Canada's Defence Challenges in the Indo-Pacific

Edited by:
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Canada's defence challenges in the Indo-Pacific

Introduction

Kim Richard Nossal

In the fall of 2022, as part of a broader shift in Canadian foreign and defence policy, the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau announced a new approach to the Pacific. In *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy* (IPS), the government recognized that there were major tectonic shifts in global politics underway: the return of great-power politics and the rising influence of the Indo-Pacific region. This was, the government declared grandly, a "once-in-a-generation global shift that requires a generational Canadian response."[1] The Trudeau government promised that it would be more engaged in the region and would be "a reliable partner in the region to promote security and stability across the region and at home."[2] The policies outlined in the strategy were wide-ranging. The five strategic objectives embraced by the government included peace, resilience, and security; expanded trade and investment, and greater supply chain resilience; people-to-people connections; sustainability and green policies; and the entrenchment of Canada as "an active and engaged partner" in the Indo-Pacific.

The Trudeau government saw its Indo-Pacific strategy as multifaceted, involving a range of policy tools that would be implemented by different departments of government. The strategy envisaged deepening Canada's diplomatic, economic, and people-to-people ties with the region, particularly with Japan,

the Republic of Korea, and the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

But the Canadian strategy also saw a role for the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in efforts to contribute to the peace, resilience, and security objectives laid out in the IPS. Of the $2.3 billion devoted to the strategy over five years (2022–2027), $500 million was devoted to shifts in defence policy to align with the objectives laid out in the Indo-Pacific strategy. In the year following the release of the Indo-Pacific strategy, the government shifted Canada's naval assets to the Indo-Pacific and increasing the tempo of Royal Canadian Navy deployments in the region. In March 2023, HMCS *Montréal* was deployed from its base in Halifax to the Pacific region along with the MV *Asterix,* the RCN's naval replenishment vessel that is also based in Halifax, to Operation PROJECTION, Canada's naval forward presence mission in the Indo-Pacific region. HMCS *Montréal* also was deployed to Operation NEON, Canada's contribution to United Nations sanctions efforts against North Korea.[3] In June 2023, while in Singapore at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue, the minister of national defence, Anita Anand, announced that the government would significantly enhance its military presence in the Indo-Pacific. A new operation, Operation HORIZON, was inaugurated, replacing the Indo-Pacific portion of Op PROJECTION; the minister promised that henceforth there would be an additional warship deployed to the Indo-Pacific so that Canada could increase its participation in international exercises.[4] With this new arrangement in place, HMCS *Ottawa* and HMCS *Vancouver,* along with MV *Asterix***,** were deployed in August 2023 to join bilateral and multilateral exercises in the Indo-Pacific. HMCS *Vancouver* assisted in the monitoring of UN sanctions against Korea and in September transited the Taiwan Straits with an American guided-missile destroyer, USS *Higgins*.[5]

The shift in naval assets to the Indo-Pacific was also accompanied by new defence initiatives in Korea. Anand secured the appointment of a Canadian general as the next deputy commander of the UN Command in Korea, continuing a pattern set in 2018, when Gen. Wayne Eyre, the Chief of the Defence Staff, was the first non-US general officer appointed to this position. Canada also signed a ten-year memorandum of understanding on defence research and development that sought to increase collaboration between the two countries in the defence sector. Defence cooperation with the Philippines was also strengthened, with Canada's first resident defence attaché appointed to Manila in October 2023.

These operational shifts in Canada's defence policy were not inconsequential. But reorienting Canada's geostrategic gaze to the Pacific Ocean from its historical transatlantic focus has considerable implications for Canada's defence policy in the years ahead. If the Canadian government wishes to pivot to the Indo-Pacific, and become a more engaged defence partner in the region, it will have to spend much more on that defence engagement than it has in the past, or anticipates spending in the future. For the existing capabilities of the CAF are designed for a global geostrategic environment that is undergoing considerable change. The title of the government's 2017 defence policy—*Strong, Secure, Engaged*[6]—reflected that earlier environment: since the end of the Second World War, the CAF has been structured to provide strong defence for the Canadian homeland, to make an appropriate contribution to North American security, and to be able to engage beyond North America to make a useful contribution to a global system that was marked by the dominance of a West led by the United States.

But that world is being transformed: the geostrategic centre of gravity is tilting towards the Indo-Pacific; the West is increasingly being challenged by other powers—by the People's Republic of China under paramount leader Xi Jinping, and by the Russian Federation under President Vladimir Putin. Moreover, the West itself faces deepening fractures since the United States can no longer be depended on to provide the kind of global leadership that it did in the seventy years after the end of the Second World War. That tradition of leadership came to an abrupt end in 2017, when Donald J. Trump became the president of the United States. An isolationist and protectionist who disdained America's traditional friends and allies, Trump evinced little desire to continue the tradition of providing global leadership. And while in 2020 Americans elected Joe Biden, a committed internationalist who provided traditional leadership in response to Russia's attempt to eliminate Ukraine, Trumpism continues to enjoy massive support in the United States.

Given these shifts in the global geostrategic environment, what kind of defence policy does *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy* call for? Should Canada consider restructuring the Canadian Armed Forces to meet the demands of the new environment, and, if so, how? What would the CAF look like if Canada decided to engage in a serious pivot to the Indo-Pacific? And, as importantly, how would the financial implications of such a pivot be managed? After all, given how successive Canadian governments over the last thirty years have

consistently under-invested in defence policy, what shifts in policy would be possible when the demands for expanded investment arrive all at once?

It might be noted that these were questions that the government itself was raising. Shortly after Russia's failed effort to eliminate Ukraine as a separate state began in February 2022, the Trudeau government announced that it was undertaking a review of *Strong, Secure, Engaged,* the 2017 defence policy, with an eye to laying out long-term goals for the Canadian military and long-term spending needs. The Defence Policy Update (DPU), as it was then called, was initially promised for the fall of 2022. But the DPU kept being delayed, so that the IPS was announced in November 2022 without waiting for the defence review to be completed.

When the IPS was released in 2022, the Centre for International and Defence Policy at Queen's University and the Canadian Defence and Security Network headquartered at Carleton University believed that it would be useful to provide an assessment of the defence policy requirements for Canada in the emerging Indo-Pacific-centred global order. We decided to bring together a group of policy practitioners and academic experts to explore the defence policy options available to Canada. Assisted by a grant from the Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security (MINDS) program of the Department of National Defence, the CDSN and CIDP co-sponsored a workshop that was held at Carleton University on January 25–26, 2024 and attended by thirty-six participants from government, academia, and the non-profit sector.

We sought to galvanize the discussion at the workshop by providing participants with a number of brief reflections on what Canadian defence policy in the Indo-Pacific might look like in the 2020s. We invited experts in the field—specialists in Canadian foreign and defence policy and in Canada's Indo-Pacific engagement—to prepare a short position paper reflecting on what Canada would need in its defence policy to implement the peace, resilience, and security objectives laid out in the IPS. The nine papers submitted were then circulated to the participants the week before the workshop.

Not surprisingly, the ten experts who prepared these nine papers had a range of views about the defence policy options available to Canada. But they all provided important insights into what an appropriate approach to the Indo-Pacific region might look like in the decade ahead.

The first two papers focus on how Canada could make a broader contribution to the shifting balance of power in the Indo-Pacific. Jeremy Paltiel argues that

Canada could make such a contribution—but Canada would have to change how to deploys its resources. While he suggests that it would be unrealistic to expect Canadians to embrace a radical change in traditional defence strategies, he argues that we could take a hard look at our existing defence policy and find ways of making the kind of contribution to the Indo-Pacific that could assist our allies in that region. But this would require that Canada would have to be more strategic in its decision-making than it has been in the past. However, for Paltiel, this kind of "toning" could make a serious difference.

For Stephen Nagy, Canada's future defence engagement in the Indo-Pacific should be much more narrowly focused and limited. First, geographic range of engagement should not be overly ambitious. On the contrary: Canada should avoid using its limited resources in the western or even the eastern parts of the Indian Ocean and instead focus on Canada's interests in the South China Sea and in the East Asian part of the Indo-Pacific. Second, defence engagement should primarily be naval diplomacy, joint exercises, and minilateral engagement, as well as introducing new formulas of cooperation such as the disinformation minilateral cooperation with Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, the United States, and Canada. Finally, Canada should focus on injecting resources in ways that add value to Canada's friends and allies in the region.

The importance of bringing capabilities to the table is also underscored by Stephanie Carvin and Thomas Juneau. They focus on the implications for Canada of the creation of AUKUS, a security partnership between the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia launched in 2021. Carvin and Juneau suggest that Canada needs to engage in those AUKUS activities that focus on emerging and disruptive defence technologies and seek to provide niche assets that Canada's allies would find useful. This, they argue, would be in keeping with the emerging trend of a more flexible, ad hoc multilateralism whereby what gets a state invited is not shared values, but its ability to contribute.

Adam P. MacDonald examines the centrality of the Royal Canadian Navy to Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy. However, he notes that the RCN will struggle over the next decade to ensure that a regional presence is actually maintained. Because the navy is facing numerous systemic challenges that affect it operational readiness, MacDonald argues that political and military leaders in Canada must keep expectations modest about Canada's ability actually deploy naval power. Moreover, establishing a naval regional presence will require difficult trade-offs and reordering of priorities. The government needs to begin taking

active steps towards expanding the RCN into a more appropriate force size given Canada's maritime strategic geography and the growing importance of maritime spaces as sites of military tension and influence.

James Boutilier also focuses on the ability of the Canadian Armed Forces to contribute to security in the Indo-Pacific. He argues that Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy is ambitious, aspirational—and forty years late. Although it is aimed at a domestic audience, it also seeks to address a long-standing perception that Canada was too often absent from the Indo-Pacific arena. He suggests that the prescriptions outlined in the strategy make sense but, as with so many other federal initiatives, the real question relates to timely and effective delivery. The state of the CAF—and the government's lagging commitments to the military—make the implementation of the strategy deeply problematic. He concludes that what is needed is something that is in relatively short supply in Ottawa: political daring.

Charlotte Duval-Lantoine's brief likewise focuses on the CAF. She argues that the Canadian military has been confronted with a multitude of organizational challenges: an "existential" personnel crisis, aging frigates, and an adverse fiscal environment are all having a profound impact on the way that the military operates and adapts to the current geopolitical and geostrategic environment. Looking at the current resources allocated to the Royal Canadian Navy, she concludes that it is unlikely that the injection of investments and the reforms necessary for the full implementation of the defence aspects of the Indo-Pacific strategy will occur.

Ross O'Connor also argues that naval power should be central to Canada's engagement in the Indo-Pacific. Noting that because the oceans matter in geopolitics once more, the Canadian government has an opportunity to transform the Indo-Pacific strategy from a document put on the shelf to collect dust into a policy with actual teeth. As China continues to bully its neighbours across the South China Sea, a struggle for the soul of the Pacific has the potential to make current conflicts seem trivial by comparison. He proposes significant investments in new naval hardware. This would not only find favour with Canadians, he believes, but would also provide great value to Canada's Pacific allies. In short, an Indo-Pacific strategy powered by a rebuilt and robust RCN would be both smart policy and smart politics.

While agreeing that new investments are needed, Deanna Horton encourages us to remember that both Canada and the United States are three-ocean

nations that are facing strategic challenges to their vital national interests on all fronts. She argues that the Arctic needs to be included as a key factor in Canada's defence policy in the Indo-Pacific. She sketches out the developments that have led to the convergence of the threats and opportunities for both Canada and the United States in their Arctic and Indo-Pacific strategies. Canada could achieve greater leverage in foreign policy, despite its few levers and limited resources, by furthering collaboration with both Indo-Pacific and Atlantic partners in the Arctic while enhancing cooperation with the United States on security and defence, and by buttressing existing alliances in both the Atlantic and the Pacific to achieve the greatest benefit. As she puts it, "the Arctic is the Indo-Pacific."

