

Feature

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The top 80 influencing Canada's foreign policy

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Whether they sit in the House of Commons, the corner office, or the Langevin Block, they make Canada's foreign policy, or influence those who do.

Through frank conversations with government insiders and policy analysts, *Embassy* chose this list of 80 powerbrokers of Canadian foreign policy.

It was tough to narrow down. Choices were made based on access to power, demonstrated ability to effect change, experience—or simply because they're in a powerful job.

The 2012 list marks the demise of the government-wide Afghanistan Task Force and the names associated with that, as Canada maintains a smaller military training presence in the still-troubled country.

The Asia-Pacific region is a greater priority in Canadian foreign policy, and that too is reflected. On the heels of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's visits to Southeast Asia and China courting markets for Canada's natural resources, and with his trade minister pushing for a seat at the Trans-Pacific Partnership table, it's no surprise the head of the Canada China Business Council made the cut.

But Canada's largest trading partner is still important. New to the list this year are people in charge of crafting and executing a Canada-US perimeter security agenda that affects billions of dollars in cross-border trade, privacy, and sovereignty.

Broken down by category, but in no particular order, here are this year's top 80 most influential people in Canadian foreign policy.

POLITICIANS

Stephen Harper, prime minister

The prime minister, more than anyone else, influences Canadian foreign policy. Although his current foreign minister, John Baird, is on a long leash, some observers still say the country's foreign policy is shaped by far the most by the man at the top. And now, more than ever, with his coveted majority and no election in sight, he has the time and experience to make his mark with his self-proclaimed "principled" approach to foreign relations.



John Baird, foreign minister

Described by observers as "a frigid machine" and "the most active foreign minister we've ever had" for the number of foreign visits he's undertaken since taking office last spring, Mr. Baird is, by most accounts, off to a good start. Seen to be close to the prime minister, he's spent time at home reaching out to long-overlooked diplomatic communities such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Mr. Baird is at the forefront of trying to re-engineer a values-based Canadian foreign policy, and he says Canada is not afraid to ruffle feathers to do it. But critics see him backing down on Chinese human rights, for instance, and selling out for votes on Israel.

Ed Fast, trade minister

This gospel music-singing small-town BC lawyer is putting on big-time air miles to move the ball forward on three key files in a priority portfolio: getting Canada in the coveted Trans-Pacific Partnership trade club, and clinching free trade deals with the European Union and India. "He's new, but he's good," said one trade watcher. "He's more open and he's more interested."

Jason Kenney, immigration minister

He may not be on the Cabinet committee on foreign affairs, but don't underestimate the power Jason Kenney has over foreign policy. Young, hardworking (he's usually in the House after hours debating the bills he sponsors), and with a freaky ability to recite facts and figures, he is also chair of the powerful Cabinet operations committee, in charge of day-to-day co-ordination of the government's agenda. He's in the midst of remaking Canada's immigration system to be better in tune with Canada's economic needs. Mr. Kenney is also the Tory point-person on enticing immigrant communities to vote Conservative, a feat he pulled off well in the last election.

Bev Oda, international co-operation minister

She has largely flown under the radar since almost losing her job last year for allegedly misleading Parliament. Praised for responding relatively quickly to the Somali famine last fall and food crisis in West

Africa this spring, she took heat for aligning the Canadian International Development Agency with private sector interests and especially mining companies. Her experience on the file (since 2007) means she knows it well. Ms. Oda is influential because she signs off on whether to approve millions of dollars in aid funnelled through international development NGOs, and on which countries Canada should focus its aid most.

Vic Toews, public safety minister

While dirty details of his divorce forced him to go off-message lately and he's been busy pushing through domestic crime laws, it's important not to forget that this Manitoba social conservative's responsibility extends to national security, counter-terrorism, border protection, and cyber security. He's been active in the government's efforts to fight human smuggling and cross-border crime, including work on the perimeter security deal.



Peter MacKay, defence minister

A senior minister with a strong political pedigree, Mr. MacKay is tasked with upholding the Tories' muscular military image while bringing down the axe on his massive departmental expenses. With the United States looking more to its allies and Canada's prime minister saying "we have to be prepared to contribute more" to protect Canadian interests against security threats, Mr. MacKay's file is highly relevant.

Julian Fantino, associate defence minister

Toronto and Ontario's former top cop, Mr. Fantino vaulted into a junior minister role (on the seniors file) after winning a 2009 by-election as a star candidate. Sticking to his talking points now as associate defence minister, he holds the procurement purse strings. He's also the guy who'll have to take the heat if Canada does a U-turn on its promise to spend billions on F-35 fighter jets.

