre-reservenaval-link-navalreserve/docs/link-2021-vol29-navalreserve>

Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island *Newsletter*, Volume 53, 4th Quarter - August/September 2021.
<https://rusiviccda.org/category/newsletter/>

Royal United Services Institute of Victoria (Australia) *Quarterly Newsletter*, Volume 20, Issue 3, October 2021.

New: Royal United Services Institute of Victoria (Australia) *Occasional*, Volume 8, Issue 8, 25 October 2021.

United Services Institute of Nanaimo and North Island *Newsletter*, Vol 29 No 09, September 2021.

Veterans Affairs Canada *Salute!*, October 2021.

Tweeted by @RUSI NS:

RUSI(NS) tweets may also be viewed by clicking on the icon at <https://RUSI-NS.ca>. To have something tweeted or retweeted, email RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com.

Irving Shipbuilding @IrvingShipbuild 22 Oct tweeted: The Future HMCS Max Bernays has successfully been rolled onto the barge and is preparing for launch! Later today, Max will make her way to the Bedford Basin. If you're passing by and capture a photo, feel free to tag us! #ShipsForCanada

RUSI(NS) retweeted: RUSI(NS) Info Note "Launch of Arctic and Offshore Patrol Vessels" <https://rusi-ns.ca/launch-of-aopv/> @RoyalCanNavy #ShipsForCanada



Canadian Armed Forces Operations @CFOperations 23 Oct tweeted: Over twenty CAF members are in Iqaluit right now, setting up deployable Reverse Osmosis Water Purification to help residents access clean water.

RUSI(NS) retweeted: Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit: <https://cmea-agmc.ca/heritage-moment/water-everywhere> "Reverse Osmosis is a pressure-driven process that uses a membrane to separate dissolved and suspended substances from water." ROWPU self-contained w/diesel power generator, control system & reverse osmosis system



Canadian Coast Guard @CoastGuardCAN 24 Oct tweeted: #CCGLive: CCGS Cape Calvert and CCGS Cape Naden have evacuated 16 people from the container ship M/V #ZimKingston near Victoria, #BritishColumbia after a fire broke out in ten containers earlier today.

RUSI(NS) retweeted: Would be interesting to read after-action review for this incident. Are there adequate fire-fighting & other emergency response resources for ship sitting off hbr? How went inter-agency cooperation, (tele)communications between responding agencies & public information activities?



RCAF Operations @RCAFOperations 27 Oct tweeted: @RCAF_ARC Long Range Patrol members serving on @CFOperations #OpNEON are in Japan helping to enforce @UN sanctions on North Korea. The CP140 ✈️ is supported by a Deployable Mission Support Centre to coordinate air operations.



RUSI(NS) retweeted: #OpNEON - CAN🇨🇦 contribution to multinational effort to support UN Security Council sanctions against North Korea

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-neon.html>

Deployable Mission Support Centre

<https://tridentnewspaper.com/deployable-mission-support-centre/>



U.S. Coast Guard @USCG 27 Oct tweeted: Earlier this month, #OperationKelpStout concluded after U.S. and Canadian partner agencies conducted 4 large-scale interagency, binational operations throughout the summer. Learn more about the exercise:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSCG/bulletins/2f66c1f>

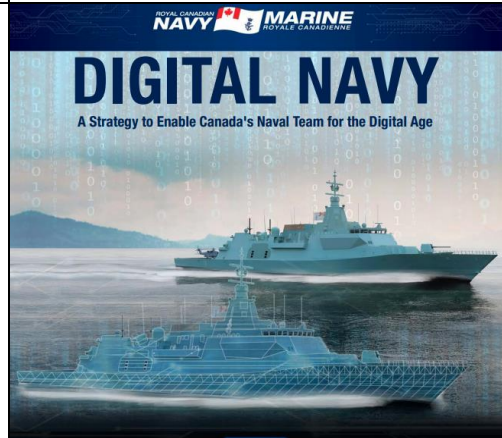
(U.S., Canadian partner agencies complete joint maritime law enforcement, security operations throughout Puget Sound, PNW)

RUSI(NS) retweeted: Combined (inter-state) & joint (inter-service) operations by @RCMP_GRC, @CANBorder & @FishOceansCAN with US allies for enhanced security of maritime borders. Assuredly based on comprehensive planning, training & exercising. Good & necessary collaboration for interoperability/interchangeability