The final reflection in this collection was given as a keynote address at the workshop by an Australian with considerable experience in Canadian foreign and defence policy. John Blaxland is a professor of international security at the Australian National University, and currently the ANU's Director of the North America Liaison Office. As the author of *Strategic Cousins,* a key work that seeks to compare Australian and Canadian approaches to defence, Blaxland examines Canada's defence challenges in the Indo-Pacific viewed through an Australian lens.[7] With the world facing heightened great power contestation, looming environmental catastrophe, a spectrum of governance challenges, and all accelerated by the fourth industrial revolution, the urgency for close coordination of their finite resources is great. But, Blaxland stresses, Canada must demonstrate that it is serious about Indo-Pacific engagement. In his view, *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy* is a good start. However, to ensure that the strategy comes to fruition, Canada needs to strengthen its cooperation with Australia and other regional security partners on environmental, governance and military preparedness issues across six domains (sea, land, air, space, cyber, and cognitive). Blaxland acknowledges that in the years ahead Canadians face tough choices on the acquisition of military capabilities, but suggests that they can be easier to make by working closely with traditional security partners such as Australia. He concludes with the suggestion that Canada should do what has been seen as "un-doable" for the last four decades: consider adding nuclear-propelled submarines to its naval capabilities in the decade ahead.

The reflections in this collection were written before the Trudeau government's defence policy update was finally released in April 2024. In the end, the government chose not to take the opportunity to make truly generational

changes in Canadian defence policy. While it acknowledged that global politics was at a generational inflection point, the new defence policy was inertial at best. It did not embrace a radical increase in defence spending, only a modest shift in direction. And rather than commit to the acquisition of new equipment that would reshape Canadian military capabilities, the new policy promised only that Canada would "explore options" for new acquisitions—a phrase that appears eight times. Most importantly, the policy did not shift Canada's defence posture to the Indo-Pacific region. Rather, the primary focus of the new defence policy was revealed in the title of the policy document itself.[8] *Our North, Strong and Free* promised to ensure that Canadian defence in the 2020s and 2030s focused much more on the Canadian homeland, on North America, and on the Arctic.

However, even though the Canadian government has now formally decided that the limited defence shifts announced in *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy* of November 2022 were in fact not a precursor of a more significant and robust commitment to the Indo-Pacific region, the perspectives articulated in the reflections that follow continue to have considerable policy relevance. While the decision to focus on the homeland, on continental defence, and on the Arctic make considerable policy—and electoral—sense, the tectonic plates in global politics are by no means finished moving. The centre of gravity in global politics has been shifting towards the Indo-Pacific for more than a decade, and developments in both American and Chinese politics suggest that that shift will accelerate. While *Our North, Strong and Free* tries to redirect the attention of Canadians away from the Indo-Pacific, Canada is likely to be drawn into greater involvement in the great power rivalries of that region. And the brief reflections in this collection provide a set of policy perspectives that promise to be useful for a consideration of Canadian defence policy in the years ahead.

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1

Shifting weight and toning up:

What Canada can contribute to the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific

Jeremy Paltiel

Introduction

What Canada can contribute to the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific is an acute question given Canada's laggardly commitment to NATO and its generally threadbare defence policy. There are two problems challenging Canada's contributions in the Indo-Pacific: the first is a lowball commitment to defence spending and readiness; the second is our traditional focus on the North Atlantic. The question of redeploying resources at a time of stringency in commitments is doubly acute. As a result, a significant contribution to the balance in the western Pacific is at best aspirational and possibly more of an imaginative exercise. Nonetheless, given at least rhetorical lip-service to making a Canadian difference over the increasingly "disruptive" role of China, it is worth asking given Canada's traditional strengths and occasional excellence where it might best deploy its resources should these be made available.

It is unrealistic and wholly illusory to conceive of a wholesale and abrupt change in Canada's traditional defence strategy to transpose it to the Indo-Pacific either wholly, or in a substantial manner. What *can* be done is to look at traditional strengths and existing commitments to see how those can be adapted to better serve security in the Indo-Pacific.

The Arctic connection

The first and most obvious place is to re-tweak our focus on security in the Arctic to better meet the challenge of China's Arctic ambitions, and to reinforce NORAD with an eye on the trans-Pacific. We already saw in the Chinese balloon incident in January and February 2023 a foretaste of what might be in our future. To meet the challenges of security in the North, Canada needs to be able to patrol and defend its Arctic airspace as well as keep close surveillance on what moves through it with real-time satellite surveillance, backed up with a quick-response capability. This may demand enhanced air defence capabilities. At the same time, we need to be able to safeguard sea-lanes and Arctic supply, as well as be able to move ground defence forces as needed. This domestic and continental commitment can be seen as reinforcing security in the Indo-Pacific.

Japan and South Korea

Second, Canada's traditional strength in anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and defence of sea-lanes must be redeployed and adapted to the north Pacific. The vastness of the Pacific and the distinct configuration of our Pacific littoral (with a comparatively short littoral compared to our hinterland squeezed between the lower forty-eight states of the United States and Alaska) means that there can be no easy equivalence between the North Atlantic and the North Pacific. But there is nothing to preclude Canada from developing a niche of excellence to support the United States and its allies in safeguarding sea-lanes in the Pacific Ocean, or enhancing deterrence against potential threats from North Korea. To do this, however, we must not only develop modular capabilities that we can share with regional allies through enhanced interoperability; we must also reconfigure and adapt our general strategy, our procurement policies, and our deployment and training to highlight these modular capabilities.

We cannot do everything, but we must be able to reliably do some things consistently well. These capabilities must be well thought out, and consistently delivered. Better interoperability may also yield dividends in better defence production cooperation that could yield better, cheaper, and faster procurement with higher technological value added. We should not try to build at home what can be acquired from abroad at a fraction of the cost, and we should aspire to

build centres of excellence with export potential within our defence production capacity. In short, at a time of heightened global competition, we must become much more competitive in our defence production.

We should look beyond better interoperability and joint training with Japan and the Republic of Korea. We should negotiate joint production agreements with both these countries, each of which has excess production capacity in areas of critical shortage.

Conclusion: A clear defence strategy

To do this we must find the political courage to write a defence strategy that establishes clear priorities for long-term defence procurement that is connected to critical capabilities that we are committed to maintain on a bipartisan (or multi-partisan) basis. Only a clear strategy can be the basis for better cooperation with allies over a division of labour with respect to capabilities and deployments, and which gives us a platform on which to plan joint production that enhances Canada's technological base and encourages domestic innovation.

Our threadbare military needs a plan. We have an Indo-Pacific strategy that commits us to the region, mandates closer working relations with the United States and US regional allies, and strengthens our capacity and preparedness to deal with an increasingly disruptive China. We can add to this a North Korea that is both more capable and more determined to provoke, and an increasingly close relationship between North Korea and NATO's principal challenge—Russia. Operation NEON may have to be strengthened to go beyond just enforcing sanctions; Canada needs to consider undertaking efforts at greater deterrence. As deputy commander of the United Nations mission in Korea, Canada is well-placed to enhance its security relationship with the Republic of Korea and increase our interoperability while taking advantage of Korea's advanced military industrial capacity to enhance the value of our procurement strategy. With the right strategy it may be possible to get more defence with better value for money while maintaining advanced technology and competitive defence production.

2

Rethinking Canadian defence engagement in the Indo-Pacific and beyond

Stephen R. Nagy

Introduction

In November 2022, the government of Justin Trudeau released its long-awaited Indo-Pacific strategy, promising that Canada would spend $2.3 billion over the next five years to allocimplement the strategy. That announcement came just months after the minister of national defence, Anita Anand, had promised that Canada would spend $4.9 billion on the modernization of North American air defence. At the same time, the Trudeau government was also committing funds to Canadian foreign policy objectives in Europe. In July 2023, for example, Trudeau committed $2.6 billion to renew and expand Operation REASSURANCE, part of NATO's defence and deterrence measures in Eastern Europe. It also sought to assist the government of Ukraine to defend against the full-scale Russian invasion that had begun in February 2022; by September 2023, Canada had allocated $9.5 billion in multifaceted assistance to Ukraine.[1]

At the same time that this spending was being announced, however, the Trudeau government was also announcing major spending cutbacks, including in the defence budget.[2] These contradictory positions raise inconvenient

questions as to how Canada in its defence policy will achieve the objectives outlined in the Canadian Indo-Pacific strategy while resources are being diminished through cutbacks or being deployed in Ukraine.

Questions as to what Canada should or must do in terms of defence policy to meet its objectives set out in the Indo-Pacific strategy are increasingly awkward as Indo-Pacific security challenges are becoming more acute, not less. Most recently, we have seen North Korea's provocations increase with testing of hypersonic missiles and the provision of ballistic and other forms of arms to Russia so it can continue its war on Ukraine. We have seen China engage increasingly in gray zone operations and hybrid operations in the South China Sea in the waters near the Philippines. We have seen an announcement by the Chinese government that it will increase the daily presence in and around the East China Sea, in particular the Senkaku Islands, and we have seen challenges across the Taiwan Strait in terms of Chinese rhetoric, discussing and focusing on reunification with Taipei through non-peaceful means. Critically, our allies increasingly see Canada as "unreliable," "decadent," or "detached from the realities of the Indo-Pacific." The inconvenient truth is that Canada has limited resources, and these resources are being further limited by defence cutbacks and the needs of Ukraine.

Defining the planning challenges

How can we ensure that Canada will have a defence presence in the Indo-Pacific region? What comparative advantages can we bring to the region? What are the best forms of cooperation to engage in sustained meaningful and fruitful cooperation within the region? Any defence engagement within the Indo-Pacific region must be clearly tied to Canadian national interests. What are these interests?

First, Canadian interests in the Indo-Pacific include—but are not exclusive to—open sea lines of communication (SLOCs) through the South China Sea, in and around the Taiwan Strait, the East China Sea, and of course to Canada. The importance of open SLOCs is self-evident: every year approximately USD$5 trillion in imports, exports, and energy resources move through the SLOCs in the region. A disruption in SLOCs would certainly affect the Canadian economy and security interests in the region.

Second, Canada has a deep interest in stable supply chains, particularly

those involving semiconductor supply chains. A number of Canadian industries, including automobile, defence, personal electronics, and many other technologies that Canada relies on are based on semiconductor supply chains largely connected to Taiwan. Canada is also dependent on other supply chains for lower-level electronics but also personal protective equipment.

Third, Canada has a defence interest in ensuring that weapons of mass destruction are not developed by actors such as North Korea. As Pyongyang continues to develop the delivery systems to launch a retaliatory attack against the United States, Canada and its defence policy should be clear-eyed that North Korean intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) would need to travel through Canadian space to hit targets in the United States. This makes Canada vulnerable to misguided missiles, missiles that may crash over Canada, or missiles that may be intercepted by US missile defence systems revealing a plethora of direct and indirect vulnerabilities to North Korea missile systems. Canadian defence policy towards the Indo-Pacific also cannot divorce itself from the defence vulnerabilities of Canada's friends in the region. Japan, South Korea, and the United States are all on the front lines of North Korean missile systems and an attack or accident stemming from North Korean missile launches on any of these partners of Canada would impact Canada's security and economy.

Fourth, Canada has a specific interest in preventing illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing throughout the broader region to promote a rules-based approach to governing fisheries and other resources. Unregulated and unreported illegal fishing and other activities can create food and economic insecurity and destabilize the natural equilibrium in nature that can impact the environment and vulnerable communities.

Fifth, Canada has an interest in ensuring that the conflict between India and China on the Himalayan plateau remains as distant a possibility as possible, since this could turn nuclear. Conflict would also cause a huge exodus of migrants, food, and other security issues that would not remain in the region.

Defence tools of engagement: Canada's comparative advantages

Considering these numerous challenges within the Indo-Pacific region, and Canada's limited resources, how can we engage within this region?

First, minilateral relationships should be pursued while not eschewing multilateral relationships. Through a greater emphasis on minilateral cooperation, Canada defence initiatives/ policies could engage within the region through an approach that "plugs into" existing minilateral cooperative partnerships or new partnerships that are limited in their scope and function. The existing Quadrilateral Security Dialogue may be a formula for cooperating on issues such as supply chains resilience, infrastructure and connectivity, disinformation, and monitoring the activities of weapon proliferators like North Korea through a "Quad-plus" arrangement in which Canada plugs into the Quad activities. Canada is already plugged into the Quad in joint exercises such as the Sea Dragon 2021 anti-submarine warfare exercises that took place around Guam in January 2021 (in which the Royal Canadian Air Force won the coveted Dragon Belt). But Canada could use its defence assets, its capabilities, as well as its long-term relationship with the United States, Australia, and Japan, to expand the number of opportunities it has to insert high quality and highly trained individuals into minilateral cooperation.

