Published quarterly for distribution to the members of **RUSI-VI**

Suggestions are encouraged.

The RUSI-VI Office is located at:

Bay Street Armoury
715 Bay Street,
Victoria, BC V8T 1R1

Email:

Membership
Inquiries- greeralex@hotmail.com

General Inquiries- shusborne@gmail.com

Web site:

http://rusiviccda.org

Volume 53, 2nd Quarter 2021

RUSI VI

To promote national defence and security issues through discussion and engagement

Newsletter of the Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island

The Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island is a member of the Conference of Defence Associations. The CDA is the oldest and most influential advocacy group in Canada's defence community, consisting of associations from all parts of the country.

The CDA expresses its ideas and opinions with a view to influencing government security and defence policy. It is a non-partisan, independent, and non-profit organization.

March 2021

Contents (Control + Enter to follow link)

President's Message

This Newsletter includes an interesting article on the recently stood up United States Space Force (USSF) introducing our Zoom webinar for 31 March. Our guest speaker is BGen Kevin Whale, Canadian Exchange Officer to the US Space Operations Command in Colorado Springs, Colorado. I encourage you to read the enclosed article, which provides background information on USSF and Space Operations Command.

Our annual AGM will be held this April by the same method as last year- by email. I can tell you that financially we are in good shape and our membership numbers, of all types, are holding firm. Including Regular, Complimentary and Honourary we are at about 120 members.

There will also be a webinar in mid April through NAC-VI on the production of the excellent Tom Hanks' movie covering the Battle of the Atlantic, entitled *Greyhound.* One of the key advisors to this production, Gordon Laco, is an ex Public Affairs Officer with the RCN, and is the guest speaker. Paul Seguna, a member of both RUSI-VI and NAC-VI, will moderate. We will conclude our speaker season in May with an interesting and unusual webinar from a world expert, Dr. Perry Biddiscombe, on SS Werewolf: the Nazi Resistance Guerilla Movement of 1944-1947. Yes, that's right, 1947!

I think we have put together a strong schedule of interesting webinars to finish our season, covering topics that you just cannot get anywhere else. Nothing special is scheduled for RUSI-VI during the summer, but we hope to go back to live speakers/luncheons by September- or shortly after. All TBC.

Get your vaccination, take care and stay safe!

Scott H. Usborne
President
Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island

Here is the read in for our Zoom Webinar on the 31st Mar. The topic of the webinar will be on the United States Space Force (USSF) and Space Operations Command with Canadian Exchange officer BGen Kevin Whale.

DEFENSE PRIMER: THE UNITED STATES SPACE FORCE

Updated January 8, 2021

On December 20, 2019, the United States Space Force (USSF) became the sixth branch of the Armed Forces. The Space Force was established within the Department of the Air Force (DAF) with the enactment of the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The Secretary of the Air Force is responsible for organizing, training, and equipping the Space Force and the United States Air Force (USAF), two separate and distinct military uniformed services (see **Figure 1**). The current Chief of Space Operations (CSO) is General John W. "Jay" Raymond, who serves as the principal uniformed advisor for all space activities to the Secretary of the Air Force.

Overview

The FY2020 NDAA assigned the Space Force the following duties: (1) protect the interests of the United States in space; (2) deter aggression in, from, and to space; and (3) conduct space operations. The military space forces of the United States provide freedom of operation in, from, and to the space domain. This includes both combat and space-focused combat support functions intended to enable the United States to promptly conduct offensive and defensive space operations to protect U.S. and allied interests in all war-fighting domains.

Except for functions unique to the space domain, in order to reduce cost and avoid duplication, the Space Force relies on the Air Force for approximately 75% of the foundational and infrastructure support for the Space Force. Some of these support functions include logistics, base operating support, civilian personnel management, IT support, and financial management.

Space Force Stand-Up

The FY2020 NDAA redesignated Air Force Space Command (AFSPC), located at Peterson Air Force Base, CO, as the U.S. Space Force with Title 10 authorization. Subsequently, an estimated 16,000 military and civilian personnel assigned to the former AFSPC were reassigned to the Space Force. The Air Force personnel who were reassigned to the Space Force and are in space-related positions are to transfer into the new service and become Space Force service members over the first 18 months. DOD's future plans include consolidating all of the space missions currently residing across all the Armed Forces and placing them within the Space Force.

Mission

The U.S. Space Force organizes, trains, and equips space forces in order to protect U.S. and allied interests in space and to provide space capabilities to the joint force. Its responsibilities include "developing military space professionals, acquiring military space systems, maturing the military doctrine for space power, and organizing space forces to present to our Combatant Commands." According to DOD, the Space Force will be lean, agile, and mission-focused in order to remove the traditional layers of bureaucracy. Some of the Space Force missions include Space Superiority; Space Domain Awareness (military, civil, and commercial); Offense and Defensive Space Control;

Command and Control of Space Forces & Satellite Operations; Space Support Nuclear Command, Control, Communications; and Missile Warning/Defense Operations.

Space Force Organization

The Office of the Chief of Space Operations and the Space Force Headquarters are located at the Pentagon. According to the Space Force, "this staff will focus on establishing a fully-functioning headquarters; preparing to execute the full scope of its organize, train, and equip responsibilities; and, in conjunction with the U.S. Air Force, developing a detailed plan to transfer forces into the U.S. Space Force." To pursue the military services goal of being lean, agile, and mission-focused and to remove the traditional layers of bureaucracy, the Space Force created a command hierarchy (see **Figure 2**) that consists of three levels: Field Commands are led by a three-star general officer; Deltas, by a Colonel; and Squadrons, by field grade officers. The career tracks within the Space Force include space-specific operations, intelligence, engineering, acquisition, science, and cyber/communications.

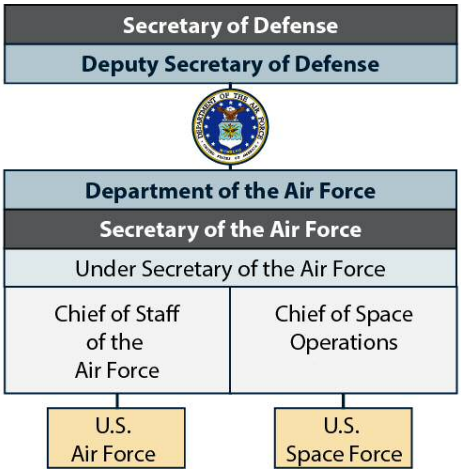


Figure 1. Space Force Within DOD and DAF

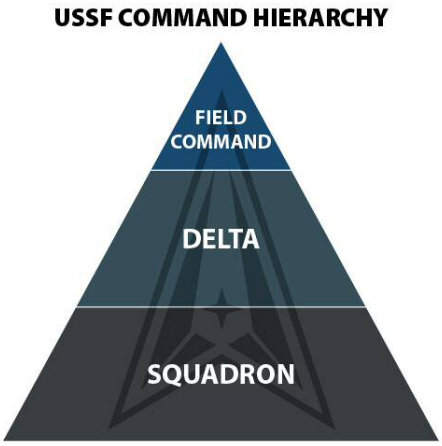


Figure 2. Command hierarchy

FY2021—Initial Budget

To provide space warfighting capabilities, the Space Force requested total personnel end strength for FY2021 of 9,979 people:

- 6,434 military end strength in the active Space Force, and
- 3,545 in civilian full-time equivalents.

The Space Force budget included resources to build and staff its headquarters and field centers. The estimated personnel level within the headquarters and field centers is approximately 553 in FY2021, with an estimated end strength of 1,800 by FY2025. The four major investment areas identified in the defense budget request for space-based systems are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. FY2021 Space-Based Systems ($15.5 Billion)

Type	FY2021
Technology Dev	$8.9
Satellites	$4.1
Support	$1.4
Launch	$1.1
Total	$15.5

Major Space Acquisition Programs

The FY2021 budget request for space-based systems included funding for the development and procurement of space-based spacecraft, launch vehicles, space command and control systems, and terrestrial satellite terminals and equipment. It also included Space Force startup costs. The major acquisition programs include the following:

- The **National Security Space Launch (NSSL)** program would provide launch services for the Space Force, Air Force, Navy, the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), Space Development Agency (SDA), and many other government agencies. DOD is currently developing two or more commercially viable space launch providers intended to meet U.S. NSSL requirements.

- The **Global Positioning System III and Projects** would provide 24-hour-a-day, worldwide coverage, including positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT) for military and civilian users. The mission of the GPS III is to provide PNT coverage to all users around the globe.

- The **Space Based Overhead Persistent Infrared (OPIR) Systems** would aim to provide the initial warning of ballistic missile attacks against the United States homeland, as well as deployed, and allied forces.

- The **Satellite Communications (SATCOM) Projects** would provide SATCOM in three capability areas: s*trategic* aims to provide Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3); *protected* is to enable tactical communications in a contested environment; and *wideband/narrowband* is to provide large amounts of throughput in a less contested environment.

