



Marking the territory

Canada

Canada's northernmost provinces are pride of place in the country's latest passport. Depicting some of the routes explorer Joseph-Elzéar Bernier took, it asserts Canadian control of these Arctic trade routes.

AMBASSADOR NO.22

UN phased

New York [ZAHIR TANIN]

Zahir Tanin, Afghanistan's permanent representative to the United Nations, is recalling the moment he returned home after living in exile for two decades. "Everything was familiar: the faces, the mountains, the trees, the stones. It was always with me," he says. The visit was to cover the inauguration of the new Afghan government for the BBC in December 2001. Five years later, Hamid Karzai told Tanin it was time for him to cross to the other side.

Tanin is intimately linked with his country's struggles. The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan – a communist regime that led a bloody coup against Afghanistan's first president in 1978 – imprisoned and tortured Tanin, who was a politically active, left-leaning medical student. "Many people were killed. It was only luck that I survived," he says.

After his release by the Soviets, he abandoned medicine to practise journalism. But his political stance made him enemies, and in the early 1990s Tanin and his family fled to France as political refugees. He moved to the UK in 1994 to work as a research fellow at the London School of Economics, followed by an 11-year stint as a journalist for the BBC World

Service. In 2006, President Hamid Karzai asked Tanin to join the Afghan government; Tanin chose his current post. During his tenure he has served as vice-president of the General Assembly and has led delegations at Least Developed Countries conferences.

He also chairs the group that calls for Security Council reform. "Can we have a Security Council that's more representative, more efficient, more legitimate?" asks Tanin, who has presided over eight rounds of discussions.

Tanin is acutely aware of the fine balance he must employ as an envoy for a nation as mired in conflict as his own. "Smaller countries are not equal in resources and capacities but their [success at the UN] depends on the quality of their representatives and how they relate to the reality there." — SK

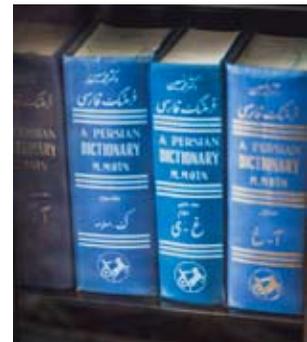
Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations in New York

01 The mission: The mission has been housed in a Midtown Manhattan skyscraper, located a few blocks west of the United Nations, since 2009. In Tanin's office, gold brocade chairs, multi-coloured rugs and black-and-white photographs of famed Afghan monuments speak to the rich cultural history of Afghanistan.



02 The staff: The mission's 18 staff members include 10 delegates in addition to a deputy permanent representative and Tanin.

03 The challenges: Afghans will go to the polls in April 2014. Maintaining a peaceful transfer of power will be an important test of the government's claim of a strategy of self-sufficiency. The fair distribution of international aid for development programmes will also be watched closely.



Friends in hot places

Latin America [UK DIPLOMACY]

A new wave of British diplomacy is targeting Latin America and the Caribbean to reverse the retreat of UK influence in the region and tap into emerging markets. The UK is said to trade two-and-a-half times more goods with Belgium than it does with the whole of Latin America, even though Belgium's economy is half the size of the state of São Paulo's. The UK closed seven diplomatic posts in Latin America from 1997 to 2010. But in recent months a new chargé d'affaires has arrived in Haiti, embassies have been opened in El Salvador and Paraguay and a consulate has opened in Recife, Brazil. — ANM



Monocle 24's correspondents are on the ground to bring you the latest news, views and analysis around the clock. Tune in for live debate, regular shows and events as they happen at monocle.com/radio.

Bore games

Santiago [FINNISH TIES]

Finland's prime minister Jyrki Katainen dropped in on Chilean president Sebastián Piñera this year after a Europe-Latin America summit in Santiago. One result was a bilateral commission to bring Finland's energy-efficient mining technology to the world's biggest copper producer.

Purchases of mining and forestry gear have raised Chile to second place behind Brazil among Finland's Latin American markets, says Ilkka Heiskanen, Finland's emissary to Chile. But Finland has more than machinery on offer. It gives Chile tips on education reform and indigenous rights and a Finnish firm is designing the residence at a radio telescope in the Chilean desert. — SEB