Other existing minilateral partnerships area that may be an opportunity for Canada defence policy to cooperate in is the AUKUS partnership between the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. AUKUS has a "second" pillar that focuses on artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing, hypersonic missile systems, cybersecurity, and other emerging technologies that will be game changers, not only in the Indo-Pacific region but globally as well. Canada already has pre-existing budgets targeted and secured for AI and quantum computing cooperation with the United States and other actors within the region. By engaging through an AUKUS-plus arrangement with other countries that are interested in engaging in pillar two like New Zealand, Canada defence institutions could contribute to the AI, quantum computing, hypersonics, cybersecurity, and disinformation aspects of AUKUS by leveraging Canada's existing comparative advantages and relationships to bring meaningful cooperation to the region. This form of cooperation also means that Canada would not be part of the nuclear submarine, nuclear powered submarine aspects of AUKUS; rather, Canada would only plug into pillar two based on the comparative advantages that defence policy and initiatives could bring.

In the area of emerging and disruptive technologies, NATO has prioritized nine areas including AI, autonomy, quantum, biotechnologies and human enhancement, hypersonic systems, space, novel materials and manufactur-

ing, energy and propulsion, and next-generation communications networks. Ukraine's innovative uses of drone technology to defend itself against Russian aggression have also been influential in how NATO views the importance of emerging and disruptive technologies and developing papers that have the ability to cooperate in these spaces. While not a member of minilateral groups such as the Quad or AUKUS, Canada could mobilize its research resources and experience in working within NATO to add material, organizational and leadership to spearheading these initiatives.

There are other emerging formulas for minilateral cooperation within the Indo-Pacific that will be important for Canada to consider how it can be a leader in terms of cooperation, or it can be an additional plug-in partner here. By way of example, developing counter-disinformation strategies is an area of concern that defence policy can contribute its skillset to the region by working with South Korea, Taiwan, the United States and Japan. There is a possibility that these countries and political entities such as Taiwan could create a defence nexus in which disinformation is identified, attributed, and defensive initiatives put into place to reduce the damage that is associated with disinformation.

Furthermore, Canada can bring naval assets to the region. Its activities under Operation NEON in the Sea of Japan, including maritime domain awareness and sanctions evasions, have been welcomed by stakeholders within the region as a meaningful and sustained initiative. Canada should continue these kinds of activities. It could also reimagine the areas of focus where it may use some of its existing resources to deal with illegal, unregulated, and undocumented fishing in the Pacific Islands, the South China Sea, or elsewhere. Through minilateral cooperation with like-minded states like Australia, Japan, and perhaps even Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines, Canada, could contribute to its defence capabilities to preventing illegal, unregulated, and undocumented fishing from expanding.

Search and rescue, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief are also other areas that Canada is well-positioned to work with partners in the region to provide public goods as Canada thinks about its defence policy engagement in the Indo-Pacific. Establishing a reciprocal access agreement or similar agreement with Japan may enable Canada to station defence resources in the region so they can respond more quickly, effectively, and synergistically with like-minded countries in the region.

Conclusion: Geography, tools, and partners

In short, Canada and its defence policies and institutions need to think about the geographic limits of its engagement, the tools of engagement, and partners of engagement. The geographic range of engagement should be limited: Canada should avoid using its limited resources in the western or even the eastern parts of the Indian Ocean. Our European and Indian partners are geographically better positioned to deal with issues of shared concern in that geographic area. Canada's interests are by and large located in the South China Sea and in the East Asian part of the Indo-Pacific. This means Canadian defence planners should locate its resources in the areas where Canada's interests are most represented.

Second, the tools of this defence engagement should primarily be naval diplomacy, joint exercises, and minilateral engagement, as well as introducing new formulas of cooperation such as the disinformation minilateral cooperation with Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, the United States, and Canada.

Third, the specific activities that Canada should be involved in should revolve around Canada's need to prioritize where it can inject resources in a sustained and meaningful way. Its experience in dealing with disinformation is a good example of where Canada can use its defence resources efficiently in a way that adds value to the region. Its strong relationship with South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan being that it can leverage those relationships to build a critical mass of countries and political entities that are dealing with the sensitive issue of disinformation.

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3

Isn't that AUKUSward:

Security options for Canada in a Three-Eyes world

Stephanie Carvin and Thomas Juneau

Introduction

The arrangement between the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, popularly known as AUKUS, and which focused on helping Australia acquire nuclear submarines, took the world by surprise in September 2021. France, which lost its contract to sell submarines to Australia with the announcement of the new pact, was very vocal in expressing its anger. The European Union, which at that time was preparing to release an Indo-Pacific strategy, agreed that France was owed an apology and expressed "regret" that the arrangement was announced without consultations.[1]

The announcement also took Canada by surprise, with officials in Ottawa left scrambling for a response to the news that three of its Five-Eyes intelligence-sharing partners had seemingly moved on without it. Based on interviews that we conducted in 2022–23[2] and media reporting, officials within the Department of National Defence expressed concerns that Canada's absence from new arrangements between its traditional partners puts it at risk of being left behind as their militaries develop new capabilities.[3] This view was repeated in much public commentary.

In previous research, we have argued that while Canada should be concerned about its exclusion from new international security arrangements, many

of the fears initially expressed about AUKUS were mistaken or exaggerated.[4] AUKUS should be understood as a defence information and technology sharing agreement, not a replacement for the Five Eyes. Moreover, Canada's absence from AUKUS as originally conceived (AUKUS 1.0, as referred to by one of our interviewees, and now increasingly referred to in public as the first pillar) is not a problem: while Canada may need to renew its aging submarines, it is unlikely to acquire nuclear submarines in the foreseeable future.

However, as the pact evolves and matures into what we call AUKUS 2.0 (or the second pillar) and broadens its remit to cooperation on emerging and disruptive defence technologies, Canada's absence from AUKUS' working groups risks imposing serious costs. This would be consistent with a worrying trend for Canadian foreign, defence, and security policy. While the alliances of the last thirty years have often featured "coalitions of the willing" premised on shared values, for the foreseeable future multilateral cooperation will be more dependent on the ability to contribute materially. While Canada has much to offer, its poor record of investing in defence, diplomacy, and security—together with its general risk-averse decision-making—have hampered its ability to position itself as an appealing contributor to such ad hoc arrangements, both in general and with regards to information-sharing on emerging technology. In this sense, AUKUS represents an important opportunity to overcome some of the traditional obstacles that have impeded Canada's decision-making and to renew engagement with its allies and partners, especially within the Five Eyes.

Current situation

While AUKUS 1.0 centred on nuclear submarines, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom have been building on the initial arrangement to expand it into other enhanced cooperation on emerging and disruptive technologies—what we refer to as AUKUS 2.0. This includes "opportunities for promoting deeper information and technology sharing, integrating security and defence-related science and technology, and building industrial bases and supply chains."[5] In April 2022, this was confirmed by the administration of Joe Biden, when it noted that there are two lines to the AUKUS partnership: submarines and "joint advanced military capabilities to promote security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region."[6] Areas of cooperation include undersea capabilities, quantum technologies, artificial intelligence and autonomy, ad-

vanced cyber, hypersonic and counter-hypersonic capabilities, electronic warfare, innovation and information sharing. Importantly, one of our interviewees noted that "information sharing" in this context did not necessarily refer to intelligence, but more broadly to classified information related to the design, capabilities, and manufacturing of emerging technologies and means to counter their use by adversaries. Further, AUKUS members hope that this second pillar will lead to cost savings through greater burden-sharing. They also hope that they will be able to set technological standards when it comes to the development of future technologies, leading to a competitive advantage.[7]

Canada is unlikely to purchase nuclear submarines for the foreseeable future. For that reason, its absence from AUKUS 1.0 does not represent a problem; the initial handwringing was misplaced. However, as the arrangement appears to be moving rapidly towards other areas of cooperation in AUKUS 2.0, Canadian officials have been taking note.[8]

The challenge for Canada does not stem from its absence from AUKUS 1.0, but from the broader risks that a new era of more flexible, ad hoc multilateralism will leave it behind. If Canada is excluded from the second pillar of AUKUS, it will not be a part of essential conversations regarding the development of some of the military technologies that will dominate the twenty-first century, and on the standards upon which they are designed and operated. Moreover, such an exclusion would challenge future Canadian interoperability with its closest and ever-more advanced allies and partners. This risk has been noted by Canadian officials who warned in a briefing note to ministers that "Canada must not risk being further excluded from collaborative opportunities that can enable enhanced national security and military capability through shared development of emerging technologies."[9] These concerns were systematically echoed in our interviews as well. It is therefore unsurprising that Canada seeks to join AUKUS 2.0. This has been confirmed in unofficial statements,[10] as well as in a briefing document for the prime minister.[11]

However, there is no guarantee that an invitation to join AUKUS 2.0 will be automatic. While the alliances of the twentieth century were largely based on "coalitions of the willing" and (nominally) shared values, the dominant multilateral arrangements of the twenty-first century are more likely to be based on material contributions. This means that Canada should not expect to be invited to the table simply because it is a friend; it will be invited when its allies believe that it will make a substantial and valuable contribution to the specific problems and missions at hand.

Our interviews suggest that, in theory, an invitation to join AUKUS could be forthcoming, in the sense that the United States and the two others are not rigidly opposed, as a matter of principle, to participation by Canada—or others, such as Japan, South Korea, or perhaps some European countries. But the key caveat here is that such an invitation would be conditional on Canada "bringing something to the table"—a prospect on which our interviewees, including some Canadians, expressed skepticism, depending on the specific issue.

The United States has sent mixed signals as to whether Canada could be invited. In June 2023, U.S. National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby stated that there were no plans to invite Canada to join AUKUS.[12] However, in December 2023, the American ambassador to Canada, David Cohen, indicated that it would be erroneous to conclude that Canada had been excluded and that Canada could eventually be invited to join the second pillar.[13]

It is important to remember that there are difficult challenges that need to be overcome. Five Eyes partners have been sharing intelligence for decades, but information-sharing regarding highly classified military technologies has not emerged to the same extent. Developing processes around the transfer of this information will have to be developed, requiring the development and strengthening of legal and logistical processes.[14] To do so, AUKUS countries can build on existing practices such as defence trade cooperation treaties (DCTCs) that date back to the George W. Bush administration, but we should not assume that the transfer of military technologies will be easy or automatic—and even less so if AUKUS 2.0 is enlarged.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Canada should pursue membership of the second pillar of AUKUS, even if it is still not clear what membership means precisely. Does it entail acceptance into one specific working group, or all of them? And what does membership concretely involve, beyond attending working group meetings? And how would it actually come about; what is the process for applying? Simply put, absence from AUKUS 1.0 does not matter for Canada, but exclusion from AUKUS 2.0 would: it would hurt Canada's ability to share information and work with its closest allies and partners on one of the most crucial sources of power in the twenty-first century.

More specifically, Canada should carefully assess, among the emerging

AUKUS 2.0 working groups, those to which it has the most to contribute. There is much to criticize in Canada's underinvestment in defence, security, and intelligence capabilities over the decades; it is nevertheless the case that Canada has several niche capabilities that are well regarded by its closest allies and partners. Our interviewees suggested that among the potential niche contributions that Canada could bring to the AUKUS 2.0 table are the Communications Security Establishment, the national cryptologic agency, which is widely viewed as among the best in the world; its knowledge of the Arctic, on which close allies have little or no visibility; as well as specific assets (such as some elements of its geospatial intelligence capabilities). This assessment should form the core of Canada's strategy to identify its potential contribution to AUKUS 2.0.

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4

Staying committed for the long term:

Ensuring Canada's naval presence in the Indo-Pacific region

Adam P. MacDonald

Introduction: A generational Canadian response?