Full report at this web site https://crsreports.congress.gov

SPACE FORCE PERSONNEL TO BE CALLED GUARDIANS

Soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen and Guardians. That's the line-up for personnel in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and America's newest armed service — the U.S. Space Force.

Vice President Mike Pence announced that personnel in the Space Force will be called Guardians. He spoke during a White House event marking the first anniversary of the U.S. Space Force, yesterday.

"It is my honor, on behalf of the President of the United States, to announce that, henceforth, the men and women of the United States Space Force will be known as 'Guardians,'" Pence said during the ceremonies.

Let me urge each and every one of you Guardians to keep pushing. ... Keep pushing the vision and the mission of the United States Space Force, which is to ensure that America remains as dominant in space."

Vice President Mike Pence

The Trump administration championed establishing the U.S. Space Force culminating in the legislation signed Dec. 20, 2019, that formed the first U.S. armed force since the Air Force was established in 1947. "That historic moment was a culmination of an effort that began from the early days of this administration — from almost the first moment that the president and I spoke about space when we were campaigning for these jobs," Pence said. "He had a dual focus of renewing American leadership in human space exploration, but also ensuring that America remained as dominant in space as we are in land and air and sea."

There are roughly 4,000 Guardians in the U.S. Space Force — all from the Air Force. One of the newest members of the service is in orbit aboard the International Space Station. Space Force Col. Michael Hopkins, a NASA astronaut, transferred from the Air Force to the Space Force. This is a far cry from earlier this year when Gen. John "Jay" Raymond and Chief Master Sergeant Roger Towberman were the only two members of the Space Force.

That space is now a war-fighting domain is not questioned. Russia and China are aggressively seeking ways to cut into America's dominance in space, Pence said. He noted that Russia conducted yet another antisatellite missile launch. "We're leading in space, but our determination … is to stay in the lead to defend America and defend our freedom from [the vantage point of] space," he said.

IT WILL BE AT LEAST A DECADE BEFORE CANADA SEES ANY OF ITS NEW FRIGATES

New Frigates Are Being Packed with More Combat Capability Than Comparable Ships of Allies

Murray Brewster · CBC News · Posted: Feb 13, 2021 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: February 13

Artist's rendering of the British Type 26 frigate.

(BAE Systems Inc./Lockheed Martin Canada)

It will be 2031, at the earliest, before the navy sees the first of its new frigates; a setback brought about partly by the fact Canada, Britain and Australia are still feeling their way around how to build the ultra-modern warship.

The outgoing president of Irving Shipbuilding Inc., which is in charge of constructing combat ships for the federal government, said he anticipates steel will be cut on the first of the new generation high-end warships by mid-2024.

"We have been trying to take an honest look at where we are and what it will take to build the ship," said Kevin McCoy who recently announced his retirement from the East Coast shipbuilder.

The current estimate is that it will take up to seven-and-a-half years to build the surface combatant, a timeline being used by Britain's BAE Systems Inc., which is constructing the first of what's known as the Type 26 design.

Both Canada and Australia are building their own variants.

"Early on [in the shipbuilding process] estimates are not very good," said McCoy. "Early estimates are not very good for price; they're not very good for size; they're not not very good for duration," McCoy said. "The British ship has a seven-and-a-half year build cycle. So, we're locked in. We said our build cycle will be seven-and-a-half years as well."

If they can find ways to speed up the process, they will, he said.

If that timeline holds, it means the federal government's marquee shipbuilding strategy will be two decades old by the time it produces the warship it was principally set up to create.

While Irving has been pumping out smaller, less complicated arctic patrol ships and Seaspan, in Vancouver, is building coast guard and science vessels, the strategy conceived by the former Conservative government was driven by the necessity of replacing the navy's current fleet of Halifax-class frigates.

Originally, when the shipbuilding strategy was unveiled, it envisioned Canada receiving the first new frigate in 2017. A lot of water, wishful thinking and even money has gone under the bridge since then.

Building off existing design

The current Liberal government, since taking over in 2015 and embracing the strategy, has been opaque in its public estimates of the build time; suggesting, in some documents, a delivery time in mid-2020s while other more internal records have pegged the first new frigate in the 2027 timeframe.

The Department of National Defence, in a statement, acknowledged some of the design and build intricacies are now better understood, and because of that; the first warship will be "approximately 2-3 years later than the previous estimate."

A spokeswoman echoed McCoy's remarks about finding ways to move construction along.

"We continue to look for efficiencies and are actively working with industry to accelerate the project in order to deliver this important platform to the RCN as soon as possible," said National Defence spokesperson Jessica Lamirande.

One of the ways they could do that, she said, would be to construct some, less complex modules of the warship early, the way it has been in the navy's Joint Support Ship project at Seaspan's Vancouver Shipyard.

McCoy, a blunt-talking former U.S. Navy admiral, suggested the expectations going to the surface combatant program were ultimately unworkable because the federal government came in expecting to do a so-called "clean sheet" design; meaning a warship built completely from scratch.

It was the shipyard, he said, which ultimately inched the federal government toward building off an existing design because of the enormous risk and expense of purpose-built ships, a position the Liberals adopted in the spring of 2016.

The selection of the British Type 26 design by the Liberal government has spawned criticism, a court challenge and will figure prominently in upcoming reports by the auditor general and the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Combat capability packed into ship

The nub of the complaints have been that the frigate is not yet in the water and is still under construction in the United Kingdom.

The defence department acknowledged that adapting the British design to Canadian expectations and desires will take a year longer than originally anticipated and is now not scheduled to be completed until late 2023, early 2024.

Canada, McCoy said, can expect to pay no more $2.5 billion to $3 billion, per ship as they are produced, which is, he claimed, about what other nations would pay for a warship of similar capability.

"This is a big ship, lots of capability" he said, indicating that full displacement for the new frigate will likely be about 9,400 tonnes; almost double the 4,700 tonnes of the current Halifax-class.

McCoy said what is not generally understood amid the public concern over scheduling and cost is the fact that the Canadian version of the Type 26 will be expected to do more than its British and Australian cousins.

Where those navies have different warships, performing different functions, such as air defence or anti-submarine warfare, Canada's one class of frigates will be expected to perform both because that is what the government has called for in its requirements.

Dave Perry, a defence analyst and vice president of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, has studied the program and said he was surprised at the amount of combat capability that was being packed into the new warship.

"On the one hand, Canada's one [class] of ship will have more combat capability than many of the other classes of ship that our friends and allies sail with, but it also adds an additional level of complexity and challenge getting all of that gear, all of that firepower into one single floating hull and platform," he said.

DND UNABLE TO SAY EXACTLY WHEN DELAYS IN $70-BILLION WARSHIP PROGRAM BEGAN

David Pugliese • Ottawa Citizen Publishing date: Feb 16, 2021

The Canadian Surface Combatant program will provide replacements for the Halifax-class warships shown in this photo. But at what cost? *PHOTO BY FILES /U.S. Navy*

National defence says it doesn't know when it determined that a $70-billion project to buy new warships had fallen five years behind schedule, adding billions of dollars to the cost.

That lack of knowledge about a massive mega-project is unprecedented, according to the department's former top procurement official, and is further proof the Canadian Surface Combatant project has gone off the rails.

The Department of National Defence revealed Feb. 1 that the delivery of the first surface combatant ship would be delayed until 2030 or 2031. The first ship was to have been delivered in 2025, according to DND documents.

The five-year delay will cost taxpayers billions of dollars, but the specific amount has yet to be determined.

DND now acknowledges that while there were indications in early 2020 the project schedule was slipping, it doesn't actually know when it was determined the Canadian Surface Combatant program was facing significant delays. "There was no specific month/year," DND spokesperson Jessica Lamirande wrote in an email to this newspaper. "It was an evolving schedule that continued to shift."

But Alan Williams, the former assistant deputy minister in charge of procurement at DND, said that lack of insight by DND staff is dangerous. On major equipment procurements, every step should be documented, as bureaucrats could be called on to justify future spending decisions and overall management of a project, he said.

"It's totally absurd they can't even say when they first determined this project would be delayed by five years," said Williams. "Is that not the definition of a total loss of accountability and control?"

The Canadian Surface Combatant (CSC) project would see the construction of 15 warships for the Royal Canadian Navy at Irving Shipbuilding on the east coast. The vessels will replace the current Halifax-class frigate fleet. However, the project has already faced delays and significant increases in cost, as the price tag climbed from an original $14-billion estimate to $26 billion and then to $70 billion.

The parliamentary budget officer is working on a new report on the CSC cost, to be finished by the end of February. Each year of delay could cost taxpayers more than $2 billion, the PBO warned previously.

Although the DND has a new delivery date for the initial ship in the fleet, that doesn't mean that the vessel will be ready for operations at that time. "We expect delivery of the first ship in 2030/2031, followed by an extensive sea trials period that will include weapons certification and the corresponding training of RCN sailors, leading to final acceptance," Lamirande said. No dates, however, were provided on when that final acceptance of the first ship would happen.