Capt(N) Sheldon Gillis @HighSeasSkipper 27 Oct tweeted: Atlantic Fleet warships are keeping skills sharp as part of Ex Virtual Flag 21. Our Halifax based simulators are full of @RoyalCanNavy operators who are linked with allied nations and other CAF elements to work through realistic combat missions. #readyayeready #digitalnavy


RUSI(NS) retweeted: Linked training/exercising like @RoyalCanNavy is doing in #ExVirtualFlag (also 'federated battle labs,' virtual wargaming) excellent means to enhance force readiness. "Digital Navy: A Strategy to Enable Canada's Naval Team for the Digital Age" <http://www.navy-marine.forces.gc.ca/en/innovation/digital-navy.page>



Kootenay Day

Patti Christie @Patti1959 23 Oct tweeted and RUSI(NS) retweeted: Today is #KootenayDay in HRM and the province of Nova Scotia #WeAreAsOne #23Oct1969 #RCN

Also: 52 years later, survivors of HMCS Kootenay disaster find strength through each other <https://globalnews.ca/news/8292248/hmcs-kootenay-52-anniversary-halifax/>

 <p>Nova Scotia</p> <h3>Proclamation</h3> <h2>HMCS Kootenay Day</h2> <p>WHEREAS October 23, 2021, marks the 52nd anniversary of the HMCS Kootenay disaster, the worst peacetime accident in the history of the Royal Canadian Navy; and</p> <p>WHEREAS the explosion off the coast of England and the resulting fire and toxic smoke claimed the lives of nine crewmen and seriously injured fifty-three; and</p> <p>WHEREAS the lessons learned from this disaster prevented future tragedies and loss of life, we offer our heartfelt appreciation for the sacrifice made in the protection of the freedoms that we as Canadians enjoy;</p> <p>THEREFORE I, Tim Houston, Premier of Nova Scotia, do hereby proclaim October 23, 2021, to be "HMCS Kootenay Day" in the Province of Nova Scotia.</p>   <p>Honourable Tim Houston, M.L.A. Premier of Nova Scotia</p> <p><i>Signed at Halifax, Nova Scotia</i></p>	 <p>Proclamation</p> <h3>HMCS Kootenay Day</h3> <p>October 23, 2021</p> <p>WHEREAS, the HMCS KOOTENAY, a Destroyer Escort, experienced the worst peacetime accident in the history of the Royal Canadian Navy. On 23 October 1969, an explosion ripped through the engine's starboard gearbox when Kootenay was approximately 200 miles off the South West Coast of England.</p> <p>As a result of the fire and deadly toxic smoke, created by the explosion, nine crewmen died and fifty-three were seriously injured. Years later, the disaster remains deeply imprinted in the memories of the survivors. In fact, most survivors have been diagnosed with PTSD, for which they are receiving professional counselling.</p> <p>As a result of the lessons learned from the Kootenay crisis, the RCN, as well as other Navies throughout the world, made significant changes to ensure much higher safety standards, which render naval ships much safer for today's sailors.</p> <p>Although all two hundred and forty crew members lived in the Halifax area in 1969, there are still several survivors of the tragedy and their family members residing in the HRM today.</p> <p>THEREFORE, be it resolved that I, Mayor Mike Savage, do hereby proclaim October 23, 2021 as "Kootenay Day" in an effort to raise awareness of this RCN tragedy of fifty-one years ago, so it will always be remembered and commemorated by the residents of HRM.</p> <p>Dated at Halifax, Nova Scotia this 23rd day of October 2021</p>   <p>Mike Savage Mayor</p>
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Posted on Facebook Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia:

RUSI(NS) postings may also be viewed by clicking on the icon at <https://RUSI-NS.ca>. To have something posted or commented, email RUSI(NS) by noon Thursday.

The British state is becoming worryingly reliant on its armed forces

<https://www.economist.com/britain/2021/10/23/the-british-state-is-becoming-worryingly-reliant-on-its-armed-forces>

[Available on request to RUSI(NS) for those who cannot access Economist articles.]