If the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau is truly committed to *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy* (IPS) as the beginning of, and mechanism for ensuring, an inflection point in the entirety of Canada's foreign policy, this will require a comprehensive transformation in the country's geostrategic orientation, international relationships, and national identity towards the Indo-Pacific region.[1] This is a very ambitious proposition, marking the most revolutionary transformation in Canada's strategic culture and international practice since the change in approach towards the United States from being seen as a possible existential threat to a deep and trusted security, economic, and ideological partner throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A multi-decade undertaking of laser-like focus, clear-eyed commitment, and continuous development and employment of all aspects of national power will be required for this transformation to succeed. And there are many good reasons to be skeptical that the momentum, focus, and effort required will last to achieve this.[2]

If Canada is serious about pursuing this project, the focus for the next decade should be on one central element: *presence*. It is the foundation upon which greater capability, knowledge, relations, and influence is and will be built. Canada has experienced setbacks and challenges with respect to the

IPS—diplomatically, strategically, and materially—as the country learns to position and navigate its way within an ever-changing region and international environment. It will continue to do so. Perseverance will be needed in the face of such difficulties, along with the ability to make difficult trade-offs and ensuring all instruments of national power are dedicated to setting up, maintaining, and augmenting a regional presence. The fundamental objective of the IPS is the establishment of a long term, multi-domain presence in the region.

The Indo-Pacific region is at its core a maritime region and strategic system. As a result, from a defence perspective the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) will be the lead service in Canada's effort to have a regular military presence in the region. While the other military services do and will continue to play a role, the RCN will be the primary face of Canada's regional military engagements and presence. The Indo-Pacific region is becoming the top-tier overseas operational theatre for the RCN, which has tasked its frigate fleet, its most combat-capable assets, to fulfill this mission while other elements of the service take the lead on naval operations elsewhere. The ability of the Navy to achieve this mission, however, is not guaranteed. The RCN, like the rest of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), is currently in a very challenged and constrained situation which will continue to be the case throughout the next two decades—a crucial period for the future of the service, the IPS, and the political, security, and economic ordering of the Indo-Pacific region. In particular, the RCN faces three major and interconnected structural issues.

First, the RCN is in the midst of a major asset recapitalization phase as it transitions to the "next navy," with sizable investments in building new surface combatants and supply ships to reconstitute Canada's Naval Task Group (NTG) capability as the primary, combat-capable naval force structure for deployed operations. This transformation will ensure the RCN, in conjunction with allies and like-minded partners, can better operate in the Indo-Pacific region where many of the issues of control and influence are in the maritime realm and in which new technologies and strategies are making it a far more complicated space to project and sustain sea power, especially in the event that hostilities break out. However, these assets will not start entering service until the late 2020s/early 2030s and will not be fully operational as a fleet to be used as NTGs until the late 2030s. This means the frigates will need to stay in service a full ten years past their original life span, most likely not being fully removed from service until 2040. Maintaining these ships will be a huge

challenge and most likely will require cannibalizing parts of the frigate fleet to service an ever-shrinking number of available platforms. As well, other major aspects of the RCN fleet are approaching the end of their service lives with no replacements, most importantly submarines and coastal patrol ships.

The second issue is recruitment and retention. The RCN is in a critical state, short almost 20 per cent of its required personnel.[3] This will mean less experienced personnel on vessels and risk of burn-out for mid-level sailors and officers serving on continuous deployments. Losing these service members not only shrinks the overall size of the force but atrophies the organization's institutional memory in terms of technical and leadership skills, the selection pool of future leaders, and experience and knowledge of operating in the Indo-Pacific region. This is a vicious cycle and will take years to rectify, requiring an entire rethink in the organizational culture to recruit and retain talent.

The final issue is the fact the RCN has many priorities and commitments beyond the Indo-Pacific region: domestic operations, commitments to NATO in the North Atlantic/European theatre, counter-narcotics and other engagements in the Caribbean, and the Arctic. The *Harry DeWolf*-class Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship (AOPS) fleet, a brand-new capability recently acquired by the RCN, is a clear signal that Canada intends to be more active in the maritime areas of the Arctic, especially the North American sub-region and possibly into the Central Arctic Ocean as it becomes more accessible. The Arctic should be a priority for the RCN given that it is an emerging third coastline for Canada and is the only region from a defence perspective which incorporates domestic, continental, and global spaces. How (and whether) the RCN will continue conducting these long-standing missions alongside its growing commitments in the Indo-Pacific region, let alone considering other ad hoc challenges (such as the ongoing Houthi threat to commercial traffic in the Red Sea), is a pressing question.

Recommendations

So how can the RCN, the CAF, and the government manage these issues over the next decade to ensure they do not derail the naval mission focus on the Indo-Pacific region? The five recommendations outlined below do include technical and policy aspects, but they are more so conceptual in nature and seen as imperative in ensuring a viable naval strategy for the Indo-Pacific region is maintained.

Keep it simple

While strengthening inter-operability, exercising war fighting skills, and conducting operations (such as sanction monitoring and joint patrols) with allies and regional partners are important, the primary and "no fail" mission for the RCN in the Indo-Pacific region is maintaining a presence.[4] The RCN must keep its presence in the region regardless of other factors except in extreme scenarios (such as a significant maritime threat close to Canada). Presence requires sustainability. Given its small size and the aging of many of its vessels, the RCN must be prepared to deploy any assets to the region, including AOPS, the *Kingston*-class Maritime Coastal Defence Vessels (MCDVs), and ideally submarines to maintain its presence. The RCN should avoid the temptation to think they have functionally differentiated assets or fleets responsible for different regions and missions sets. This is particularly true for the Arctic. The AOPS cannot be seen as the Arctic appendage of the RCN which is solely responsible for operations in that region while the rest of the fleet focuses elsewhere.[5] Having all assets available to deploy will also ensure a surge capacity if needed and covering off duties when specific classes of vessels are busy or unavailable. A focus on modularization—the ability to quickly fit specific capabilities on/off vessels, usually in containers—can help augment the suitability of these assets for operations in the Indo-Pacific region, but it must be kept in mind that naval assets are not endlessly reconfigurable in this regard. While evidently moving beyond a periodic, ad-hoc regional presence, clarity is needed from the political level about what type of presence the RCN is expected to sustain instead. There are two types: persistent (regular but not all the time) versus permanent (all the time), with each requiring different considerations. A permanent presence may justify having assets stationed in the region, either part of an allied task force or via a bilateral access agreement with a host country, whereas a persistent presence can most likely be done through the continued deployment of assets stationed and serviced in Canada.

Think about contingencies

While contingency planning is not usually included in official defence policies (and rightly so, given the impossibility of preparing for all possible futures and the need to avoid making commitments to hypotheticals), there are several

increasingly important issues military and political leaders should be working through and preparing for on a regular and ongoing basis.

The first is how Canada would respond to a military crisis or confrontation in the Indo-Pacific. How will Canada signal what it is willing to do and not do in terms of dispatching military assets during such events, to the Canadian public, allies, regional partners, and competitors and adversaries? What are the factors which will influence putting Canadian naval assets in harm's way?

A second contingency is the possibility of being asked by the United States to participate in a designated Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP), most likely against Chinese maritime claims. While Canada has been clear it does not conduct FONOPs—due to concerns about legitimating a tool which could be used against them in the Arctic, specifically with respect to the status of the Northwest Passage—more policy clarity is needed regarding how, where, and why Canadian naval and air assets will exercise freedom of navigation in the region, by themselves and/or in conjunction with others.[6]

A third contingency is the necessity of trade-offs. Saying no to other military missions elsewhere will be an important signal that the Indo-Pacific region is the top overseas priority for the RCN regardless of other (non-existential) issues and crises. Such a commitment will require high-level political consensus across governments for decades in making such calls and absorbing the backlash domestically, from allies/partners, and from within the public service and military.

Finally, thinking about war scenarios is needed, not just at the front end in terms of initial moves and responses, but more importantly looking at the back end in terms of psychologically and materially preparing for asset and crew losses. The government needs to build contingency plans, in conjunction with industry, business, and allies, about shifting towards an accelerated model of recapitalizing naval (and other) assets and re-generating sailors and crews if needed quickly. Naval assets (and crews) are expensive and exist in small numbers, thus producing immense concern about even one of them being damaged (by enemy attack or accident) and put out of commission.

Choose partnerships over minilaterals

Canada should pursue a multi-tiered engagement approach via the RCN across a wide variety of issues, activities, and groups, but the focus should be

on bilateral partnerships. The lesson from Canada's non-invitation for joining AUKUS is that states must upfront put sizable money, commitment, and political risk to enter such security pacts in the region.[7] However, rather than try to join existing minilaterals, or advocate for establishing new ones, Canada should focus on building one to two strategic partnerships with key Indo-Pacific states to maximize our ability to invest sufficient resources towards establishing meaningful security relationships in the region. As prioritized in the IPS, Canada should focus these efforts in Northeast Asia—which is considered in the current Canadian strategic geography framing as constituting part of the "North Pacific" where Canada sees itself as a resident state—with South Korea and Japan the obvious candidates. These states are part of the Western bloc and important partners not just in the region but globally. They also possess major maritime defence industries, with South Korea a growing leading defence exporter and Japan moving to loosening arms export control rules. Canada should seek to establish deep and multi-faceted defence research relationships with one or both states. In particular, the focus should be on naval/maritime technologies and capabilities such as submarines, uncrewed vessels, and underwater sensors and detectors. Canada should take advantage of the advancements these states have made in these areas, such as their expertise in building large submarines with air-independent propulsion systems, in acquiring or working to modify such assets which would be an important instrument of national power in the Indo-Pacific and other regions of interest, most importantly the Arctic. The United States still plays a major role in defence cooperation and coordination in the region, but such partnerships will contribute to the growing web of defence relations among Western and Indo-Pacific states which are not entirely reliant on Washington.

Embrace a grand plan for a three-ocean navy

The RCN, and Canadian maritime power in general, must grow over time. While the current naval recapitalization project is focused on updating old capabilities and assets with new, modern ones, it is not necessarily expanding its overall capacity in terms of size. A serious, long-term, and politically backed multi-decade plan to grow the force, not just modernize it, is desperately needed to truly bring about a three-ocean navy: a force with the appropriate number and types of vessels to patrol and conduct operations in and through Canada's

three adjacent ocean maritime spaces. Such a plan would also assist in reconstituting the sea power of the West, which has atrophied significantly over the past three decades. This would require the prioritization of, and a radical transformation in the relationship between, the RCN over the other services, which will not be an easy task. Furthermore, getting the political class and public onboard for such a project faces major obstacles. Most importantly, it will have to grapple with the lack of maritime consciousness in the country's identity and understanding of international affairs to justify the costs and resources. One way of trying to elevate the importance of the maritime realm, and the necessity of having sufficient sea power, is emphasizing that this is an increasingly important area for the future of humanity in a variety of ways—legal, economic, social, environmental-climate, and security wise—and that in many places it is a contested domain and a more likely and primary site of confrontation and conflict than in the Cold War and post–Cold War eras.

Be realistic

We need to be realistic about Canada's impact and influence in the Indo-Pacific, especially from a defence and security perspective. After all, Canada has a limited military power base; it continues to have a strong strategic orientation towards the North Atlantic, and long lead times are needed to build its relations with, and understanding of, the region to move the Indo-Pacific up the priority chain in foreign and defence policy. Furthermore, at a grand strategic level, Canada is increasingly moving more intensely into alignment with the West (even amidst concerns about the uncertain future of the United States domestically and its disposition towards allies and the world in general) across several domains—defence, diplomacy, trade, investment, research, and technology—against competitor and adversarial states in this new era of strategic rivalry. The most important of these states is China. For unlike other states, China is seen as a peer competitor capable of not just undermining various aspects of the existing order, and the powerful position of the West within it, but introducing an alternative system with itself in the centre. The tightening of this alignment, usually justified as in the defence of the rules-based international order, will increasingly influence Canada's approach to the Indo-Pacific region. It will bring about greater collaboration opportunities with some regional actors but also limit the ability to progress other relationships, especially with states

which are not part of the West, do not share the same concerns about China, and disagree about the ways to manage changing power configurations in the region and beyond, including towards existing global governance forms and practices.

Finally, one of the major risks facing Canada and the RCN is the impulse to rush to do more, especially over the next decade which will be a very crucial period in determining the geopolitical nature of the Indo-Pacific and its relationship to the larger international environment. Canadians, however, cannot exhaust themselves trying to rush their efforts to become a more meaningful actor in the region overnight. But Canadians cannot just rest on their laurels and believe such a drastic strategic orientation will come about inevitably or automatically. To set Canada up for success in this endeavour, the government in Ottawa must build up sustainably over this time and particularly from a defence perspective focus on maintaining a commitment to regional presence, with the RCN leading the way.