Troy Crosby, the assistant deputy minister of materiel at the DND, denied the CSC project is in trouble. "I wouldn't call it trouble," he said in an interview with this newspaper in November. "Is it hard? Is it challenging work? Absolutely. But I wouldn't say we're in trouble."

Other defence analysts are arguing the CSC program is salvageable with better governance and oversight.

But Williams said the CSC is like a train rolling down a hill without brakes. "You're heading for disaster and people are talking about improving governance," he said. "That won't save this project."

Canada has yet to sign a contract to build the Type 26 ship proposed by the consortium of Lockheed Martin and BAE for the CSC. So far, taxpayers have spent $739 million preparing for the eventual construction, according to figures tabled with parliament.

Australia and the United Kingdom also plan to purchase the Type 26. But the first ship, destined for the U.K., has yet to be completed.

The Canadian government originally said it would only accept a winning bid based on a mature existing ship design or a ship already in service with other navies. That would eliminate technical risk, as the design would be a known and tested commodity.

The Type 26 carries extra risk as its design has not yet been proven.

Williams said Canada could build an initial three Type 26 ships and then purchase other warships based on a proven design at a much reduced cost.

CANADIAN MILITARY SHORT THOUSANDS OF TROOPS COVID-19 IMPEDES RECRUIT TRAINING

Lee Berthiaume, The Canadian Press 14 Feb 2021

OTTAWA — The Canadian Armed Forces is dealing with a shortfall of several thousand troops as COVID-19 has forced the military to curb the training of new recruits for most of the past year.

©

Provided by The Canadian Press

While the military says there has not been any immediate impact on its missions here and abroad as it manages the shortfall and training challenges, a spokesman acknowledged the potential for longer-term ramifications.

“It is too early to determine how the reduced number of recruitment files being processed during the pandemic will affect CAF operations in the medium to long term,” Maj. Travis Smyth said in an email.

The federal Liberal government has authorized the Armed Forces to have at least 68,000 regular-force members and 29,000 part-time reservists, which is based on available funding and the missions that the military is expected to undertake.

Yet the military was short of those targets by about 2,000 regular-force members and nearly 5,000 reservists at the end of December, according to figures provided to The Canadian Press.

One reason: The military was able to provide basic training to only about a quarter the expected number of new hires since March as COVID-19 forced recruiting centres and training camps to close or otherwise curtail their operations.

“The pandemic has limited training for large parts of the year in order to meet provincial and federal health and safety guidelines,” Smyth said.

“The reduced training capacity, in addition to strict protocols that the recruiting centres are required to follow to ensure the safety and well-being of applicants and staff, has reduced the number of files being processed.”

The pandemic has exacerbated a long-standing problem for the military, which has struggled for years to attract new recruits.

Federal auditor general Michael Ferguson flagged personnel shortages as a real threat to the Forces in November 2016, warning that it put a heavier burden on those in uniform and hurt military operations.

The military at that time was dealing with roughly the same number of unfilled positions as today, which resulted in a number of issues including a lack of personnel to fly or maintain various aircraft.

The shortfalls have persisted despite a 2017 Liberal government promise to expand the size of the Armed Forces to defend against growing global instability and emerging threats in space and online.

The recruiting challenge has contributed to a push by senior commanders to make the Armed Forces more inclusive, with active efforts to attract women, visible minorities, Indigenous Canadians and members of the LGBTQ community.

On the plus side, Smyth did indicate that the military had managed to make some progress on retaining more experienced members in 2019 and the first three months of 2020, though he did not have figures for the nine months of the pandemic.

Defence analyst David Perry of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute said the difficulties attracting and training recruits during the pandemic is not surprising given the restrictions that have been placed on society as a whole.

Yet he also noted that at a time of great economic uncertainty for large parts of the country, the military — and the federal government — represent stable employment, and that the military should at least be able to see better retention.

Either way, Perry said the continuing challenge getting new recruits in uniform underscores the importance of the military’s efforts to attract new recruits beyond what has been its traditional source: white men.

“The interest and the onus on the military organization to try and achieve some very longstanding goals ... to broaden its recruiting base, to make it more representative of the country as a whole, take on increased importance,” Perry said.

He also worried that continued reports about hate and sexual misconduct in the ranks — including the recent allegations against former chief of the defence staff Gen. Jonathan Vance — send the wrong message to potential recruits.

Global News has reported allegations that Vance had an inappropriate relationship with a subordinate and made a sexual comment to a service member that he significantly outranked in 2012 before taking on the military's top post.

Vance has not responded to The Canadian Press’s requests for comment, and the allegations against him have not been independently verified or tested in court. Global says Vance has denied any wrongdoing.

Military police are now investigating the allegations, while Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan has promised an independent probe into the matter.

Military police confirmed last week that they opened an investigation into Vance’s conduct during his time as deputy commander of a NATO force in Naples, Italy, before he was named defence chief. No charges were ever laid.

WILL THE INDO-PACIFIC BECOME THE NEW BATTLEGROUND FOR US AND CHINA-LED ALLIANCES?

- There is speculation over whether the Quad can become a united, NATO-like bloc when its members are so dependent on China economically and India might be its Achilles’ heel.
- But if Biden succeeds in expanding alliances, particularly in Southeast Asia, the Quad strategy might work.

Danil Bochkov **South China Morning Post** Published: 9:15am, 19 Feb, 2021
https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3122072/will-indo-pacific-become-new-battleground-us-and-china-led

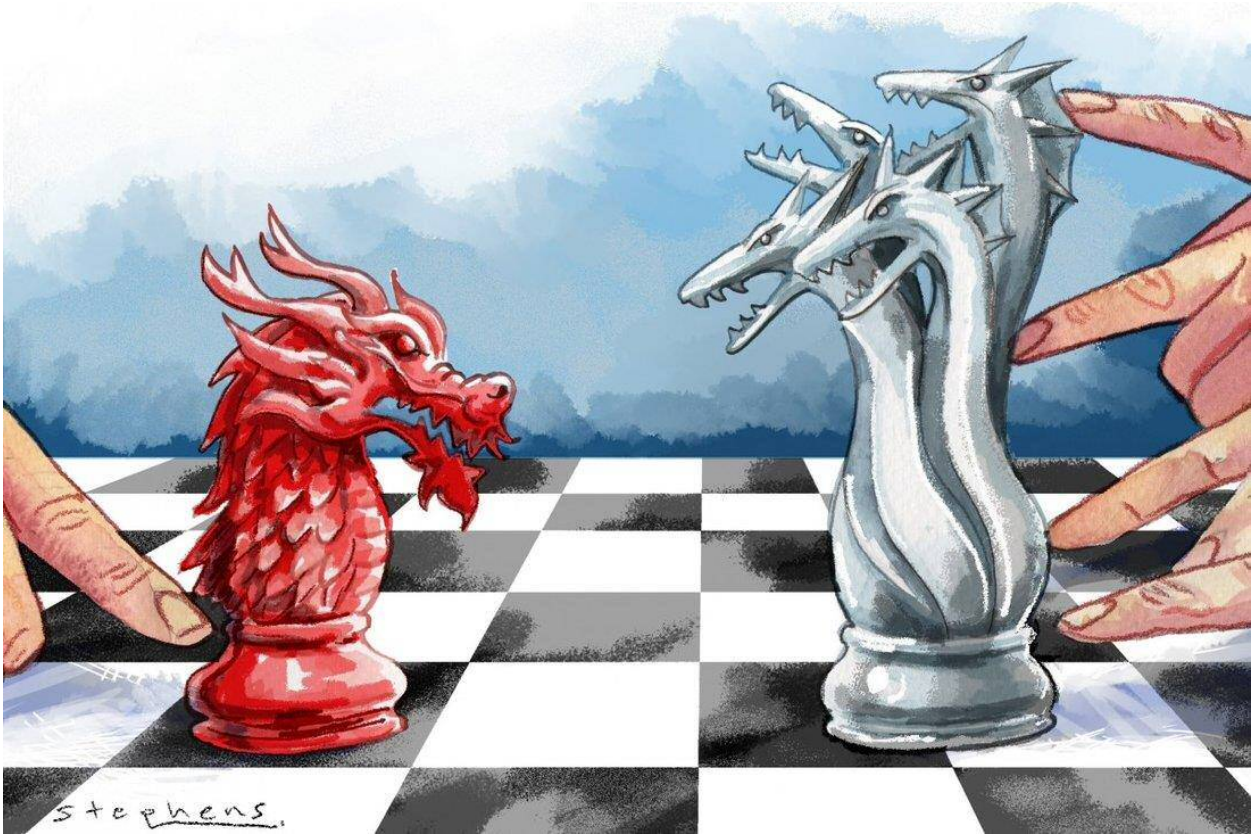


Illustration: Craig Stephens

US President Joe Biden has instructed the Pentagon to review America's China-related strategy to meet challenges in the Indo-Pacific. The establishment of a China task force to revise US capabilities in Asia signifies the huge importance Washington attaches to China and the Indo-Pacific. The European Union has also been ramping up its policy planning for the region, with Germany, France and the Netherlands taking the lead.