"The so-called 'integrated review' of Britain's foreign, defence and aid policy, published in March, sets course for a Scandinavian-style 'whole-of-society' approach. It includes a proposal to bring in a new team of civilian reservists, with outside expertise. Along with cuts to troop numbers, it is part of what Ben Wallace, the secretary of state for defence, has characterised as a transition from 'mass mobilisation to information-age speed'. This may spell trouble. It seems unlikely that a shrunken armed



forces—stuffed with coders, scientists and technology experts—will be particularly enthused by the prospect of driving fuel tankers."

Considerations for design and employment of the Canadian Armed Forces.

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Comment: Deployment of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members to Iqaluit to set up a Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit to help residents access clean water (<https://twitter.com/CFOperations/status/1452046015868063748>) puts into context this British article about reliance on the military for security and safety matters. The CAF has been very active in domestic operations (e.g., Operation LENTUS) these recent years.

Trafalgar: The Legacy of George Anson

<https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/trafalgar-legacy-george-anson>

"For the modern Royal Navy, the lessons of Anson's tenure are still relevant. He built a navy in his own image: quietly professional and lacking braggadocio; guided by doctrinal principles; aware of what maritime power truly means; and acknowledging that people rather than platforms are the decisive factor. Without Anson, there would have been no Nelson and no Trafalgar. No officer before or since has matched Anson's legacy for selfless duty, professionalism, management or strategic vision."



Lessons relevant today for members of any country's navy.

NATO still looking for 'lessons learned' on Afghanistan

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/nato-afghanistan-stoltenberg-1.6222090>

"Canada has not conducted its own comprehensive lessons-learned exercise on the war, mostly because no one wants to admit mistakes were made, Saideman added."



One can be quite assured that there is a multitude of lessons-learned staff activities about Afghanistan ongoing within the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), as there has since the CAF first deployed to that theatre. That process, often known as after-action review (AAR), is baked into the modern Canadian military culture and routine. Yes, many AAR are at the tactical and operational levels. To what extent there are strategic AAR, particularly strategic AAR that cross over into the political realm (hard to keep the two apart), may not be apparent to the general Canadian public. Such processes ('exercises' can be a misunderstood term) may better be undertaken by academic and professional military education institutions where they would be less likely to be subject to political influence.

Defence Minister Sajjan participates in NATO Defence Ministers' Meeting

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2021/10/defence-minister-sajjan-participates-in-nato-defence-ministers-meeting.html>

"During the June 2021 NATO Summit, Canada proposed to establish and host a new NATO Centre of Excellence on Climate and Security and work with allies as the Centre's framework nation. This Centre would provide allies with a central location to pool their knowledge and develop effective preparedness and responses to the security impacts of climate change."



Cancers Strike US Fighter Pilots, Crews at Higher Rates, Air Force Finds

<https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2021/10/cancers-strike-us-fighter-pilots-crews-higher-rates-air-force-finds/186324/>

One wonders whether Canadian fighter pilots are similarly afflicted.



NORAD Modernization Forum: Information Dominance

<https://cdainstitute.ca/norad-modernization-forum-info-dominance/>



Former Prime Minister of Australia Tony Abbott: Brilliant Nuclear Attack Submarine Acquisition Strategy?

<https://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/2021/10/24/former-prime-minister-of-australia-tony-abbott-brilliant-nuclear-attack-submarine-acquisition-strategy/>

Novel major capital acquisition strategy?



Canada looked at acquiring nuclear-powered submarines in the 1980s. At the same time we were to rebuild our ocean escort fleet (Halifax-class) and build up our Reserve coastal fleet (Kingston-class). 'Building three navies at once' was too much. But, hmm, borrowing some ships/subs? Done that before. Has its advantages and disadvantages. Taking on old nuclear subs could be quite the undertaking. But considering what nuclear-powered submarines can do for large open areas (Pacific) and iced-over waters (Arctic), in the interest of deterring an imperialistic competitor, such a strategy may be well worth following.

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This article was directly contributed to RUSI(NS) by its author.

Hong Kong Convention influence on recyclers is growing

<https://www.tradewindsnews.com/regulation/hong-kong-convention-influence-on-recyclers-is-growing/2-1-1088852>

"Canada has not ratified the Convention but continues to monitor the international progress towards meeting its entry into force conditions."