Endnotes

1. As the IPS notes, "The rising influence of the Indo-Pacific region is a once-in-a-generation global shift that requires a generational Canadian response." See Government of Canada, *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy* (Ottawa, 2022), 4.
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5. Adam P. MacDonald, "A Royal Canadian Navy that is a blue water navy and Arctic-capable: How to be/come both?" presentation at the North American and Arctic Security and Defence Network Emerging Leaders Network Summer 2023 conference, July 28 2023, https://youtu.be/Tpv-vRPbDmI.
6. Canadian air and naval assets are already regularly exercising freedom of navigation throughout the Indo-Pacific region, but have never conducted a FONOP.

Ottawa should emphasize the benefits to Washington of conducting a spectrum of various naval and air activities—including exercises and transits—which exercise FON and sends the signal of a united position of opposition to in the maritime realm by various states but enables contributing countries to not have to do a one-size-fits-all type of operation such as FONOPs.

7. Stephanie Carvin and Thomas Juneau, "Why AUKUS and not CAUKUS? It's a potluck, not a party," *International Journal* 78, no. 3 (2023): 359–74, https://doi.org/10.1177/00207020231195109.

5

Weak, insecure, and unengaged:
The Canadian Armed Forces in the Indo-Pacific

James A. Boutilier

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are in a mess. It grieves me to say that. I served the Canadian Department of National Defence (DND) for almost fifty years—faithfully and conscientiously, I believe—but my loyalty to the institution and the individuals with whom I worked should not blind me to the parlous state of Canada's military. What follows is an examination of the reasons why, in my estimation, those forces are so weak and ill-prepared, and what we can expect, militarily, if the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) are called upon in the event of hostilities in the Indo-Pacific region.

There has been a firestorm of criticism lately by journalists, retired military personnel, and former politicians about the lamentable state of the CAF and Canada's marginalization as a force in international politics. In addition, senior officers, like the Commander of the RCN, Vice-Admiral Angus Topshee, have been refreshingly forthright in their critiques of the CAF's shortcomings. Sadly, they are voices in the wilderness. The problems afflicting the CAF are long-standing in nature and anchored in culture, geography, and politics. Canada is a country that is militarily indigestible. It is flanked by broad oceans, and it lies next to the most powerful military power in the world; a power with which Canada enjoys benign and fairly predictable relations. These realities gave rise, long ago, to the famous observation that Canadians live in a fireproof house. While Canadians fought with valour in the First and Second

World Wars, decades of peace—admittedly a relative term—have generated a complacent and self-indulgent naïveté that has fueled a free-loading mentality. While this may be an understandable state of affairs, it is a tragic blot on our national character. In a word, freeloading is, and should be, beneath us. I cringe to think that it has become our default position.

Over the last half-century, successive Canadian governments have failed to take defence seriously. Unlike Australians, Canadians have rendered defence subject to the vagaries of parochial, small-minded politics. The result is stop-start decision-making, dithering, incompetence, and colossal cost overruns. Governments have bureaucratized defence acquisition decision-making in such a way that—at its simplest—everyone is involved, and no one is responsible! There have been unconscionable delays in deliveries. For example, the replacement for the Sea King helicopter, the CH-148 Cyclone, began to be delivered in June 2015, just before Justin Trudeau became prime minister—fully thirty-seven years after the replacement program for the Sea Kings had been approved by the government of his father Pierre in 1978. Compounding the nation's woes is a proclivity for buying things on the cheap, pervasive Canadianization, and a fatal inability to prioritize defence capability over local, politically advantageous, industrial offsets. Accordingly, the four submarines making up the RCN's *Victoria*-class were purchased from the United Kingdom for under $500 million, but they had been lying alongside for almost a decade in UK waters by the time they were acquired, and spare parts were not included. The upshot has been a multi-billion-dollar nightmare. One of the boats did make an historic, months-long, deployment to Asia but, for the most part, the submarines have barely been at sea. They have been sidelined, often for years at a time, by electrical systems failures, dents, sub-standard welds, leaks, and groundings. What has been lacking, time and again, is political leadership, vision, and a real sense of urgency.

But there's more. The defence budget is large, and because there is a discretionary element to defence spending, governments cannot resist the temptation to treat defence budgets as emergency funds. Thus, just as DND was struggling to realize a number of major programs, the current government has begun to cannibalize the defence budget.

And then there is the Arctic—a grand excuse for inaction on the defence file. The Canadian Arctic is vast and very, very thinly populated. There is a seductive, mythological character about the Arctic. Every Canadian seems

committed to the integrity of the Arctic, but hardly any of them have ever been there. The Conservative government of Stephen Harper was fixated on the Arctic and ordered the construction of the *Harry DeWolf*-class Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS). Prime Minister Harper also authorized the establishment of an austere naval refuelling station at Nanisivik on northwest Baffin Island. That was in 2007. Seventeen years later, Nanisivik remains incomplete. But the Arctic hasn't gone away. Whenever there are concerns about defence policy in Canada, people ask what the government is going to do about the Arctic. A case can be made that the security environment is deteriorating (quite apart from the effects of climate change on isolated Arctic communities) and that Canada has commitments under the North American Aerospace Defense command (NORAD), but all too frequently, it appears to be words, words, words, and not actions.

Indeed, federal governments have become remarkably adept at recycling defence acquisition announcements, and even more adept at rendering excuses for their failure to deliver on them. That is not meant to be a cheap shot. There is, in fact, a deeply disturbing element of self-congratulation in the political culture in Ottawa. It is entirely understandable that governments want to put a good face on their performance, but often, it seems, the self-congratulation suggests that its purveyors don't really realize how threadbare their performance actually is. The claim that "Canada is back" is somehow meant to mask the fact that Canada is not really back at all. Part of the problem is that Canada is seen as an untrustworthy partner. That seems like a harsh thing to say, but member states of NATO will point to Canada's pledge in 2014 to spend 2 percent of the nation's GDP on defence, while admitting thereafter that it did not have the slightest intention of doing so. Stark statistical comparisons are often misleading, but it's enlightening to see that Singapore, with nearly the same population as Metropolitan Toronto, spends about 3 percent of its GDP on defence or, in other words, about 40 percent of Canada's defence budget.

There are four critical factors that need to be borne in mind. First, American military power has declined markedly over the past three decades relative to other major powers. The United States Navy, for example, has shrunk from approximately 575 ships in 1987 to 293 today. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) of the People's Republic of China, by way of comparison, (again, in numerical terms) has risen to about 350 ships (not to mention that China has the world's largest coast guard, which is available for military

purposes). Thus, Canada's seaborne protector is stretched to the breaking point fulfilling its maritime responsibilities. The same could be said for the other American armed services. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the United States is increasingly interested in military burden sharing. Freeloading is viewed with thinly disguised disgust in Washington.

Second, the world is an increasingly complex, challenging, and dangerous place. Every generation thinks this way, but what we are witnessing is a world war by proxy in eastern Europe; NATO and others versus Russia, supported by an odious array of nations like China, Iran, and North Korea. We cannot afford the luxury of growing bored with the war in Ukraine. We need to remember that Ukrainians are fighting and dying every day so that we can carry on our lives as if nothing is happening. Russian revanchism is only part of the problem. China, which was a marginal actor for much of the twentieth century, is now an assertive, arrogant, and ambitious great power. Together, Russia and China are constantly seeking ways to undermine the international rules-based order. North Korea has joined the ranks of the nuclear powers and Iran is seeking to do so. Global stressors—drought, demographic pressures, water scarcity, uncontrolled migration, and food scarcity (all, or in part, climate related)—are steadily reducing global options.

Third, the war in Ukraine has brought home an easily forgotten and hard-won truth: if you want peace, prepare for war. Furthermore, the conflict has highlighted two powerful realities, namely the technology of war is being democratized and contemporary warfare is logistically voracious. Does Canada have the stockpiles to sustain prolonged warfare? We dug deep and found eight tanks and four 155 mm guns for Kyiv. Then what?

And finally, armed forces are meant to protect the nation by threatening or delivering lethal violence to the enemy. If this is distasteful to you, you're in the wrong business. Ask the war weary Ukrainian soldiers if this is not the case. The CAF is not a petri dish for social experiments; nor is it a national guard in the making. The very fact that commentators can speak in those terms is a measure of the price that the CAF has paid for decades of near criminal ineptitude.

In November 2022, the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau unveiled *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy* (IPS). At the time, I wrote that the strategy was ambitious, aspirational—and forty years late. It is a profoundly domestic document that reflects Liberal Party concerns in Canada—female empowerment and Indigenous entrepreneurship. However, it does seek to address a

long-standing national deficit: Canada's perceived absence from the Indo-Pacific arena. The prescriptions outlined make sense but, as with so many other federal initiatives, the real question relates to timely and effective delivery. Will this government—and those that succeed it—follow through? One of the prescriptions calls for the RCN to deploy three frigates to the region every year. Warships, and submarines in particular, are the coin of the realm in this quintessentially maritime arena, and naval diplomacy goes a long way to telegraph a nation's commitment. But—and this is a big "but"—Canada's *Halifax*-class frigates are well beyond their shelf life. Replacement warships are "in the works," but I imagine that it will be another decade before the first of them is operational. And that's only the first one. Navies normally need at least three ships to have one at sea while the others recover or prepare for deployment. If you have fifteen ships, divided between two coasts, you would normally have only two ships available for deployment on each coast. With every passing year it becomes more difficult and more expensive to keep old ships seaworthy. Will we get the new ships in time?

Another nagging question relates to the paucity of personnel. While the federal civil service has ballooned over the past eight years, the CAF have not only been incapable of recruiting sufficient personnel but have not managed to retain them. As a consequence, the RCN is probably 1,500 personnel short, a condition that the Commander of the RCN has called "a critical state." It takes years to train technicians to work on, or operate, sophisticated equipment, and if a warship is missing a few sailors, it may not be able to go to sea. A shortage of naval personnel is a global problem, whether you are in the Royal Navy, the United States Navy, or the Republic of Singapore Navy. It reflects new global demographic realities and shifts in culture. Furthermore, if a navy lacks the requisite personnel, it is not in a position to expedite the construction of new vessels. This problem is shared by the RCAF, which has fewer pilots than fighter aircraft and is faced with the problem of dipping into that inadequate pool to siphon off candidates for pilot training on the new F-35 fighters, which are themselves another long-delayed acquisition—replacements for the CF-18 Hornets, most of which are at least forty years old and dangerously near the end of their operational lives.

Submarines remain a major question mark. While the RCN desperately needs new boats, there are no yards in Canada capable of making them. South Korean or Japanese submarines might be possible candidates. Experience sug-

gests that the maintenance of foreign-built submarines in Canadian yards is likely to generate enough employment over thirty years to meet the customary industrial benefits expectations. What offshore construction would require, however, is something in remarkably short supply in Ottawa—political daring.

Even if the RCN had new warships and submarines, there would still be a host of daunting challenges to be addressed when it came to contributing to multilateral military operations in the Indo-Pacific. We were not asked to join the AUKUS defence arrangement, which brought together Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom to collaborate on the production of nuclear attack submarines for the Royal Australian Navy. Nor is Canada a member of the Quad which links the Australian, American, Indian, and Japanese navies. Nor are we a member of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM+). In each case, Canada was perceived to be "punching below its weight"! The IPS may begin to address this reputational shortfall—slowly. Unfortunately, Ottawa has misled itself grievously over the years in thinking that what mattered was soft power. Soft power values are important but it's hard power—of which we have had pitifully little—that carries the day in the councils of war. Even if we develop significantly closer relations with key Asian states we will be faced with vexing problems of logistics—food, fuel, personnel, basing, military accords, replenishment, and so forth. Do we have the stocks of missiles or ammunition to sustain combat at a huge distance from our home bases? "Six packs" of fighters, our much-favoured deployment option, may turn out in practice to be such a trifle that they are hardly worth considering!

Sadly, I agree with my colleague Dr. Christopher Ankersen, who has expressed his concern that the CAF may have deteriorated so far that only a program reminiscent of wartime mobilization would be capable of reanimating it.[1] It seems that what we need is a Lord Beaverbrook or a C. D. Howe—a powerful acquisitions czar—to drive through long overdue programs and rebuild the CAF. Only then will we be able to put our shoulder to the wheel in a meaningful way in the Indo-Pacific world. Failing that, we will remain weak, insecure, and unengaged in Asia.