The US' first freedom of navigation operation in the South China Sea during Biden's term came just over two weeks after his inauguration, compared to four months for Donald Trump. Trump waited even longer for his first Taiwan Strait pass – Biden took just two weeks.

Then, on February 9, in a clear demonstration of the seriousness of the new administration's intentions to maintain a "tough posture" towards Beijing, the US navy held a rare dual-aircraft-carrier exercise in the South China Sea, only its third since 2012.

One outcome of the US redistribution of force might be the redirection of resources from the Middle East to Asia. Much depends on how the US formulates its Iran strategy, which has been ambiguous since Trump withdrew the US from the 2015 nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Meanwhile, Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin has placed the Indo-Pacific and "the chief pacing challenge" of China in the spotlight of long-term military planning. And National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan has said the "Quad" framework will play a key role in the US' Indo-Pacific policy.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue – revived in 2017 in response to China's rise – is already seen by Beijing as an anti-China alliance or an "Asian NATO".

The first Quad ministerial meeting took place in September 2019 in New York, followed by a second gathering in Tokyo last October, where then-secretary of state Mike Pompeo called on the group to rally against Chinese " exploitation, corruption and coercion".

Last November, despite the Covid-19 pandemic and deadly China-India border tensions, all four Quad members – Japan, the US, India and Australia – joined together for the Malabar naval exercise . It was the first time since 2007 that Australia had joined the Indian-led exercise and, significantly, happened amid an escalating trade war with Beijing.

As concerns dovetail over Beijing's growing clout in the Indo-Pacific, the Quad is working towards its first-ever summit of leaders. This would bring the bloc closer to institutionalisation, a plan that was reaffirmed after Sullivan said the Quad should be a "foundation upon which to build substantial American policy in the Indo-Pacific region".

Beyond the Quad, the US has been bolstering its regional security alliance network to counter China – it plans to renew its Visiting Forces Agreement with the Philippines, which would allow US troops to be stationed there, amid growing regional wariness of China's newly adopted coastguard law.

On the other side is China, also summoning its partners against the US-led coalition. China is teaming up with Russia and Iran, which are also facing criticism from the US and its allies over their foreign policy ambitions. Most recently, on February 15, all three faced criticism from a coalition of 58 states, launched by Canada, against "hostage diplomacy".

In December 2019, Moscow, Tehran and Beijing conducted their first joint naval drills in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Oman, which Iranian state television dubbed "the new triangle of power in the sea". Russian state media emphasised that the trio shared an opposition to US hegemony.

After Trump's 2018 withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, sanctions were again imposed on Tehran, forcing it to turn to Russia and China. That same year, Russian President Vladimir Putin voiced support for Iran's status at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation , a China-led Eurasian pact, to be upgraded from observer to full member.

A year later, Beijing and Tehran decided to upgrade their relations to a "comprehensive strategic partnership" and are currently studying a US$400 billion economic deal.

This week, Russia and Iran kicked off a joint naval exercise in the Indian Ocean, with India also joining and China to follow, four years after Russia and China held a joint military exercise in the South China Sea for the first time.

There has been speculation over the Quad's capability to become a united, Nato-like bloc when its members are so dependent on China economically. While recent trade wars between China and Quad members the US and Australia show that national interests still take priority, the Quad is far from perfect and India might prove to be its Achilles' heel.

India's trade with China is declining despite hopes of surpassing a milestone of US$100 billion. New Delhi, which joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2017, also has to balance its

relations within that grouping against its Quad ties. It is hoping to restart discussions with Iran over development of the strategically important Chabahar port, which were halted after the US resumed sanctions on Iran.

Despite the Quad's weaknesses, however, it still holds out the promise of curbing China on a multilateral front. As Biden rebuilds alliances, the Quad mechanism may prove to be more effective and palpable, especially if new partnerships are explored, including with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

"Extreme competition" will increase with new local encounters, but a war in the Indo-Pacific looks very unlikely, given that all the actors involved have proven their ability many times to exercise restraint – whether it is between the US and Iran, China and India, the US and Russia, or the US and China. Every player values strategic and economic stability in a region that constitutes a major part of the world's maritime trade.

THE CHINA-INDIA BORDER DISPUTE: ITS ORIGINS AND IMPACT

For the first time in decades, soldiers stationed along a remote front line between the two countries engaged in deadly hand-to-hand combat.

Leaders have sought to settle the conflict as it ripples out into the economy and wider international relations.

South China Morning Post Published: 11:00am, 29 Jul, 2020

https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3094884/china-india-border-dispute-its-origins-and-impact

An Indian Air Force aircraft flies near Leh, in Ladakh, on June 27. Photo: AFP

In mid-June, 2020, in a remote Himalayan valley, Chinese and Indian troops faced each other, armed only with sticks and rocks. By the time the confrontation in the Galwan Valley was over,

at least 20 Indian soldiers were dead and 76 were wounded. The casualties on the Chinese side are not known.

It was the deadliest clash between the two militaries over their high-altitude border in decades and set off a flurry of diplomatic activity to try to defuse the tensions.

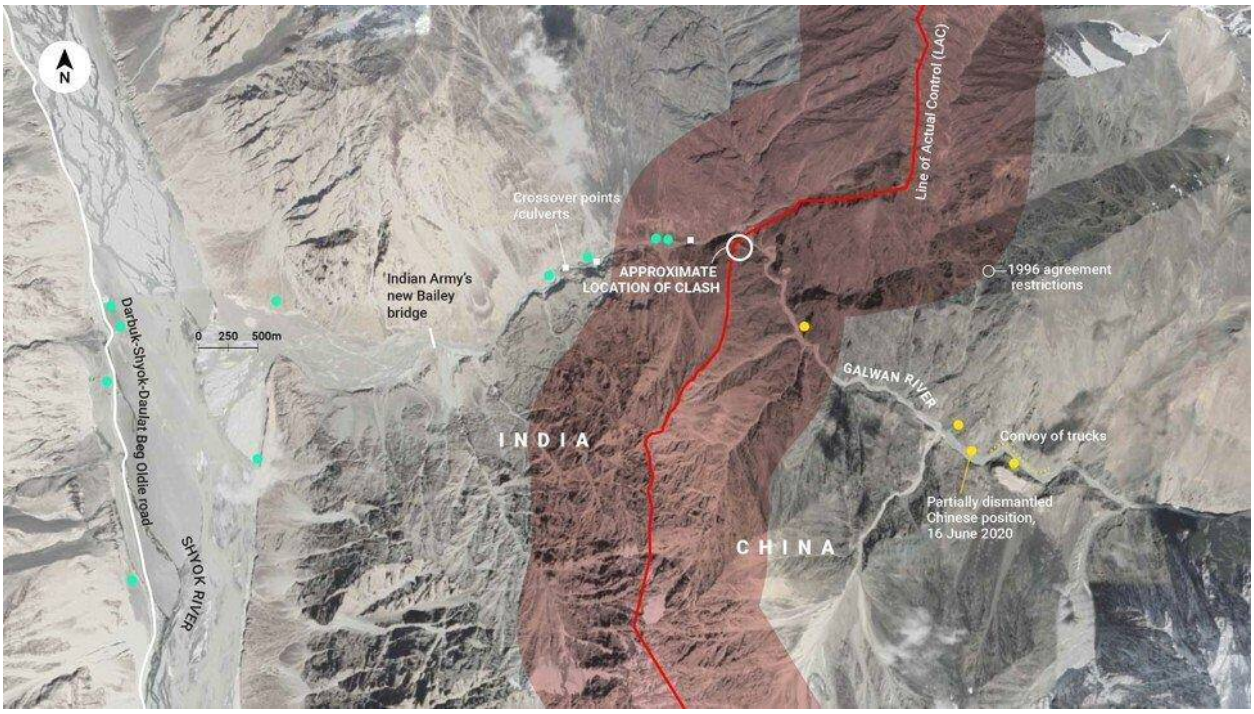
But the dispute has deep roots and its effects are felt well beyond an ill-defined border area between the countries.

What happened in the Galwan Valley?

The clashes took place at more than 4,000 metres (14,000 feet) above sea level in an area between Indian-controlled Ladakh and Chinese-controlled Aksai Chin on June 15 but exactly what caused it is not clear. The deadly confrontation came after another clash on May 5, and during an attempt by both sides to de-escalate the subsequent six-week stand-off.

The troops did not have guns because of a 1996 agreement the two sides signed to build trust and begin to settle the border issue. Instead, the soldiers fought with fists, sticks and rocks

.



SCMP Graphics

An Indian colonel and two Indian soldiers were reportedly killed in the combat, while 17 others died overnight from their wounds. The condition of the wounded was worsened by the lack of oxygen and the sub-zero temperatures. Search and rescue efforts were hampered by the rough terrain.