(<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/corporate/international-affairs/partnerships-organizations/safe-recycling-ships-hong-kong.html>)



Canadian government ships (warships, Coast Guard and the like) continue to be sent to shipbreakers, it seems always to Canadian breakers where labour and environmental regulations are followed better than by foreign breakers.

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Comment: Up until at least the 1980s, many CCG ships were towed overseas for scrap. Not all ship recycling of CCG/RCN ships within Canada has been successful.

Alternative Channels for Police Transparency

<https://www.lawfareblog.com/alternative-channels-police-transparency>



A Canadian Hybrid Submarine Design: A Case for the Slowpoke-2 Reactor

<https://www.navalreview.ca/2020/02/a-canadian-hybrid-submarine-design-a-case-for-the-slowpoke-2-reactor/>

What with all the recent attention on the Australian intent to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, this piece comes to the fore. Whether or not a Canadian nuclear solution is feasible and acceptable, or developments in battery power allow serious consideration of options there, the rationale and utility of Canadian submarines (and their replacements) need public consideration.

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Comment: All the problems of nuclear propulsion with none of the benefits.



Photo: M/Cpl. B. Rodgers, Formation Imaging Services, Halifax

China's Rise Is a Threat the U.S. Has Faced for a Century

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-10-24/china-s-rise-is-a-threat-the-u-s-has-faced-for-a-century>

Something not encountered overly often – an article on maritime “grand strategy”, and its historic evolution. Worth a read – as it brings both our history and future strategies into useful context.



With a Wink and a Nod, Japan Has an Aircraft Carrier Again

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/10/27/wink-and-nod-japan-has-aircraft-carrier-again.html>

One more sign of the US-driven strategic shift (after AUKUS and the "Quad")...the return of "Kido Butai."



Other Sources:

#Arctic

The Arctic Cold War: Competition and Deterrence at Our Northern Doorstep

<https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/articles/arctic-cold-war/>

#China

China and its seas: possible zone of conflict

<https://www.hilltimes.com/2021/10/25/china-and-its-seas-possible-zone-of-conflict/324771>

#cyber ops

The Problem with Deterrence

<https://wavellroom.com/2021/10/20/cyber-deterrence-analysis-uk-capability/>

#drones

Military Collaboration

<https://insideunmannedsystems.com/military-collaboration/>

Acronym alert! MUM-T = manned-unmanned teaming.

Report on Navy Large Unmanned Surface and Undersea Vehicles

<https://news.usni.org/2021/10/27/report-on-navy-large-unmanned-surface-and-undersea-vehicles-6>

Why The Pentagon Wants Robot Subs That Swim Like Fish

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelpeck/2021/10/20/why-the-pentagon-wants-robot-subs-that-swim-like-fish/>

#environmental

The Pentagon has to include climate risk in all of its plans and budgets

<https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2021/10/26/the-pentagon-has-to-include-climate-risk-in-all-of-its-plans-and-budgets/>

Is Canada going that way?

#leadership

Military Command as Moral Prudence

<https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2017/9/22/military-command-as-moral-prudence>

#policing #COVID

First Covid raised the murder rate. Now it's changing the politics of crime.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2021/10/28/covid-murder-crime-rate-517226>

#shipbuilding #National Shipbuilding Strategy

Socio-economic Contribution Study of Seaspan Shipyards NSS-related Activities and Repair, Refit and Maintenance Activities