Diane Ablonczy, minister of state for foreign affairs (Americas and consular affairs)

First elected in 1997 as a Reform MP representing part of Calgary, Ms. Ablonczy has maintained a low profile since taking on her dual role with foreign affairs last January. Although not seen to be a great driver of policy, her role gives her influence. She's made several trips to South and Central America and has taken heat for Canada's handling of the consular cases of a New Brunswick farmer jailed in Lebanon and others caught up in Arab Spring protest crackdowns. "She's one of those very steady performers in the government," said one former Tory staffer.



Joe Oliver, natural resources minister



Although his job could be considered domestic, under Mr. Oliver it has become international. After a 30-plus-year career in the investment business on Bay Street the rookie MP became minister last spring and started racking up the air miles. He visited China, Japan, England, the US, and Kuwait, pushing Canada's oil sands as "ethical" oil, the Keystone XL and Northern Gateway pipelines, and fighting against the EU fuel quality directive. Canada's oil sands make international news and Mr. Oliver is their chief defender.

Gerry Ritz, agriculture minister

Mr. Ritz straddles both domestic and foreign aspects of agriculture. His job includes boosting agricultural trade, re-opening markets to Canadian beef, and cutting down non-tariff barriers to trade. But lately he's been busy defending Canada's continued supply management as Canada seeks to enter the Trans-Pacific Partnership where some in the club are against the system. In this government, anything foreign affairs-related is more often than not tied to the economy, and Mr. Ritz's job fits the link.

Chris Alexander, parliamentary secretary to the defence minister

Few parliamentary secretaries normally make the cut, but Mr. Alexander is more influential than most because of his stellar diplomatic resume. Before winning his seat in the House of Commons as a star candidate in the 2011 election, he was Canada's ambassador to Afghanistan, deputy special representative to the UN's secretary general for Afghanistan, and served at the Canadian Embassy in Russia. He also published a book on his time in Afghanistan. The foreign minister just appointed him to a fact-finding mission in Sri Lanka to "help inform Canada's next steps" in relating to the country coming out of civil war.

Hélène Laverdière, NDP foreign affairs critic

Ms. Laverdière is a former foreign service officer who worked in the United States, Senegal, and Chile before she was elected during Quebec's 2011 NDP Orange Crush. Originally serving as CIDA critic, she shifted to foreign affairs when long-time critic Paul Dewar took a stab at leadership and has performed strongly in the official Opposition role.

Dominic LeBlanc, Liberal foreign affairs critic

A Liberal frontbencher and bilingual New Brunswicker, Mr. LeBlanc's views are appreciated by Mr. Baird, although he represents the third party in the House. They've travelled to Haiti along with their NDP counterpart. He's his party's former defence critic and a former leadership contender.

Irwin Cotler, Liberal justice and human rights critic

Mr. Cotler is respected, even within the Conservative camp, on issues involving Israel and Iran, for instance, where the two have some agreement. Representing a hotly-contested heavily-Jewish Montreal neighbourhood, he and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney have collaborated on anti-Semitism initiatives this government has supported. He travels extensively abroad and uses his skills as an international human rights lawyer to defend political prisoners.

Alison Redford, premier of Alberta

Premier for less than six months, Ms. Redford, of the provincial Progressive Conservative Party, has been a "very strong advocate for energy supply to the US—that's been helpful," noted one federal government source. Having worked as a senior policy adviser to Progressive Conservative Joe Clark when he was secretary of state for external affairs, she knows her way around Ottawa and Washington. A bilingual lawyer, her international experience makes her "unique among premiers" said a former foreign affairs analyst. She has given legal reform advice in Africa, and helped administer Afghanistan's first parliamentary elections. But will she stay premier? She has called an election for April 23.



Brad Wall, premier of Saskatchewan

Not your typical past choice for an internationally-minded premier, but Saskatchewan is booming from selling its oil, gas, uranium, potash, and wheat globally, so Mr. Wall is listened to in Ottawa. When the leader of the Saskatchewan Party, a liberal-conservative combo, lobbied against the foreign takeover of Potash Corp. of Saskatchewan Inc, the federal government blocked the deal.

Jean Charest, premier of Quebec

Described by one trade analyst as "the godfather of the Canada-EU agreement," he pushed for an economic deal with the EU to open labour mobility and government procurement, now currently in its end stages. The Canada-EU trade deal is building on the Quebec-France professional services agreements. Mr. Charest is also actively pushing to Asian, European, and American players his 25-year \$80-billion Plan Nord agenda to develop and conserve northern Quebec.