Endnote

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6

Canada's military personnel crisis, the Indo-Pacific strategy, and the Defence Policy Update: A reflection

Charlotte Duval-Lantoine

Introduction

2022 was a pivotal year for the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). In February, Russia's invasion of Ukraine partially diverted political attention away from the military's sexual misconduct crisis towards a renewed focus on capabilities, capital expenditures, and posturing. It was no surprise then that in Budget 2022, the government of Justin Trudeau set aside money for a modest increase in defence spending and promised a swift review of the 2017 defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged.* In June, the minister of national defence, Anita Anand, made a substantial announcement concerning NORAD modernization, a critical aspect of Canadian defence that had remained unaddressed in the defence policy.[1] And finally, in November, the government of Canada published its long-awaited Indo-Pacific strategy, in which it committed to greater military presence and the deployment of an additional Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) frigate in the region.

These strategic developments include themselves in a dark personnel context for the Canadian military. In February 2021, a major crisis revolving around allegations against the general/flag officer cadre of the military,

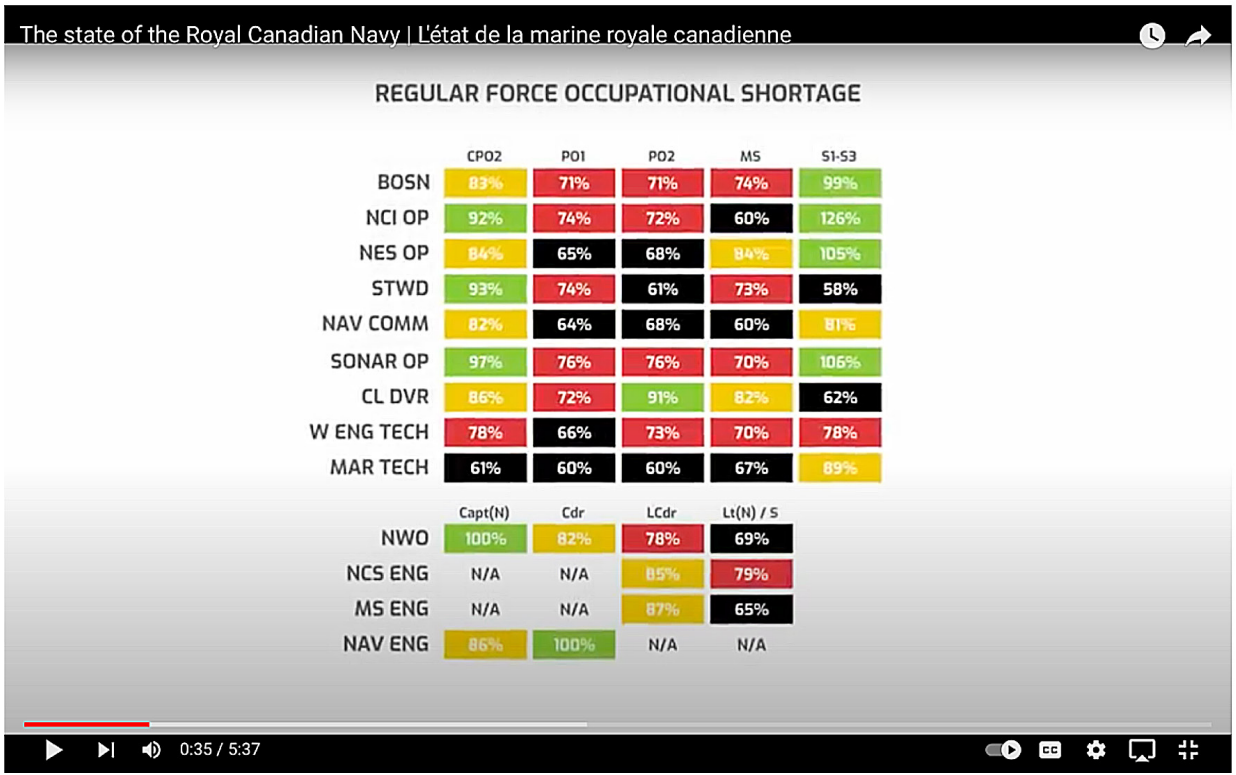
leading to the fall from grace of a recently retired Chief of the Defence Staff, the suspension and then dismissal of his newly appointed successor, as well as criminal procedures against several senior leaders. In May 2022, former Supreme Court Justice Madame Louise Arbour released her report on sexual misconduct in the CAF, offering a new roadmap to tackle engrained military violence after the "culmination" of a defunct Operation Honour.[2] In parallel, the Covid-19 pandemic and the substantial reduction of recruiting for public health reasons turned the systemic issues identified in a 2016 report of the Office of the Auditor General into an "existential crisis" for the military.[3]To cope with and solve this crisis, the CAF and the Department of National Defence (DND) published a Reconstitution Directive in October 2022 and subsequently a Retention Strategy. The Reconstitution Directive seemed to try and refocus personnel time towards essential tasks and foregoing more ceremonial and "morale" activities; e.g., parades while listing a wide-ranging list of action items for various agencies within DND/CAF to reform the recruitment system and modernize the personnel management apparatus.

While the implementation of the directive and the strategy is underway, the situation remains dire. In their 2022-23 Departmental Results, DND/CAF assessed that 70 per cent of its occupations are in "critical shortfall," and as of July 31, 2023, the Regular Force's trained effective strength—i.e., the number of troops that have gone through training and are available for duty—is a just under 18,000 short of the goal of 101,500 troops outlined in *Strong, Secure, Engaged*.[4] The 2021-22 Departmental Results estimated that it would take a decade to overcome the personnel challenge.

The Royal Canadian Navy is not immune to these issues. In a remarkably honest YouTube video posted in late November 2023, the Commander of the Navy, Vice-Admiral Angus Topshee, noted that a large number of navy occupations have significant shortages, and that the attrition of technicians has reached critical levels. Making the picture even more complex, the core of the bleeding occurs at the mid-levels ranks and roles (master seaman and administrator and supervisors). According to VAdm Topshee, the situation "could mean that [the RCN] fail[s] to meet [its] force posture and readiness commitments in 2024 and beyond." His video included the chart in Figure 1.[5]

Personnel is not the only issue at hand for the RCN. Today there are 37 ships in Canada's navy: 12 *Halifax*-class patrol frigates, three *Harry DeWolf*-class Arctic and Offshore Patrol vessels (with three more awaiting delivery), 12

Figure 1


The state of the Royal Canadian Navy | L'état de la marine royale canadienne
REGULAR FORCE OCCUPATIONAL SHORTAGE
CPO2 PO1 PO2 MS S1-S3
BOSN 83% 71% 71% 74% 99%
NCI OP 92% 74% 72% 60% 126%
NES OP 84% 65% 68% 84% 105%
STWD 93% 74% 61% 73% 58%
NAV COMM 82% 64% 68% 60% 81%
SONAR OP 97% 76% 76% 70% 106%
CL DVR 86% 72% 91% 82% 62%
W ENG TECH 78% 66% 73% 70% 78%
MAR TECH 61% 60% 60% 67% 89%
Capt(N) Cdr LCdr Lt(N) / S
NWO 100% 82% 78% 69%
NCS ENG N/A N/A 85% 79%
MS ENG N/A N/A 87% 65%
NAV ENG 86% 100% N/A N/A
0:35 / 5:37

Kingston-class Maritime Coastal Defence Vessels, and four *Victoria*-class submarines. The RCN is also scheduled to acquire 15 warships—the Canadian Surface Combatants—to replace the decommissioned *Iroquois*-class destroyers and the *Halifax*-class frigates. In 2024, the frigates are rapidly approaching the end of their life cycles, and issues are now arising. For example, HMCS *Winnipeg* needs extensive reparations following its deployment in the Indo-Pacific in the fall of 2022, and HMCS *Ottawa*'s transponder broke during its August-December 2023 mission in the region with HMCS *Vancouver*. But delays on the delivery of the CSCs—they are not expected to go into service until the early 2030s—raise concerns over the ability of Canada's ships to fulfill their entire mission set.

For now, the RCN can meet one of the demands of the Indo-Pacific Strategy: it can deploy one additional frigate in the region a year. But it is not doing so without also coping with significant organizational challenges. What does this mean for the upcoming Defence Policy Update (DPU)?

The Defence Policy Update

Announced in Budget 2022 with a promise that it would be released swiftly, the DPU still has not been released at this writing in January 2024. As the name suggested, the goal was to review and revise *Strong, Secure, Engaged,* the defence policy released in 2017, and align its principles and objectives to the new geopolitical environment. After private and public consultations over the course of winter and spring 2023, the document was shrouded in silence and secrecy. The most recent news on the DPU came in November 2023, when the minister of national defence, Bill Blair, declared the draft document would go through substantial revisions "give industry more clarity on long-term spending plans."[6]

Blair's disclosure about the direction of the DPU seems to suggest that DND/CAF's relationship with industry will be a significant element of the document, as the war in Ukraine and the rapid advancement of emerging technologies are requiring a new approach to defence procurement. However, considering that part of the DPU's intent is to provide "a clear plan of action to ensure that the CAF has the resources and capabilities required to meet its mandate," there is some hope that personnel issues will occupy an important section of the document. Indeed, personnel policy was the topic of the very first chapter

in *Strong, Secure, Engaged*. That chapter presented a plethora of initiatives to improve recruitment, training, and retention; job satisfaction, benefits, and compensation; wellness and mental health; sexual misconduct; diversity; and military-to-civilian transition.[7] Notably as well, the chapter is also where the policy outlined an increase in the Canadian military's size to 101,500. As noted above, in July 2023, the CAF was 18,000 members short of that goal.

Thus, the DPU faces an urgent need to review and revise the personnel initiatives set out in the 2017 policy. It does not need to overhaul the Reconstitution Directive or the Retention Strategy—it would in fact be counterproductive and would undermine efforts underway without having any data to assess whether the intended results have taken hold. Rather, the DPU should offer new direction on recruitment and retention moving forward by identifying several key elements.

First, it should offer a long-term vision for a more unified approach to personnel-related initiatives. Silos within DND/CAF continue to have a powerful, yet problematic, influence on the way the institution does business.[8] Second, the DPU should reflect on the current personnel situation. Usually, the topic of personnel is treated as a separate matter to discussions of the CAF's mission set; this time, the current personnel situation is too critical to cast aside. There seems to be a form of self-reassurance from DND/CAF that attrition levels, sitting between 8 and 9 per cent, are not worrisome as they are better than those of Canada's allies and align with labour market data.[9] However, the highest levels of attrition are concentrated in the midlevel ranks, which cannot be replaced easily due to the military's approach to recruitment and career progression. Unlike the private sector, the CAF cannot recruit a major or a master corporal to fill in for one who has just left.

This has several implications. The CAF will not be able to simply recruit out of this personnel crisis if it wants to recover quickly from the unavoidable loss of operational effectiveness, knowledge, and expertise that comes with attrition. The Navy Experience Program can temporarily offer relief to the RCN by expediting the training of new recruits and send them on deployment, but it cannot overcome the loss of supervisors. Therefore, the onus of efforts must be put on retention and expediting some of the measures presented in *Strong, Secured, Engaged,* accelerating the pace of conduct-related culture change, finalizing the health care arrangements with the provinces under Seamless Canada, as well as implementing the action plan to reform housing policies and pro-

cesses (expected in June 2024) as soon as possible. More related to the topic of implementing the defence aspects of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, it also entails considering how the current personnel shortage is impacting personnel and the execution of the mission set. Since it is unlikely that the government will scale down operational tempo to relieve service members, innovative ideas to help them cope with the crisis would be necessary. But there remains a central issue left to be addressed: defence spending.