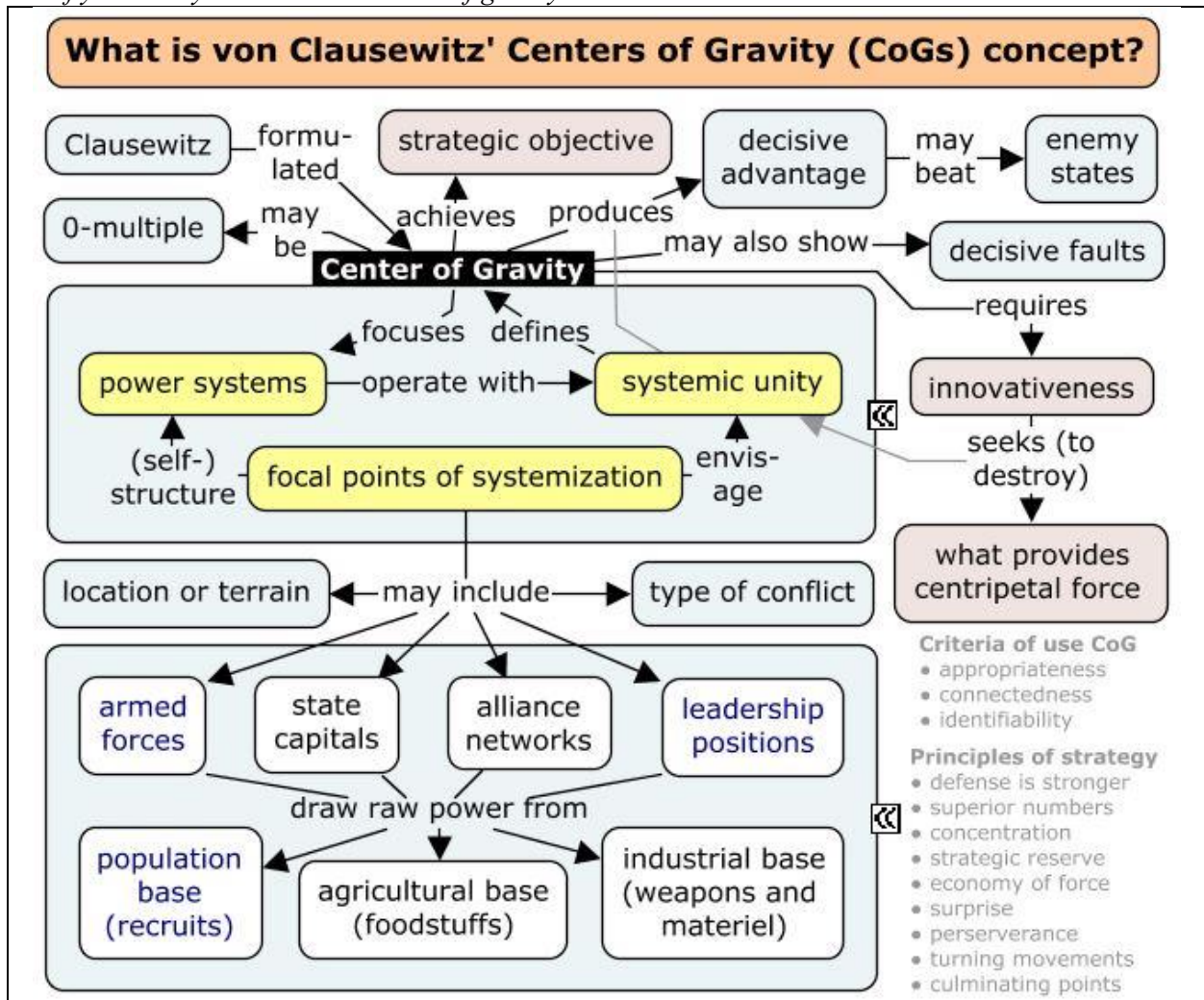
<http://nss.seaspan.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Seaspan-Shipyards-Economic-Contribution-Study-Executive-Summary.pdf>

#warfare

Moving Beyond Mechanical Metaphors: Debunking the Applicability of Centers of Gravity in 21st Century Warfare

<https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2017/6/2/moving-beyond-mechanical-metaphors-debunking-the-applicability-of-centers-of-gravity-in-21st-century-warfare>

And if you think you understand centre of gravity...



#wargaming

Made in China Wargaming?

<https://www.armchairdragoons.com/articles/analysis/made-in-china-wargaming-learning-in-a-wargame-laboratory-a-report-from-the-institute-for-the-study-of-war/>

Other:

Security Affairs Committee Synopsis

O Canada

Anita Anand is an interesting choice for Defence Minister. She has done well in her previous work as Procurement Minister. Mind you no big ticket DND items were procured but she handled the vaccine procurement relatively well and allowed the government to dodge a bullet so to speak for its lack of attention and its willingness to accept Chinese statements at face value. She is a lawyer and is an expert in governance. Just thinking of the military legal system alone, she will at least understand the theories and precedence of what is being suggested as modifications. Her understanding of the procurement system will also be an asset for the department. Time will tell if this is in fact the case. One hopes that Minister Anand will not forget the raison d'être of the Canadian Armed Forces and will not go down rabbit holes.