DIASPORA GROUP AND NGO REPS

Shimon Fogel, CEO of The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs

Mr. Fogel made this list previously when he headed the Canada-Israel Committee. But observers note that this year he holds even more power at the helm of the new CLIA, which consolidated the Canada-Israel Committee, Canadian Jewish Congress and other Jewish groups last year. The small-but-mighty Canadian Jewish community, courted by both Liberals and Conservatives, influences the

government's approach to the Middle East. Need evidence of Mr. Fogel's power? After his organization alerted the foreign minister's office to a video link it thought offensive that was tweeted by the chief Palestinian envoy to Canada, the government called her in for a high-level dressing down and limited communication with her until a replacement arrived. Ouch.

Frank Dimant, executive vice-president of B'Nai Brith Canada

Perhaps now eclipsed somewhat by Mr. Fogel's influence in the Jewish community, Mr. Dimant is still an important player influencing the government's approach to the Middle East and Israel. He is well-consulted as a foreign policy stakeholder and holds sway as publisher of *The Jewish Tribune* and leader of the B'Nai Brith, a national Jewish service and advocacy group.

Paul Grod, national president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress

A lawyer and head of an energy company, Mr. Grod since 2007 has led the UCC, which represents many in the 1.2 million-strong Ukrainian-Canadian community concentrated in the prairies. The prime minister last fall attended a UCC dinner in his honour, and his caucus members are eager to attend UCC events to show support for the large and well-established Ukrainian-Canadian community.

Khalil Shariff, CEO of Aga Khan Foundation Canada

International Co-operation Minister Bev Oda doesn't go to every event she's asked to attend, but she makes her presence known at those held by the Aga Khan Foundation Canada. It is an agency of the non-denominational Aga Khan Development Network, founded by the Aga Khan, the imam of Ismaili Muslims. AKFC is a preferred non-profit partner of the Canadian International Development Agency. And Mr. Shariff "is very, very good at moving the agenda forward from a development perspective," said one government insider. The Harper government has courted Ismailis, which it sees as a moderate Muslim sect, and consulted the Aga Khan, a billionaire philanthropist, on its upcoming office of religious freedoms.



Dave Toycen, CEO of World Vision Canada

World Vision is Canada's largest Christian humanitarian organization and another big recipient of Canadian International Development Agency funding. CIDA is funding 11 of its ongoing projects to the tune of almost \$20 million. World Vision has supported some of the government's anti-human trafficking work. And it strikes the right balance for the Harper Conservatives as a non-denominational organization with a Christian base. This year World Vision was criticized for partnering with Barrick Gold and CIDA on a development project in Peru because of the mining giant's alleged unethical practices.



Neil Desai.

Nigel Wright, prime minister's chief of staff

A well-paid Bay Street dealmaker, Mr. Wright took a leave of absence last year to serve as the prime minister's chief adviser. Rooted in the party's Progressive Conservative wing, he is the most powerful political staffer in Ottawa.

Alykhan Velshi, director of planning in the prime minister's office

Although his job is mostly domestically focused now, Mr. Velshi, a former top staffer to Mr. Kenney, still has a big personal interest in foreign affairs. And being at the table alongside the prime minister on a day-to-day basis, he can chime in on those files, said a government insider. Mr. Velshi was for a few months last year the head of Ethical Oil, a group lobbying for the use of oil sands resources, whose message has been repeated by Cabinet ministers.

Garry Keller, chief of staff to the foreign minister

Mr. Keller is one of a small nucleus of key political staffers who play a big role in shaping the political side of Canada's foreign policy. Raised in Stony Plain, Alta. and in his mid 30s, he's been working as an aide to Tory MPs and Cabinet ministers since 1997, including a stint as the director of the Tory research bureau for backbench MPs. He has a long history with Mr. Baird and is loyal to the core.

Neil Desai, chief of staff to the international co-operation minister

Mr. Desai knows foreign relations and politics well and is in the PM's inner circle of foreign policy decision-makers. He was stakeholder relations manager in the prime minister's office before signing on with Bev Oda. He helped set the political agenda during bilateral visits with world leaders during the Canadian hosting of the G8 and G20 summits in 2010. In between government stints, he worked for the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto. He is media savvy, with a strategic and internationally-focused mind.

Andrea van Vugt, prime minister's foreign affairs, trade, and international development policy adviser

With all key foreign policy portfolios in her lap, three years of experience as a PMO policy adviser, and direct access to the prime minister, Ms. Van Vugt (née McGuigan, she got married last year to Dustin van Vugt, chief of staff to Minister of State for Sport Bal Gosal) has a position of influence. She's one of a small group of political staffers shaping Canada's foreign policy. She is reportedly a bright mind committed to the Conservative cause.

Paul Hong, foreign minister's senior policy adviser



Mr. Hong is in charge of advising Mr. Baird on Asia, parts of Africa, Oceania including Australia and New Zealand, and the UN. Last week, he was with Mr. Baird and the prime minister in Asia. Mr. Hong is the most known on the diplomatic reception circuit of Mr. Baird's trio of senior policy advisers. He may be younger looking than his 30-something years, but this South Korean-born Ontario-bred strategist has political smarts and a passion for human rights and freedoms.