China has yet to clarify the cause of the conflict or how many casualties it sustained, saying only that its forces had “light injuries”.

When did the border trouble begin?

The dispute dates back at least to the Simla Convention in 1914, when representatives of British India and Tibet agreed to a de facto eastern border known as the McMahon Line. Beijing never agreed to the line, but the Indian government has adopted the boundary as the effective border in the area between India and China.

SCMP Graphics

In 1962, India lost a four-week war with China, with People's Liberation Army troops crossing the McMahon Line in the east and advancing in the west. India claimed that China grabbed some 43,000 sq km in Ladakh/Aksai Chin, an area roughly the size of Switzerland.

The two sides could not agree on an official border, so they reached a temporary truce along an unofficial border in the west known as the Line of Actual Control. But they have never agreed on where the line is. Conflicts continued as the Chinese and Indian armies accuse each other of breaches, reaching a peak in 1967, when there were hundreds of casualties.

The LAC is also sometimes used loosely to refer to the entire disputed border between the two countries.

What is the impact on other countries in South Asia?

Beijing has been extending its reach in South Asia, particularly through its Belt and Road Initiative, a massive trade and infrastructure programme to link economies in a China-centred network.

It has sought to forge stronger political ties with countries such as Nepal and Sri Lanka that have traditionally been within India's orbit.

Nepal's foreign ministry said its government was confident "our friendly neighbours India and China" would be able to peacefully resolve their differences.

Maldivian Foreign minister Abdulla Shahid said his country "extends deepest condolences to the people of India for the lives lost in the recent clashes on the border".

Wedged between the two Asian giants, Bhutan is also feeling the squeeze.

In 2017, Chinese and Indian troops were involved in a month-long stand-off on the border area between the three countries known as Doklam.

More recently, Beijing has opposed Bhutan's plans for a wildlife sanctuary that China says is part of its territory – a claim that Bhutan rejects.

The Galwan Valley clash also stoked concerns that Pakistan might enter the fray, raising the risk of a clash between three nuclear-armed powers.

India has a disputed border with Pakistan known as the Line of Control, which is separated from the LAC by the Karakoram Pass, west of the Galwan Valley.

Bilateral tensions were heightened after India scrapped Kashmir's semi-autonomous status in August, and moved to expel Pakistan's embassy staff over alleged spying.

What is the wider impact in the Asia-Pacific?

India is trying to strengthen ties with countries in the wider region. Japan and the United States have accepted invitations to take part in India's Malabar naval exercise , while Australia might also participate.

India has also sought to improve relations with Vietnam and the Philippines.

Defence officials from India and Vietnam have affirmed that defence cooperation is an important pillar of the two countries' relationship.

And Philippine Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said India was interested in carrying out navigation activities in the South China Sea, where a number of countries have competing claims with China.

India and Indonesia have also signed a memorandum of understanding on maritime safety and security.

Where does the United States fit into this?

Relations between India and the United States have warmed, with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo expressing "Washington's support to New Delhi at that time of crisis" in a call to Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, according to *The Indian Express*. Pompeo also said the US would give India intelligence on Chinese activity along the border.

But India has also had strong ties over the decades with Russia, a relationship that analysts say India must keep building, even as it grows closer to the US.

In July, the Indian government rushed to approve a proposal to acquire 33 new Russian warplanes for US $2.4 billion and upgrade 59 more, in addition to an earlier US$5.43 billion deal for S-400 air defence missile systems.

Are there other border disputes between India and China?

In all, there is about 120,000 sq km of disputed territory between China and India.

In the east is the largest, the economically important area known in India as Arunachal Pradesh and called Southern Tibet by China. It is controlled by India and was the main battlefield of the 1962 border war.

There are also a few small scattered areas west of Nepal as well as near the state of Sikkim. A trijunction area that also connects Bhutan, the Sikkim section has been another hot spot because it is next to India's strategically vulnerable "chicken neck" Siliguri Corridor connecting the state of West Bengal to the rest of the country.

In addition, Nepal has had a territorial dispute with India this year, starting from May over India's building of a new road at the Lipulekh Pass, which connects the Indian state of Uttarakhand with China's Tibet region.

So, what happens next?

Soon after the Galwan clashes, leaders from both sides went into crisis talks and issued public statements about the need to reduce tensions.

But there have been signs of public anger in India, with some protesters burning images of Chinese President Xi Jinping, stomping on the Chinese flag and boycotting Chinese-made products.

The Indian government has also banned 59 Chinese mobile apps, including TikTok and WeChat, over what it said were security and privacy concerns.

The Chinese government has blamed the Indian military for the clash. But it has downplayed the border conflict in state media, which experts say is to avoid stoking nationalist sentiment at home.

Both countries have stepped up military reinforcements along the border but the likelihood of a war is low, observers say.

On July 14, China and India met for a fourth round of commander-level talks . Representatives from both sides discussed details of a second phase of disengagement – an agreed plan to pull back troops and equipment from the area – after the implementation of an initial phase of standing down.

THE POST-PANDEMIC INTERNATIONAL ORDER

CDA Institute Blog transcript Feb 1, 2021

Stephen Walt responds to questions

Stephen M. Walt *is the Robert and Renee Belfer Professor of International Affairs. He previously taught at Princeton University and the University of Chicago, where he served as Master of the Social Science Collegiate Division and Deputy Dean of Social Sciences. He has been a Resident Associate of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace and a Guest Scholar at the Brookings Institution, and he has also served as a consultant for the Institute of Defense Analyses, the Center for Naval Analyses, and the National Defense University. He presently serves on the editorial boards of Foreign Policy, Security Studies, International Relations, and Journal of Cold War Studies, and he also serves as Co-Editor of the Cornell Studies in Security Affairs, published by Cornell University Press. Additionally, he was elected as a Fellow in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in May 2005.*

The following transcript has been edited for clarity.

Q: What trends have been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic? In your opinion, what are the most pressing geopolitical and international security-related challenges facing the West in the coming decade?

A: The pandemic has accelerated trends that were already underway. We've seen what I would call a backlash against globalization. Examples of this include the U.S – China trade war and Brexit. The world is becoming less connected than it was before. The pandemic has encouraged this, as well as the shifting of supply chains, it has cut tourism by about 70%, and international travel has declined significantly. Businesses are hedging more—[they] don't want to be as dependent upon single suppliers far away. The pandemic has contributed towards the backsliding of democracy, with an increase in authoritarianism or at least stronger states.

Democracies and dictatorships around the world are exerting more control over their citizens through lockdowns. Some of [these trends] are going to be temporary—travel will eventually resume, not quite at the same levels, and some of the lockdowns will eventually be lifted. Generally, we are veering towards a less free or less open world.

I think the biggest security challenge over the next 10 – 20 years will be the management of the growing rivalry between the U.S and China, which has prevented cooperation on areas between these two very large, powerful countries where it is needed the most. Climate change and future pandemic preparedness are two examples. I think [it's] going to be a serious challenge for both Beijing and Washington.

Q: In your opinion, which countries have managed the pandemic most effectively? What are the consequences for countries that have been unable to get the pandemic under control quickly enough?

A: Interestingly, there are no clear patterns. Initially, China handled it very badly but has since put forth a good effort to control the disease domestically. Dictatorships or one-party states, such as Vietnam have performed decently well. In some cases, authoritarian governments have done

a good job. But again, some countries like Russia, Belarus, and Iran have handled the pandemic quite poorly. The same mixed pattern holds for democracies. New Zealand, Australia, South Korea, and Taiwan have done well managing the pandemic, but other democracies, like the U.S and UK, have done quite badly. There don't seem to be any obvious and clear patterns here. Performance also varies depending on what measures you look at, i.e. total number of cases, cases per capita, or mortality rates. The U.S performs very poorly on cases per capita, but [does] well on mortality. Some people [living in] the U.S have had access to good treatment as well.

The longer the pandemic lasts in a given country, the greater the long-term and lasting effects. This takes a whole series of interesting forms. Lockdowns, in one form or another, have culminated in reduced economic growth. Educational achievement will be lower as students can't go to school. Long-term, that means a less productive, well-educated population. A consequence of lockdowns has been upticks in partner and child abuse. Since it's hard to detect you have a greater, society-wide mental health problem emerging. There's been some fascinating research on what prenatal maternal stress does to children after they're born—lower educational achievement, reduced life expectancy, poorer health are a few long-term consequences. This is happening everywhere around the world. But the longer the pandemic lasts in a given country, the bigger those effects are going to be. Failure to deal with the pandemic aggressively and get it under control has lingering effects. But [these effects] won't necessarily look the same in every country.

Q: What sorts of challenges has COVID-19 presented to democracy and human rights worldwide? Will these challenges persist when the pandemic ends?