Canada's Ambassador to Turkey was nearly declared "persona non grata" and expelled by the Turkish President along with ambassadors of nine other countries: the US, France, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Finland and New Zealand. Fortunately when the president took it back to the elected representatives, they seemed to have talked him out of it. The cause was apparently support of Osman Kavala, accused of supporting the opposition and links to the coup attempt. The European Court of Human Rights had already ruled that the arrest and incarceration of Mr Kavala was illegal and called for his immediate release. This did not go over well with President Erdogan. We were at least in good company.

Pakistan

Pakistan is a country that is essentially controlled in large measure by the military. Its civilian government has been routinely overthrown by military coups when the civilian government tried to rein in the military. The current government under Imran Khan, a former cricket player, has tried to assert control recently over the selection of the next Director General of the Interservice Intelligence agency or ISI. Gen Bajwa, the Chief of the Army Staff, wanted to place his own candidate, LGen Anjun, as LGen Hameed's replacement and to position LGen Hameed as the potential successor to Gen Bajwa as Chief of the Army Staff. As of today, this is still not resolved and LGen Hameed is still head of the ISI until such time as his replacement is officially blessed. In articles, both Indian and Pakistani, the word coup continues to come up as a possibility. The Indians are expected to take a dark view of the situation, but the Pakistani press is also doing so as well. This is not a good omen for a nuclear armed state. This is a situation to watch carefully.

Pakistan is also having difficulties with its former clients, the Taliban, who are now making demands on Pakistan to cut airline tickets of the Pakistan International Airlines or PIA. PIA has since cut its flights to Kabul. Only two other airlines, Qatar Air and the private Afghan airline Kam Air, are currently flying there at this time and both have had to significantly increase prices to help pay insurance costs, amongst other issues. It is unlikely that this will change in the near future. It is also reported that the chief of the ISI LGen Hameed was forced to referee in between the Taliban and the Haqqani Network during recent unity government negotiations. The ISI was thought to be the main architect of the Taliban and its allies' success in Afghanistan. The Taliban is just a cover for a large number of various groups which managed to hold together during this initial phase of governing Afghanistan. Now that the situation is clearer the various groups will now jockey for positions of power both inside and outside of government.

Russia

Russia has had the greatest number of deaths on a single day with 1123 people dying of Covid. Nearly 8.4m people have contracted the disease and nearly a quarter million have died so far. Russia is likely to enter another period of lockdown. Many people will not accept the Sputnik V vaccine and only slightly above 30% are fully vaccinated so far.

Russia continues to ride the wave of energy shortages. As Western countries scale back oil and gas projects Russia is all too eager to step up and replace their output. COP 26 in Glasgow will likely be a major talkfest that will likely do little as per normal. The real winner will be Russia once again as they are able to take greater share in the global energy market.

Russia continues to be surrounded by conflicts around its borders as well as suffering the effects of sanctions. The latest threat comes from a different corner: Belarus. Apparently there was a poll taken by Russian media which showed Lukashenko as being only popular with 30% of his countrymen. Belarus responded through a comedian, by stating that Lukashenko is not the one who hid himself in a bunker as was the case of Vladimir Putin who avoided people by hiding away. One has to wonder about the mental capacity of someone who is attacking the very person keeping that someone in power, but this is the state of Russian-Belarusian affairs at the moment.

Russia is fully withdrawn from its NATO liaison office and has removed any formal connection. Sergei Lavrov commented that NATO should go through the Russian Embassy in Belgium if they wanted to speak with Russia; this was generally assessed as a joke. What is not a joke are the number of areas that could be discussed including Afghanistan and illegal migration amongst other critical matters.

Belarus

Belarus' efforts to cause difficulties for EU members through immigration and refugees has taken a new twist as Belarus is now pointing fingers at EU countries stating that the EU countries are killing the migrants then dragging them back over the border of Belarus. Still, their efforts in the use of immigrants and refugees as a weapon has been largely successful as it has caused virtually all the EU to respond in some ways. Belarus has been able to make the EU feel some of the pain of their sanctions. The use of refugees as pawns in this game is a moral and ethical failure of all sides but in particular Belarus and its leader.