Follow the money

Strong, Secure, Engaged featured a plan for a twenty-year increase in defence spending. Through its thorough accounting exercise, the 2017 policy was intended to send a clear message that a boom-and-bust approach to defence spending would no longer be a feature in Canada. The humble allocation of additional money for defence in Budget 2022, and the announcement of NORAD modernization-related investments in June 2022, appeared to have confirmed that those aspirations were in fact reality. But as defence budget expert David Perry noted, Budget 2022 shone light on difficult fiscal outlook for Canada. However, it is Budget 2023 that suggests that significant budget cuts are coming—including defence, even though the document makes the promise that cuts will not impact the CAF's operational effectiveness.[10] A couple of weeks after NATO's Vilnius Summit, during which Canada pledged to have its defence spending meet the 2 per cent of GDP, it was announced that DND/CAF will have to cut close to $1 billion in its budget over five years. Despite the promise that these cuts would not impact operational effectiveness, the size of this reduction should give all stakeholders pause. DND/CAF has been asked to look outside of major capital spending to reduce spending, but the protection of major capital projects from this development does not mean that operational effectiveness will remain unscathed. Contracts and external services, operational and maintenance, as well as personnel-related spending contribute to the CAF's mission success. But the DND/CAF's plan on how and where to reduce spending remains unknown, and there remains hope that the negative effects, if any, will be minimal.

This discussion about budget is relevant when reflecting the defence implementation of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, given the personnel and capability context in which the CAF finds itself. To overcome this difficult situation, sub-

stantial investment and resourcing will be necessary. The current uncertainty on future defence spending, however, calls for caution. The CAF's ability to implement the aspects of the Indo-Pacific Strategy under its purview is as good as the money, equipment, and personnel it has available. Is there hope with the coming DPU? Considering Canada's fiscal situation, healthy skepticism about the investments is necessary.

Conclusion

In 2023, the Royal Canadian Navy was able to deploy three frigates to the Indo-Pacific, as per the demands of *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy*. It is only one aspect of the defence implementation of the strategy since the other dimensions of "increased military presence" have yet to be quantified and measured (or these assessments are not public as of January 2024). There should be concerns over the ability of the CAF to implement its Indo-Pacific related commitments to the fullest. The personnel situation is dire, and equipment is rapidly aging. The DPU may offer some hope, but Canada's fiscal situation and $1 billion in defence budget cuts should temper those expectations.

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7

Rule the waves: Canada's blueprint for a resurgent Indo-Pacific strategy

Ross O'Connor

Introduction: The historical context

Developed during the American civil war and perfected during the Great War, the United States blueprint for military victory had been to field a much larger army than its opponent and overwhelm it. Although the same strategy was again employed at the start of the American intervention in Europe in the Second World War, the Allied plan to field a giant army to beat the Wehrmacht had completely collapsed by the summer of 1942. Having realized that hard strategic choices were necessary for victory, General George C. Marshall, chief of staff of the U.S. Army, made the bold decision to cut the planned size of the army *in half* and gamble almost entirely on air and sea power.[1] Although the decision was born out of necessity, it broke the institutional mold and played a vital role in the allied victory in Europe.

Today's languishing Canadian defence policy/posture[2] can find inspiration from this historical vignette. While the Indo-Pacific in 2024 is not yet at the same inflection point as Europe was in 1942, the disruptive actions of China (and its friends) represent a deliberate and sustained attempt to undermine and eventually break up the American led rules-based order. As the United States and its allies in Asia continue to invest real money to contest China's claims

to the South China Sea and surveil Beijing's growing fleet of submarines and ships, Canada has remained the silent partner. If our Indo-Pacific strategy is to mean anything, it must be buttressed by *game-changing investment in naval capacity* in the same way that Marshall made the strategic decision to gamble on sea power in the Second World War.

Building confidence with our allies

A robust blue-water Canadian navy deployable to the Indo-Pacific would be an invaluable help to allies (including the United States) to secure maritime shipping lanes, help patrol against illegal activity, and act as a deterrent to potential maritime embargos and chokepoint blockades and other flashpoints. An increase in the presence of Canadian naval assets would also represent the "hard power" needed for Canada to demonstrate its commitment and bona fides to friendly countries in the Indo-Pacific as a way to build partnerships and increase trade in a region where most of the future global commercial growth will be. The minister of foreign affairs, Mélanie Joly, has stated in the past that we should be as close to Japan and South Korea as we are to the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy.[3] I agree, but actions must speak louder than speeches. A significant Canadian contribution of naval assets patrolling the Pacific theatre would go a long way to making friends and influencing allies.

Elsewhere, Australia has shown that it is willing to invest both in the seas and in their alliance partnership with the United States through AUKUS. The Royal Navy, though a shadow of a Britannia that once ruled the waves, still operates two aircraft carriers and frigates that showed their worth to their American ally by supporting operations against the Houthis in Yemen.[4] Unless Canada is ready to significantly re-invest in the Canadian naval assets, we can look forward to even greater insignificance amongst our allies, the United States being the first among them. The United States remains Canada's most important partner in the Pacific, and a hard-power investment in naval assets would create a great deal of reciprocal goodwill in Washington. In other words, God helps those who help themselves.

Dealing with China

China's Pacific agenda continues to be narrowly focused: muscle out the

United States Pacific Fleet in order to establish a "China led" rules-based international order in its own backyard. To achieve this, Beijing employs aggressive tactics at every turn in order to bully its neighbours across the South China Sea. The most recent example was in the Philippines, where Chinese vessels rammed and harassed Filipino ones attempting to resupply Second Thomas Shoal. As the quantitative edge held by the United States and its allies is eroding, the presence of Canadian naval hardware could be part of the solution to keep sea lanes secure and to build confidence with allies like South Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.

But China's navy continues to grow, with the construction of aircraft-carrier strike groups and the third domestically manufactured carrier, the *Fujian*, is nearing completion. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is also actively pursuing opportunities in ports across the globe, ranging from the Solomon Islands to Equatorial Guinea and the United Arab Emirates. Meanwhile, American shipyards are experiencing a decline. European navies have significantly downsized: between 1999 and 2018, submarine fleet by 28 per cent of their submarines and 32 per cent of their frigates/destroyers have been decommissioned.[5]

Globally, China and its friends continue to manufacture crises designed to stretch American resources. Iran has been setting multiple fires in the Middle East to keep the United States from strengthening its position in the Pacific. Even more worrying, North Korea could soon play a similar role in the Pacific, with Kim Jong Un declaring South Korea his "primary foe" (a significant policy shift), leading some analysts to conclude that Kim has made the strategic decision to go to war, an assessment shared by the UK's secretary of defence, Grant Shapp.[6] While we find it unlikely that North Korea would launch a land incursion aimed at Seoul, it could engage in creating smaller crises around the peninsula designed to keep the United States Seventh Fleet bogged down and unable to defend Taiwan.

The importance of Taiwan remaining out of Beijing's hands cannot be overstated. Like Berlin in the Cold War, Taiwan is the first and most important link in a defensive chain of countries which includes Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. If it were to fall into the PRC's influence, the breach would allow the PLAN to gain a huge advantage, giving them the cudgel needed to slowly push the Seventh Fleet out of the Pacific and dominate the Indo-Pacific. This is the nightmare scenario Canada must actively work to avoid, and

hard naval assets deployed to the Indo-Pacific theatre would not only build confidence with our partners but would also play a vital role in deterring the looming conflicts. Canadian naval forces had a significant role in protecting trans-Atlantic shipping routes in wartime and can be the new "peacekeepers" of the future.

What would a naval presence look like?

New submarines for Canada would be the most important part of a deployable naval upgrade. Undersea surveillance and defence remain paramount in the Pacific because that is where the United States and its allies have the technological edge over China which has a limited capacity to detect, track, and target American and allied subs. That explains why a midsized power like Australia is willing to spend billions of dollars over three decades on leasing American nuclear-powered subs and building new ones with Britain.

But more ships and more presence are the bottom line—whether it be surface combatants or autonomous systems and sensors. It was recently suggested (and I agree) that our weight in international diplomacy is a function of our military capability and that we must be able to fly the flag on international missions and participate with our allies in exercises to be taken seriously.[7] Naval assets that can be deployed in the Pacific theatre should be the leading face of that diplomacy.

The politics of naval investments

A new investment in submarines, surface ships, and autonomous naval systems would come with a hefty price tag that many would see as prohibitive and thus politically impossible to sell to politicians and voters. Furthermore, conventional thinking dictates that Canadian voters continue to see themselves as pacifists and consistently rate defence spending at the very bottom of their priorities. Thus, to suggest (as I have) that Canada should triple down on naval assets could understandably be seen as accelerated political suicide.

However, history teaches us that ships and naval hardware do not carry the negative baggage usually associated with military purchases. In 2011, when the government awarded a $25-billion contract to the Halifax shipyards to build twenty-one surface combatants, the announcement was so well received that it

dominated the news cycle for an entire week, and politicians of all stripes were falling over themselves to appear in the photo ops. In preparation for the roll-out of the Arctic Offshore and Patrol Ships in 2007, the government developed a political communication plan to counter the usual arguments from opposition parties about government waste and toys for the military. As it turns out, that plan was never used since every opposition party praised the purchase instead of criticizing it.

By comparison, the procurement of F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jets in 2010 or the light armored vehicles contract in 2015 went through *agonizing* controversies even though they both promised significant economic benefits to the aerospace industry in Montreal and the General Dynamics Land Systems–Canada plant in London. While several factors contribute to the success or unpopularity of military procurement, experience has shown that *Canadians love ships*, even the military kind. While tanks, artillery, and fighter jets are intuitively categorized as "evil weapons of war" in the psychological construct of many Canadian voters, ships and naval vessels are beloved and thus largely inoculated against political controversy—apart from serious cost overruns. In my assessment, a new and robust investment in the Canadian navy would be a political winner if it were packaged appropriately.

Conclusion

In the eternal quest to define Canada's presence and purpose on the world stage, a supercharged Canadian navy with actual deployable assets could finally give Canadians the difference-making role they have been looking for. Most future commercial growth for Canada, and most of the global political risk, lie in the Indo-Pacific. Every measurable indicator shows that Canada's interests lie in managing that risk to ensure a free and open commercial gateway to Asia. Keeping navigation lanes secure and keeping Beijing from gaining further footholds in the South China sea (and beyond) serve Canada's interests.

As I have noted, the "political sell" for ships and naval assets is much easier to make compared to fighter jets and tanks. The reason for that psychological distinction could be explained by the fact that Canadians associate naval power as "defensive" rather than "offensive" assets. Whatever the reason, the facts do not lie: Canadians appreciate ships and if naval assets can be branded as a continuation of peacekeeping, bringing Canadians on board becomes very possible.

The bottom line is this: a significant investment in naval assets can both serve Canadians at home and act as a force multiplier to our allied defence framework in the Indo-Pacific. Regarding our most important security partner, I feel supremely confident that such an investment would find great favour with whomever is in the White House in 2025—which would translate into important benefits to Canada. I thus feel the convergence of what is needed to defend Canada in the next half century, what is needed to secure the Pacific and to build confidence with partners in the Indo-Pacific, and what the Canadian public is willing to accept has never been so aligned. It improves defence policy, foreign policy, and is politically acceptable—if handled right.

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8

Canada, the United States, the Indo-Pacific, and the Arctic: Two three-ocean countries

Deanna Horton

Introduction

Canada and the United States have a shared destiny as three-ocean nations with regard to the Indo-Pacific and the Arctic—two constructs whose boundaries can fluctuate, deliberately including or excluding countries. With a growing interest in the Arctic on the part of Asian states, any Indo-Pacific strategy—indeed, any defence strategy for that matter—must take the Arctic into account.

Throughout its limited foreign policy history, Canada has tended to rely on multilateral institutions in support of a rule-of-law approach. While the United States does not have the same multilateral reflex, and has a more integrated approach to strategy, an increasingly multipolar world and the growing limits on resources might propel Washington to be more cognizant of the importance of alliances. Canada, on the other hand, could benefit from a more centralized

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and strategic approach to its activities in all three oceans, including, of course, the Atlantic which has been Canada's mainstay.

The Indo-Pacific and the Arctic are regions of great strategic opportunities with a crucial part to play in the emerging multipolar structure. Comprising two-thirds of the world population and an economy that will account for half of the world GDP by 2040, the Indo-Pacific will drive the core of the global economy. Meanwhile, given its strategic location between the United States and Russia and the increased access to natural resources and ship transportation routes due to climate change, the Arctic has been noticing growing international interest from non-Arctic states.