A: The pandemic has highlighted the tension between certain ideals of individual liberty—that the government shouldn't tell us what to do—and competing notions of collective responsibility. To some, freedom means "I don't have to wear a mask". That's not just an expression of individual freedom though. Refusing to wear a mask potentially puts those in proximity [to you] at greater risk. In many instances, countries with a greater sense of collective responsibility and belonging have responded better, because there was not a lot of disagreement over following rules or government directives. In the U.S and other democracies, some political leaders have actively encouraged defiance, apparently in the name of "liberty." But a virus doesn't respect political ideology one way or the other. One of the great mistakes here has been confusing the desire for freedom from government constraint, and notions of social responsibility.

Q: How has the pandemic impacted competition between China and the United States. Is either country positioned to emerge from COVID-19 in a way that could dramatically shift the balance of power in its favor?

A: I think it's pretty clear that China will come out of this looking better than the U.S. The initial Chinese response was quite bad. It's one of the reasons we ended up with a global pandemic. China didn't recognize what was happening, individuals within China didn't report what was going on, and they misled the outside world. China does bear some real responsibility for what happened here. As the pandemic progressed though, China's management of the pandemic improved.

The U.S response, as we all know, has been embarrassingly incompetent. In the aftermath, our economic growth will be lower than it would have been, and that's going to shift things in China's favor to some degree. I think the U.S has damaged its reputation for competence by its mismanagement of the pandemic. America's reputation may improve under a different president, but it will take some doing.

Although I think China will come out of this in better shape than the U.S, this is not going to have a decisive effect on the balance of power all by itself. The pendulum hasn't suddenly swung in China's favor. The U.S will still have an economy the size of China's, we're still going to have military superiority and a lot more allies around the world. We have lots of other advantages as well. If a decisive shift occurs in China's favour, it will take place over multiple decades. And it may not happen at all.

Q: What challenges and opportunities do middle powers such as Canada face in the years to come? What role can they play in the world amid the re-emergence of great power competition and in the aftermath of the pandemic?

A: Many countries will have to navigate between the U.S and China. There isn't a lot of wiggle room for Canada, however, because of where it's located and because of the deep integration between the U.S and Canadian economies. I think Canada will and should continue following the policy it has had for decades, which is to be very close to the U.S and use its influence to ensure that American power is employed judiciously and wisely. That's not always easy to do. But I think that will be Canada's role.

Some other medium powers have greater latitude. What is interesting in this regard is that the U.S and China have been competing to see which country can alienate other people more rapidly. Donald Trump has done a good job of that, although he didn't fully succeed. In recent years, China has taken a more bellicose approach to diplomacy; coercing or punishing countries like Australia, when they did things China didn't like. This generated more international notice about what China's long-term intentions might be. I think we'll see medium powers like Germany, the EU more generally, and some Asian countries try to hedge a little bit. They'll maintain ties with the U.S but refrain from relying solely on those relations.

Q: In what ways can we afford to be optimistic about the post-pandemic world? Are there opportunities for positive global cooperation despite maybe the prospects of more nationalism, less prosperity, and increased global competition?

I'm by nature an optimist. Let me give you several reasons why you could be somewhat more upbeat. One is generational change. We are witnessing the waning power of my generation, notwithstanding the age of our president-elect. If you look at the political attitudes of young people, not just in the U.S but around the world, they are substantially different than previous generations, and in ways that are quite encouraging. Some of the worst forms of populism around the world tend to be associated with older populations, rather than younger populations. Support for Brexit in the UK was primarily among older Britons, not younger ones.

Science and technology will continue producing extraordinary things for us. The most obvious recent example is the speed with which we have developed vaccines to deal with COVID-19. We're going to see some amazing developments, and most of them will benefit human

welfare. COVID-19 has also helped reinforce awareness of what I would call “issues of the global commons”. This is a virus that does not respect borders, does not carry a passport, and does not have a national label. It affects all human beings. It’s a reminder that if you don’t have effective global public health institutions, something like this can get out of control. I’d say the same thing concerning climate change. There is a greater global awareness that we are facing a common danger, which will require collective action.

Finally, I’m hoping that all of these problems—but in particular, the pandemic—reminds people that having effective government institutions is really important. I don’t mean a massive, centralized bureaucracy, but we’ve learned we can’t just rely on a Twitter account or the free market to solve problems like this. We need public institutions, staffed by competent people, to manage problems like COVID-19. I’m hoping that’s one of the lessons people draw from this once the pandemic is over.

EYCK FREYMANN: WHY CONVENTIONAL WISDOM ON CHINA'S BELT & ROAD IS WRONG

https://cdainstitute.ca/ Jan 26, 2021

The Belt and Road Initiative, known in Chinese and formerly in English as **One Belt One Road or OBOR** for short, is a global infrastructure development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013 to invest in nearly 70 countries and international organizations.

What does conventional wisdom say about OBOR and why is it wrong?

Conventional wisdom is that OBOR is primarily an infrastructure, development finance, or connectivity initiative, and should be evaluated on those terms. I think that's only half-right, at best. The OBOR slogan actually elides three different dimensions of the same phenomenon. Physical, debt-financed infrastructure is only one dimension. And this model preceded Xi Jinping and the OBOR slogan. The more important and less-studied dimensions are OBOR as a *brand* for Chinese national power, or a conceptual shorthand for a Chinese model of world order that evokes a whole complex of constructed historical claims; and OBOR as a *campaign*, propelled largely by the Chinese grassroots with help from friendly foreigners, to make more of China's political and economic interactions with the rest of the world serve that concept. In other words, OBOR's drivers and motivations are much more domestic than has been commonly realized. Propaganda is more important than has been commonly realized. And it is all far more personalized to Xi Jinping's own legacy and personality cult than has been commonly realized.

The second big error in conventional wisdom is that OBOR is some nefarious, predatory "debt trap" scheme that ensnares gullible partner countries into vassalage to China. My book shows, using several of case studies, including the prominent case of Hambantota, Sri Lanka, that many if not most OBOR-branded projects are actually driven from start to finish by the recipient country—even if the money, materials, labor, and know-how comes from China. In other words, lecturing developing countries that it's not in their interest to partner with China is a failed strategy. We now have confirmation, by the way, that that was the Trump administration's approach. Last week, Trump's National Security Council declassified its "Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific." The document confirms that the U.S. strategy has been to "communicate to allies and partners" the strings attached to China's "Belt and Road Initiative.'" But how many countries have actually repudiated OBOR in a lasting way after learning about the "strings attached"? By my count, just India and the Maldives. Countries think they know what their interests are; it's not easy to convince them otherwise.

Media coverage have far overplayed OBOR's impact on global trade. China has made minimal efforts to construct an actual trading bloc between member states. As far as the pandemic goes, Chinese exports to the U.S. are higher than ever. As China rebalances its domestic economy to support consumers, it is also importing more, particularly from Southeast Asia. Again, it's important not to conflate OBOR with global trade patterns, since there has been minimal effort to do trade deals under the banner of OBOR.

What activities and tactics has China engaged in internationally to promote OBOR? Has the CCP's attempts to gain support for the initiative been effective?

The CCP has a well-developed propaganda apparatus, which Xi Jinping has empowered and expanded. The Central Propaganda Department (CPD) is the heart of the system, loosely overseeing a broad complex of propaganda activities and multimedia organizations for domestic and foreign audiences. For domestic audiences, I argue that OBOR is being pitched essentially as a new-and-improved return of the imperial "tributary system." The tributary system is a constructed, Western idea that never "existed" in a formalized sense, but it's a historical touchstone that all Chinese people are familiar with. The idea is one of a harmonious regional or global order with China at the center, where peripheral states pay tribute to China's centrality and superior status, and in return receive favorable access to Chinese technology, products, and markets. In propaganda for foreigners, by contrast, references to the Han Dynasty and the tributary system are almost entirely absent. There is a lot less focus on the political elements of the project, and much more focus on concrete, measurable financial gains that the foreigners will enjoy if they participate. The effort to promote OBOR has been largely grassroots, including many books, conferences, and so forth not organized by the central CCP. So it's important, I think, to focus on the most authoritative sources of propaganda, which can be found in CCTV documentaries, essays in party mouthpieces like the *People's Daily*, and the like.

What are the consequences of increased Chinese influence in regions already prone to corruption and authoritarianism, and for regions that are trying to democratize? Are advanced democracies immune to China's influence?

There is a meme in the U.S. discussion about OBOR that China is "exporting" an "authoritarian model" of national or regional order, via OBOR. Elizabeth Economy and other scholars I respect have made this argument, and they can point to scattered examples. But my own analysis of OBOR case studies finds that it's basically compatible with democracy. China has invested in basically every country on earth, and you'd be hard-pressed to name half a dozen where democratic structures have been meaningfully weakened as a direct result. I think OBOR is more pro-elite than it is anti-democratic. It offers a value proposition for whoever happens to be in power in the partner country at the time: sing China's praises and give it long-term market access and status benefits, and China will repay with short-term political favors that are useful for staying in power and playing off regional rivals. That's why opposition parties everywhere are usually anti-OBOR, and quickly reconcile with China once they take power themselves and the logic of the scheme starts working in their favor. As long as this trend holds, and China has friends in every major political party in every country where it has interests, Beijing doesn't care all that much if an election brings a new party to power. China can adapt. I'd caution, though, that past performance is no guarantee of future results. OBOR has the potential to evolve into a China-led authoritarian political bloc. That's one reason why the United States in particular has to think very carefully about what is says about OBOR. We do not at all want to facilitate or enable that transformation.