Tajikistan

This was a surprise courtesy of the Moscow Times - Tajikistan will not recognize the Taliban government in Kabul. It has also sought to safeguard survivors of the Afghan National Security Forces and refugees in Tajikistan. They have stated that they are willing to take up to 100k refugees. President Emomali Rahmon has positioned a sizeable portion of his forces on the border and they have actually engaged in fire fights with Taliban forces. Tajikistan has suffered numerous terrorist attacks as it is also a main line for drugs from Afghanistan to Europe and beyond, as a result the current government is not willing to take any action from Afghanistan lightly. According to the Tajik President, up to 46% of the population of Afghanistan is actually Tajik, although semi-officially only about 20% of the population is Tajik. Blood counts in this part of the world

The main reason according to the Moscow Times article is the usual one for a "strongman" and that is to gain popularity at home and abroad, a tried and true method of lowering opposition at home, by finding an outside enemy. In this case President Rahmon is also going against the wishes of Vladimir

Putin who has asked the West and others to connect with the Taliban government. The leaders of the “stans” are worried that a continuation of hostilities will have a crossover effect and potentially cause a wider conflict. This is something China also wishes to avoid. It is therefore surprising that the Tajik president is willing to take such a chance with his immediate neighbours, all of whom are recognizing the Taliban regime. This is certainly not the type of activity that the Putin regime needs at the moment, another potential conflict. Keep in mind Armenia and Azerbaijan are still in conflict with incidents happening with uncanny regularity not to mention the Turkey-Syria issue or issues regarding Israeli air strikes in Syria. Interesting times for the “strongman of Moscow.”

Iran

Speaking of Azerbaijan, it and Iran are having a bit of a squabble over whether Azerbaijan has brought Israeli forces to Iran’s border. During recent fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Iran moved troops to its northern border to ensure border integrity but also to show opposition to Turkey’s increased influence in the area with which Iran is not comfortable with present. Somewhat surprisingly, Iran appears to be more sympathetic to Armenia’s Christians than Azerbaijan’s Sunni Muslims. Still, the potential for a low level conflict is good.

Iran just underwent a cyber-attack that targeted gasoline service stations such that they were unable to pump fuel or use their usual gas card for reduced fuel prices according to the Orlando Sentinel. No one has claimed credit for the attack as yet but it is causing wide spread dissension throughout the country, cutting into an already weakened economy.

According to the New York Times, Iran has also gone through what may be considered a type of buyer’s remorse for its general support of the Taliban throughout the international efforts there. Now that the Government of Afghanistan has fallen to the Taliban, Iran now finds itself beside a radical Sunni Muslim state which has shown a tendency to attack Shia Muslims. The Taliban takeover has also resulted in a large number of refugees crossing the border, thus putting a strain on an already weak economy. Thus far even though the Taliban have said they will keep the area safe and secure, it has turned out far from being true as low level conflict continues. Iran has a number of issues that are of concern; one of course is the border security, the second is the rise of ISIS within Afghanistan and lastly, protection of the Shia minority in order for Iran to even consider recognizing the Taliban. Thus far, the Taliban have been unable to do any of these requirements from the Iranian point of view. It is a case of the old saying “be careful what you wish for, you just may get it” and so Iran now has a radical Sunni regime next door. Are they sure it is better than the international community?

China

The French Government recently released a report on Chinese influence operations called “Les Operations d’influence Chinoise: a moment Machiavelien” (Sorry the various accents are missing), a 650-page treatise by Paul Cheron and Jean Baptiste Jeangene Vilmer of the French Strategic Research Institute of France which covers a wide view of Chinese influence operations. To quote the article:

“The report meticulously maps out China's means of exerting influence abroad, from ‘most benign (public diplomacy) to the most malignant, (clandestine activities),’ including attempt to aggressively manipulate public opinion abroad through think-tanks, ‘Confucius Institutions’ and media.” It is available in French only at this point but it is an amazing piece of work.

Unfortunately, Canada is mentioned as a target in this overview as a target for Chinese influence operations both benign and malignant. As we have mentioned before, CSIS has tried to convince the government that Canada is a major target. The actions by China in Canada are not OK, they are

directly trying to influence political discourse and support of our allies. It has been reported that the Canadian Chinese language press has been effectively utilised against the Conservatives in the last election which may have caused the loss of up to 20 seats and therefore if true, we would have a different government. Chinese influence activities are pervasive in Canada and we are ignoring it.