Kasra Nejatian, immigration minister's director of strategic planning

Wherever you see Mr. Kenney, Mr. Nejatian is usually only a few steps behind. He could be mistaken for a communications or policy aide, but his job is strategic planning. Either way, it's clear Mr. Kenney listens to him and likes having him around because a year ago he had resigned from his former job as director of multicultural affairs and was grilled by the opposition-dominated House ethics committee for using government resources for partisan fundraising. But after the election, Mr. Kenney rehired Mr. Nejatian as his communications director. He's a blunt, fast-talking, Iranian-bred former New York City corporate lawyer—and one to watch.

Roy Rempel, prime minister's policy adviser

Mr. Rempel has a PhD in international relations and has written several books on Canadian foreign and defence policies. Observers cite him for his defence knowledge and his keen interest in the War of 1812. He used to serve as policy director responsible for the Western hemisphere under Stockwell Day when he was trade minister. That international experience gives him influence.

CIVIL SERVANTS

Brent Babcock, defence minister's senior policy adviser

A Royal Military College graduate and former armed forces member, Mr. Babcock took this job in 2010, having previously worked as an aide to former defence minister Gordon O'Connor. Like Mr. MacKay, he's an easterner, hailing from New Brunswick. Working with his director, Joe Varner, his senior policy role means he has sway in Mr. MacKay's inner circle.

Louise Girouard, trade minister's director of policy and stakeholder relations

Having worked several senior roles in several ministers' offices, Ms. Girouard has come to know policy, communications, House procedure, and how to run an office. Trade is a government priority, and so Ms. Girouard has an important job. "Louise is a very steady insightful person that brings a lot of experience," said one former political staffer.

Oren Cainer, foreign minister's senior policy adviser

Rather than employ one director of policy like past ministers did, Mr. Baird has three senior policy advisers who are involved in the day-to-day shaping and direction of policy. Mr. Cainer is responsible for Europe, the Middle East, Afghanistan, and the Commonwealth.

Wayne Wouters, privy council clerk

Mr. Wouters is Canada's top public servant. While not intimately involved in international affairs, he gives advice to the PM on all policy and operational issues affecting government. A trained economist, he's also the guy in charge of keeping the federal government an attractive and efficient employer with strong capacity in the current context of job and budget cuts.



Margaret Biggs, Morris Rosenberg and Wayne Wouters.

Ward Elcock, prime minister's special adviser on human smuggling and illegal migration

The former head of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Canada's spy agency, the prime minister tapped Mr. Elcock to be his direct adviser on human smuggling after nearly 500 Tamils docked in British Columbia aboard the MV Sun Sea in August 2010 hoping to make Canada their new home. Another migrant ship arrived the year prior. Mr. Elcock has travelled to Thailand, New Zealand, and Australia to monitor the phenomenon and come up with ways to stem the flow. He does his work quietly, but with Mr. Harper announcing millions of dollars of new initiatives to fight human smuggling in southeast Asia during his visit there this month and an anti-human smuggling bill winding through Parliament, it's clear this is still very much a priority.

Gen. Walter Natynczyk, chief of defence staff

Out of Libya, and with a fighting force no longer on the ground in Afghanistan, the Canadian Forces are taking a breather, but preparing for the next big engagement. With government-wide budget cuts coming, Gen. Natynczyk will have a say in how they go down and how they affect the future capability of the Canadian Forces.

Morris Rosenberg, deputy minister of foreign affairs

A lawyer by training, Mr. Rosenberg has a long public service career, including as a deputy minister for various departments for more than a decade. Since 2010, he's led a department critics have described in recent years as being once great and now relegated to the corner. He's got a big job on his hands. He will have his hands on an ongoing foreign policy review. And he'll have to manage whatever cuts are coming to DFAIT in this week's budget. He's said to get along well with his boss, Mr. Baird.

Louis Lévesque, deputy minister of trade

Diversifying beyond the United States and opening new markets in Asia is a priority for the Harper government. Trade more generally is an important portfolio to the prime minister. Mr. Lévesque has an influential role implementing the government's trade agenda. A Quebec City-born economist, he was the sherpa for the 2010 G20 summit in Seoul, South Korea.

Neil Yeates, deputy minister of citizenship and immigration

Mr. Yeates is Canada's top immigration bureaucrat. His job is to support a very activist minister whose goal is to reform both the immigration and citizenship systems—a big job. He's had to put in place ways to deal with a growing case backlog, and is set to manage upcoming refugee reforms. And he has overseen the switch to a global case management system to better manage applicant files.

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