What is the DSR and does it pose any serious risks to the freedoms and sovereignty of foreign nations as well as the global internet?

The DSR has been around for years but is emerging as a major focus of the Chinese leadership coming out of the pandemic. China has a sophisticated tech sector, particularly in digital payments and cloud services, and would like to help these companies internationalize for all the obvious reasons. There have been scattered reports of China exporting surveillance technology or suggesting it could help OBOR partner governments set up their own "social credit" systems. So far, little of substance has been done in this domain, though this is an obvious direction OBOR could move in in the future—particularly if, in response to U.S. opposition, China decides to try to convert OBOR into a China-led geopolitical bloc.

Do China's Arctic ambitions pose a threat to Canadian sovereignty?

China isn't prosecuting any territorial claims in the Arctic, and it doesn't have its own base of operations in the Arctic, which makes it dependent on partner countries in the region for refueling and commercial operations. Mostly, I think China is focused on avoiding getting shut out of the region altogether when the sea ice melts. Russia has tried to position itself as China's gatekeeper to the Arctic, supporting the expansion of the Northern Sea Route, which for the moment is basically an occasional Chinese merchant ship sailing with a Russian naval escort. In the early 2010s, China made a series of overtures to Norway, Finland, Iceland, and Greenland to

explore jointly building logistics infrastructure. Most of these efforts failed. Perhaps one day we will learn that Washington's fingerprints were all over this.

How has the Meng Wanzhou affair and the case of the Two Michaels influenced the economic relationship between Canada and China? Is China still a viable economic partner for Canada?

China and Canada will remain important economic partners for a number of reasons, including Canada's abundant natural resources, the large diaspora population, and the attractiveness of Canadian universities to Chinese students. But I think the scales have fallen from Canadians' eyes in the past two to three years. Ottawa—and by Ottawa I mean mainly the Liberal Party—is coming to recognize that China is a fast-rising illiberal state that is increasingly willing to violate international law and squeeze small-to-medium countries when it is displeased. Canada is still catching up to Australia and New Zealand in recognizing the threat that the CCP's United Front activities can pose to national security and democratic processes. This is going to be a long-term challenge for Canada because so many Canadians have Chinese ancestry, or relatives back in China, and are therefore vulnerable in various ways to coercion from the CCP. Canada doesn't just need to protect its *institutions* from CCP interference; it also needs to protect its *citizens* from being blackmailed or put in impossible positions by the CCP. I suspect that the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and other countries in similar positions will eventually need to coalesce behind a common policy for dealing with this challenge.

IT'S A LANDMARK DAY FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT, BUT AN AWKWARD ONE FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Canada won't sign Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons despite being 'committed' to disarmament.

Bianca Mugyenyi, Setsuko Thurlow · for CBC News Opinion · Posted: Jan 22, 2021 4:00 AM ET

A decommissioned U.S. Titan II Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) is seen at the Titan Missile Museum in Sahuarita, Ariz. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

that went into effect Jan. 22 requires ratifying nations to never 'develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.' (Nicole Neri/Reuters)

This column is an opinion by Setsuko Thurlow and Bianca Mugyenyi. Thurlow, the co-recipient of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of ICAN and recipient of the Order of Canada, survived the bombing of Hiroshima and has devoted her life to nuclear abolition. Mugyenyi is a director at the Canadian Foreign Policy Institute.

Today is an extraordinary day for humanity. Yet it is an awkward moment for Canada.

At midnight the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force. For the 51 countries that have already ratified it, developing and possessing nuclear weapons is now illegal. The treaty requires ratifying nations to, "never under any circumstances … develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices."

Beyond making weapons that have always been immoral now also illegal for nations that have joined the treaty, it requires signatories to promote nuclear abolition. Similar to the landmine and cluster-bomb treaties, the TPNW seeks to stigmatize the stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons in the hopes of changing the behaviour of all nations, including non-signatories.

The pressure is not only directed at the state level. It is also aimed at companies, universities and other institutions that enable nuclear weapons development, research and production.

Yet despite stating that it is committed to nuclear disarmament, Canada's federal government has refused to sign the TPNW.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is seen here speaking to the media in Ottawa on Jan. 15. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that went into effect Jan. 22 is backed by 51 nations, but the federal government doesn't support it. (Adrian Wyld/The Canadian Press)

Nuclear weapons continue to pose a serious threat to human survival. There have been accidents involving these weapons in the U.S., Spain, Russia, British Columbia and elsewhere over decades. Similarly, early warning system failures have almost led to drastic decisions by the leaders of nuclear armed states.

Tens of millions could die instantaneously if nuclear weapons were exploded over cities. The use of a fraction of the more than 13,000 nukes in the world could imperil billions in a global famine and through radioactive fallout.

The UN Institute for Disarmament Research, as well as the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, argue that the risk of nuclear weapons use is at its highest in decades.

Nuclear armed Israel, Pakistan and India have never signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, while North Korea withdrew and is building up its arsenal. In recent years the U.S. has pulled out of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, Iran nuclear deal and Open Skies Treaty. Washington is spending $1.7 trillion over three decades to modernize its nuclear stockpile with new bombs that are 80 times more powerful than those it dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By positioning troops on Russia's doorstep, including Canadians in Latvia, the NATO alliance is heightening tension between the two great nuclear armed powers.

An estimate of the global stockpile of nuclear weapons as of 2018, compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Amidst the dangers of a nuclear conflict, the TPNW is a bright light. In 2017, 122 countries voted in favour of the treaty's adoption at the United Nations.

Canada, however, has been hostile to the initiative. It voted against establishing talks for the treaty and then boycotted the negotiations, which two-thirds of all countries attended. More recently, Canada voted against a December UN resolution supporting the TPNW, a resolution backed by 130 UN member states.

Meanwhile, Global Affairs has claimed in recent months to "unequivocally support global nuclear disarmament" and a "world free of nuclear weapons."

Just two weeks ago during a meeting of foreign ministers of the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Rob Oliphant reiterated in a government statement that, "Canada is committed to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its part in achieving a safer and more peaceful world. Now is the time to make a concerted effort, working with like-minded partners, to advance our shared nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament objectives. We are committed to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons."

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Rob Oliphant, seen here in the House of Commons in June 2019, told a Jan. 6 meeting of foreign ministers that the federal government remains 'committed to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.' (Fred Chartrand/The Canadian Press)

So why is the Trudeau government refusing to sign the TPNW prohibiting nuclear weapons?

Initially Prime Minister Trudeau dismissed the UN conference that negotiated the treaty, stating, "there can be all sorts of people talking about nuclear disarmament, but if they do not actually have nuclear arms, it is sort of useless."

As support for the TPNW has solidified, the government's tone softened. It now asserts that it prefers to focus on the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which opened for signatures in 1968.

However, signing the TPNW is not at odds with seeking to reinvigorate NPT negotiations.

Ottawa's opposition to the prohibition treaty appears driven by the military and political establishment's ties to the United States and NATO (the Liberal government's defence policy makes two dozen references to Canada's commitment to NATO).

In a bid to block the treaty that went into effect today from reaching its ratification threshold, Washington sent a message in late October urging countries, including Canada, to "withdraw your instrument of ratification or accession" to the TPNW.

The nuclear-armed NATO alliance is also hostile to the treaty – in December, the alliance reaffirmed its opposition to the TPNW.

While the Liberals may not be on board, the NDP, Greens and Bloc Québécois have all expressed support for Canada signing the TPNW.

Additionally, former prime ministers Jean Chrétien and John Turner, former deputy prime minister John Manley, former defence ministers John McCallum and Jean-Jacques Blais, and former foreign ministers Bill Graham and Lloyd Axworthy all signed an international statement in September supporting the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

If the federal government adopted their vision to prohibit nuclear arms, many in Canada would proudly celebrate.

NEW DETAILS EMERGE IN THE CASE FOR THE FIRST CANADIAN VICTORIA CROSS

by Stephen J. Thorne THE LEGION MAGAZINE February 8, 2021

Private Jess Randall Larochelle of the Royal Canadian Regiment.

Private Jess Randall Larochelle of the Royal Canadian Regiment was in an observation post when it was destroyed by a rocket-propelled grenade during an enemy attack on the position in Pashmul, Afghanistan. It was Oct. 14, 2006.

Manning a C6 machine gun—known as "the bullet magnet" because the enemy always looks to disable it first—Larochelle was knocked unconscious by the blast. Two members of his section were killed and three others wounded.

Some time later, Larochelle came to and quickly realized his unit's position was about to be overrun. He didn't know it yet, but his back was broken. Bloodied and battered, his ears ringing from the concussive blast, his years of training took over.

Larochelle crawled back to the machine gun to defend his position, only to find the weapon had been destroyed. Larochelle's actions saved the lives of the remainder of his section.

“Beside him are 15 unused M72 rocket launchers,” wrote his comrade in arms, retired corporal Bruce Moncur. “Think about how fortunate he was that none of them detonated, and how dangerous it could have been to fire them if they had been bent or damaged.”

Oblivious to the risk, the Callander, Ont., native started pulling off the rubber stoppers on the 15 single-shot rocket launchers, extending the disposable tubes and taking aim.

The weapon was devastatingly effective. Taliban fighters were blown to pieces with each shot, their body parts flying in all directions. Other enemy fighters were unnerved by the sights and sounds around them and they began a scattered retreat.

Larochelle’s actions saved the lives of the remainder of his section. He was awarded the Star of Military Valour.

“Although he was alone, severely injured, and under sustained enemy fire in his exposed position at the ruined observation post, he aggressively provided covering fire over the otherwise undefended flank of his company’s position,” said his citation. “Private Larochelle’s heroic actions permitted the remainder of the company to defend their battle positions and to successfully fend off the sustained attack of more than 20 insurgents.

“His valiant conduct saved the lives of many members of his company.”

The Canadian Victoria Cross medal - DAVID ASH/NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA

Ninety-eight Canadians are among the 1,358 British Empire and Commonwealth soldiers, sailors and aircrew to have earned the original Victoria Cross.

The last Canadian recipient was Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray, whose posthumous award came for actions on Aug. 9, 1945, when, under heavy fire, he led a Corsair attack on a Japanese destroyer and sank it with a direct hit even as his aircraft burned.

Canada has not seen fit to recognize any of its soldiers with the new award.

In February 1993, Canada followed Australia's precedent and established its own VC, its distinctive cross impressed with the Latin motto "Pro Valore" instead of "For Valour," thus avoiding the need to squeeze Canada's two official languages onto the scroll that bears it. New Zealand followed suit with its own medal in 1999.

But while Australia has awarded four of its own VCs and New Zealand one, Canada has not seen fit to recognize any of its soldiers with the new award.

Two critical criteria for the awarding of a VC are lacking in all of the 109 total actions honoured with intermediate gallantry awards in Afghanistan, including the 20 Stars of Military Valour (SMVs), Lieutenant-Colonel Carl Gauthier, the military's director of honours and recognition, told Legion Magazine in a 2018 interview.

"One is when somebody voluntarily or knowingly draws the enemy's fire upon them in order to relieve the pressure on somebody else," Gauthier explained. "Or somebody just gets up and charges the enemy against overwhelming odds.

"It's not that we didn't want to award one. It's simply that nobody met that very, very high standard for a Victoria Cross action. If one had, I can assure you, it would have been awarded."

The Department of National Defence even initiated a review of all 20 SMV actions after some veterans suggested the award had become more generous as Canada's participation in the Afghanistan war was ending in 2014.

A committee of general officers representing all commands reviewed the citations and entire nomination processes for each, concluding that all were fair, efficient and consistent across all the Afghan rotations. They even compared the SMVs awarded in Afghanistan with recent Commonwealth VCs dating from Vietnam on.

"It was surprising how consistent they were," said Gauthier. "In the end, the committee was very clear that the SMVs were all very good SMVs, that none of these awards should have been higher or lower; they were right in that window."

Now a group of Afghanistan veterans spearheaded by Moncur and supported by retired general Rick Hillier are challenging that assertion.

Calling themselves Valour in the Presence of the Enemy, they have compiled lists of potential VC recipients, both modern-day and historical, which they intend to detail in a pair of documentaries they hope to air in a future remembrance period. Backed by new evidence, Larochelle stands at the top of that list.

His citation did not mention the fact his unit was already undermanned before the attack. Moncur said a section was at a nearby forward operating base getting checked after two were killed in an ambush that morning, including the section commander, Sergeant Darcy Tedford. Four others were wounded.

Furthermore, cannons aboard the two light-armoured vehicles facing the enemy went down during the battle, leaving Larochelle and his cache of M72s their only defence until the cannons could be cleared.

Corporal Bruce Moncur (right) carries a C9 machine gun in Afghanistan in 2006.

BRUCE MONCUR

Later the following day, Larochelle—his back injury still undiagnosed—was among eight soldiers to carry a friend's casket during a ramp ceremony. Only afterwards did the private come forward to seek medical attention. The doctors discovered he had a fractured vertebra.

His injuries were so severe he was released from the military, receiving the Star of Valour and his release papers the same day. He has struggled mightily since, says his brother, Andrew.

"He has almost died a number of times due to physical medical complications because of that day, so many that I have lost count," he wrote in a December 2020 Facebook post supporting the call to award his brother the VC.

"It would be great to see this awarded to him before he succumbs to his injuries."

The award process is long and complex. Any witness can nominate a VC candidate, but it has to be signed off by the nominee's unit commander and is subject to multiple reviews and revisions before it reaches the honours and recognition panel for a decision. Thus, Gauthier didn't know at the time of his interview if any new VCs were ever nominated.

Among his committee's criteria are numerical limits on the number of gallantry awards that can be given—one nomination for every 250 people under command for each six-month period of war; mentions in dispatches are at one in 100.

The rate of Victoria Crosses awarded in the First World War stood at about one per 7,400 combatants. Translating that to the 40,000 Canadians who rotated through Afghanistan, five VCs could technically have been awarded and still been historically consistent, though the introduction of intermediate awards for gallantry over the years has changed the landscape considerably.

No less than 24 VCs were awarded in just one day at the Relief of Lucknow during the Indian Rebellion, also known as the Indian Mutiny, of 1857.

Eleven were handed out after the two-day Battle of Rorke's Drift during the 1879 Anglo-Zulu War, when 137 British troops held off thousands of Zulu warriors.

There were 628 VCs awarded during the First World War (Canadians got six at the Battle of Hill 70), only 182 during the Second, and just 16 since.

Racism, classism and politics—even British reluctance to recognize their colonials—have all figured in past nomination processes and, as with any judgment-driven awards, there have been many cases where VCs were awarded or denied for reasons unsupported by the evidence.

Moncur believes Larochelle was denied the supreme award simply because the action occurred too early in the war. The mucky-mucks back in Ottawa had no way of knowing then if someone else would set a new standard later on. No one did.

"By the time the war moved on, the story became 'how do you give somebody the VC over what those guys at the beginning did?' They set the standard so high, it became almost impossible to get the VC. It adds to the conversation that we are the forgotten war."

"They second-guessed themselves and basically said 'no, we're just going to stick to the Star.' I think it cost us the Victoria Cross and, I'm telling you right now, there are 40,000 pissed off [soldiers] that the VC didn't get put out."

Like the Korean War, in which no Canadian received a VC, Moncur says the lack of recognition has only contributed to the feeling among a significant number of Afghanistan veterans that their service somehow didn't measure up.

"It adds to the conversation that we are the forgotten war, that we don't get the respect that the other wars get. It does cause a bit of animosity, especially when you have Afghanistan veterans who feel like they've fallen between the cracks."

In these pandemic times, when morale across the country tends to be at a low ebb, Moncur says a VC would inspire soldiers and their compatriots, giving Canadians someone or something to look up to, rally around, and be motivated by.

"How many people know Jess Larochelle? I've got soldiers, even, who don't know these stories. We, as Canadians, fail to brag about some of these people and what they've done. It's in our nature."

THE EARLY DAYS OF RUSI VI?

United Services McCaulay Point Golf Course

First mentioned in Victoria's history in early 1888, this course was built by the Royal Marines Artillery on land cleared as a Hudson Bay Company farm at Esquimalt Harbour (a naval base since 1865). The golf course quickly became part of the social life of the community, as shown by this family outing.

Expansion of the navy base forced the golf course to close in 1942. Many of its membership had already been moving to the more upscale Uplands Golf Club (opened 1922) and the A.V. Macan designed Gorge Vale Golf Club (opened 1927). The course continues to be represented in name only: "Golf Hill" is located near Work Point and acts as an Environment Canada weather reporting point.

So much of the early Victoria landscape was made up of indigenous Garry Oak trees and rocky terrain, shown here at McCaulay Point (and Victoria Golf Club). Each of the individuals are very much dressed in concert with the times: ladies with long dresses and everything covered except hands and face... everyone wearing a hat... all the clubs being carried in small carry "pen" bags, with the addition of a young caddie, looking much like a little soldier (maybe a cadet?).

Perhaps the most important aspect of this photo is that the majority of individuals (the centerpiece) in the photo are ladies... it is so commonly believed golf was exclusively a "man's game"... not so in the early part of the 20th century.

Credit - Highland Pacific Golf Course Royal View BC – Scott Keenlyside