The Indo-Pacific

Apart from each other and their North American partner Mexico, both Canada and the United States are more economically intertwined with the Indo-Pacific than any other region. However, we have tended to be Atlantic-facing—favouring multilateral and minilateral partnerships with traditional Western allies through trade agreements and security-oriented intergovernmental organizations. This is perhaps because our initial settlers were European, and we have always inhabited an international order built on Anglo-American power and principles, providing us with a comprehensible and navigable international order amenable to our national interests. Experts also point to diaspora politics and the government's underinvestment in foreign policy to explain Canada's spread-too-thin engagement and, arguably, its incapacity to make meaningful contributions abroad beyond the United States and Europe. Nevertheless, the Indo-Pacific has grown in importance for both countries, not only for economic reasons but in response to the growth of China.

US security partner Japan initiated the Indo-Pacific concept when the late Prime Minister Abe Shinzo talked of a "free and open Indo-Pacific" in 2016. The Americans soon jumped on the bandwagon, along with other countries, and, judging from the 2023 G7 meeting in Hiroshima where various leaders added concepts like "stable" and "prosperous" to that of "free and open," Indo-Pacific is now firmly entrenched in international discourse.

Deliberately excluding China and including India, today's formulation of the Indo-Pacific is an instrument capturing the world's political and economic centre. While Canada has a large Indian diaspora and the commonality of the

Commonwealth, the United States has brought India into the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), along with Australia and Japan, currently at the apex of strategic developments taking place across the Indo-Pacific region. However, the recent crisis that has engulfed Canada-India relations due to allegations of the Government of India's involvement in the assassination of a Canadian Sikh activist, has cast a shadow on any enhancement of the relationship in the short-term.

From a policy perspective, the Indo-Pacific is a versatile concept that deals with not only military components, but also economic elements generally related to connectivity. In 2018, once again Japan took the lead, resulting in the signing of the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), a free trade agreement among eleven Pacific nations without China or the United States. However, neither Canada nor the United States (nor India, for that matter) are members of the behemoth Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), an economic grouping hovering at just under one-third of the global GDP and population.

The American initiative, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), has won adherents despite some criticism in Washington and trade policy circles for its lack of market access to the United States. At its initial IPEF meeting, the US was able to gather twelve countries, including India and seven ASEAN members. Its menu-driven pillars, led by the United States Department of Commerce and the United States Trade Representative, allow some selectivity of participation. Canada initially played down the relevance of the US initiative but, of course, has subsequently worked to gain entry. Similarly, the first Indo-Pacific Dialogue between Canada and the United States was held in Washington March 2023 to further align their approaches to the region.

Canada should also be paying attention to the ground-breaking USA-Japan-South Korea trilateral summit at Camp David which took place in 2023. As Victor Cha of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, has noted, "the significance of the Camp David summit cannot be overestimated."[1] The agreement will have an enormous impact on the defence relationships going forward, with planned exercises and greater interoperability and communications between the two alliances. And beyond the Korean peninsula, there are also plans for collaborations on cybersecurity, South China Sea, Taiwan, and more. Further, there is the economic significance of the summit: Japan and ROK have leading-edge technologies in electric vehicles and bat-

teries, 5G and 6G networks, and semiconductor manufacturing—technologies that will contribute to supply chain resilience. All of this should be of interest to Canada as well, as a partner in the north Pacific.

The Arctic

The first objective of *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy* (IPS)—committing Canada to the promotion of peace and security in the region and globally—echoes another foreign affairs document of the government of Justin Trudeau: Canada's 2019 Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (ANPF), which sets out Canada's strategy to maintain sovereignty and the rule of law.

Canada's "third ocean" was also brought up during a conference at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto on March 27, 2023. Founding Director Janice Stein stressed the importance of how we think about the Arctic, which, she claimed, will be "the next big bucket of investment for Canada," and thus "an Indo-Pacific issue!" because of China's growing engagement in the region. However, despite the importance of the Arctic to Canada, its governance and protection have not been viewed as a priority by many Canadians, or by governments for that matter. Similar to the Indo-Pacific, which has seen fluctuations over the years in Canada's prioritization of cross-Pacific relations, government spending in the Arctic does not reflect the significance of the Northwest Passage to Canadian sovereignty. Although it was co-developed with Indigenous, territorial, and provincial partners, Canada's ANPF has been called "a laundry list of objectives—which is neither a strategy nor even a policy" by Arctic expert Tom Axworthy.[2]

Canadian-American cooperation in the Arctic goes back to the bilateral North American Aerospace Defense (NORAD) command that was created in 1958. In its Arctic strategy, the US government echoes the qualities and wording of its Indo-Pacific strategy: it seeks an Arctic region that is "peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative." In order to enable this desired end state, the *Strategy* acknowledges the increasing strategic competition in the Arctic—singling out Russia and unprovoked war in Ukraine—and aims "to position the United States to both effectively compete and manage tensions." In an effort to extend cooperation in the Arctic, Washington seeks to consult and co-manage with Alaska Native Tribes and Communities, modernize the NORAD network of air defence systems, deepen Arctic relations with allies and partners, and

"expand Arctic cooperation with other countries that uphold international law, rules, norms, and standards in the region."

The Arctic played an important role in the Cold War, with both sides building chains of radar stations at high latitudes in fear of an air attack across the Arctic Ocean. After a period of "high north, low tension" following the end of the Cold War, the diplomatic situation worsened, first gradually with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2014, then abruptly with the effects of conflicting great-power policies, especially between Russia and the United States, as both recognize the significance of the region to their strategic interests and the growing interest of non-Arctic countries to Arctic affairs, led by China and its intention to play a larger role in shaping regional governance. Following the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the seven like-minded Arctic states suspended their participation in the Arctic Council—challenging once again Arctic cooperation—and resumed work on projects that did not include Russia.

The Arctic is the Indo-Pacific

In 2013, the Arctic Council granted observer status to five Asian countries: China, India, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea. Although difficult given rising speculation about a "scramble" for Arctic resources, this decision highlighted the internationalization of the region's dynamics—raising the question of whether the title of regional stakeholder should be limited to the "Arctic Eight"—and increasing the attention the region is receiving from non-Arctic states. Since their Arctic induction, Asian observer states—particularly China, less so in the case of India—have rapidly expanded their Arctic presence through unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral engagement.

These developments have added a new dimension to the concept of a "global Arctic" and shifted the Arctic's strategic centre away from the region itself toward the Indo-Pacific. With China, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore developing Arctic capacities and interests, Canada and the United States, among other Arctic nations, can no longer overlook non-Arctic Asian actors in their strategic approach to the region. Importantly, Russia has embraced the involvement of new actors as a means to balance against North American and European states and potentially challenge the region's "liberal order."

When discussing the growing engagement of non-Arctic states in the Arc-

tic, China stands apart due to its self-proclaimed identification as a "near-Arctic state" and its disproportionate allocation of national resources to Arctic exploration, exploitation, and research and development. China has also been widening and deepening its Arctic involvement by fostering what some refer to as an "Arctic alliance" with Russia and identifying the development of a Polar Silk Road as a foreign policy priority. For its strategic intentions regarding the Arctic, Beijing has been under intense international scrutiny.

For its part, Japan has a long history of Arctic engagement, in particular regarding scientific activities, polar research, and innovation. In recent years, Japanese engagement in the Arctic has been driven by rapid climate change, rising traffic in the Northern Sea Route, and increased interest in other non-Arctic states. A relative newcomer to Arctic affairs, South Korea has been primarily interested in the region's natural resources and maritime transport potential. Over the past twenty years, Koreans have increased their Arctic activities and become one of the most active non-Arctic states, comparable to Japan and China. Finally, as part of "small state" diplomacy, Singapore has specifically worked through the Arctic Council to address climate change, promote Arctic governance, and question the implications in the maritime domain.

Conclusion: The three-oceans nations

Recent geopolitical developments have underscored the need of both Canada and the United States to buttress their Atlantic front through NATO and improve supply chain resilience while continuing to benefit from Asian economic growth. Canadian and American Arctic and Indo-Pacific strategies recognize the challenges to their vital national interests in security and economic prosperity as well as the opportunities to bolster their leadership abroad, address climate change, and support the cooperative, rules-based international order.

It is possible that the emphasis of the administration of Joe Biden on the Quad and a reinvigorated support in NATO might signal that the United States is being more selective in determining and pursuing its national security interests.[3] As for Canada, the IPS and ANPF indicate that there are strategic views at work, and a concerted effort from an inter-ministry coalition. However, the limited resources being allocated suggest that the ultimate test of Ottawa's willingness to make a meaningful contribution, gain the trust of regional partners, and bring about its Indo-Pacific and Arctic vision will be in the implementation.

In the "three oceans" context, Canada will need to be perceived as a helpful partner and contributor and be sure that Washington policy-makers understand that Canada's interests are aligned with those of its neighbour to the south. Although Canada cannot afford to maintain a three-ocean strategy similar to its historical engagement in the Atlantic, it will have to make sustained commitments in the two other oceans and make any trade-offs cognizant of its interests in the emerging international order.

Given the level of interconnectedness between the three oceans, setting a clear, pragmatic foreign policy agenda and delivering on all three fronts can help Canada revamp its diplomacy and avoid losing the trust of regional partners over yet another failure at sustained engagement abroad. For example, on the security front, further investments in technologies such as spatial and drone reconnaissance for the Arctic would be helpful, and combining forces with NATO partners in the Arctic would help share the burden—a burden which Canada has yet to fully embrace. Similarly, promoting investment from like-minded partners in much needed infrastructure investment in the Arctic would help in building resilience in this still fragile economy. Overall, Canada will have to leverage its limited impact by maximizing complementarity with its partners.

Canada could achieve a more integrated approach to foreign policy, despite its few levers and limited resources, by seeking cooperation with both Indo-Pacific and Atlantic partners in the Arctic, cooperating with the United States on security and defence and utilizing its existing alliances in both the Atlantic and the Pacific to achieve the greatest benefit.

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9

Canada's defence challenges in the Indo-Pacific:

*A view from Down Under**

John Blaxland

Introduction

This paper considers defence assets and the defence posture Canada likely will need in the 2020s to achieve its policy objectives in the Indo-Pacific, largely through comparison with the circumstances of its strategic cousins, Down Under, in Australia.

In seeking to understand Australia's predicament and options, I undertook a *Geostrategic SWOT Analysis for Australia.* A distillation of the findings from that study pointed to a series of overlapping challenges that are beyond the remit of any one government agency, nation, or institution to solve. *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy* covers similar themes (on economic opportunity, strategic challenges and sustainable development), but the SWOT approaches the Indo-Pacific from a different angle and finds four overarching themes which must inform defence policy choices.

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The first is great-power contestation—not just between China and the United States, but increasingly others. Russia's border with Canada stretches not just across the Arctic but the northern reaches of the Indo-Pacific as well. Tension and contestation are manifesting in clashes in the South China Sea, the East China Sea, the Korean peninsula, the Himalayan mountains, at home online and in fractured social settings, and yet again amongst the strategic waterways of the Middle East.

The second theme is looming environmental catastrophe. This is particularly acute for many Pacific Island states and similar low-lying communities. But it isn't just about the prospect of sea level rise. Extreme weather events and pandemics are becoming normal and presenting a greater tempo and scale of challenges that requires innovative collaboration to address. This generates growing and unsustainable demands for the support of the armed forces.

The third theme is a spectrum of governance challenges: people smuggling, drug smuggling, terrorism, the breakdown in law and order, insurgencies, revolutions and more. Australian and Canadian defence, intelligence, security and police agencies cooperate closely on these matters but they are stretched and yet there is much more to be done.

These three challenges are being accelerated by the fourth industrial revolution, with artificial intelligence, quantum computing, autonomous systems and more. Along the way society has morphed from being web-enabled to web-dependent and, in turn, web-vulnerable. The scale of cyber intrusions and attacks from state and non-state actors has grown commensurately. In addition, civil society is struggling with fake news and algorithm-generated echo chambers, fomenting civil unrest. Recruiters struggle to get the required number of enlistees who, for a variety of reasons, are staying away from service, leaving the armed forces desperately short-staffed. Canada and Australia already work closely on this, particularly in the security-intelligence, policing and cyber domains, but need to step up the investment in collaboration.

The utility of closer collaboration

Australia and Canada have an enduring interest in making a positive contribution to security and stability in the Indo-Pacific. That interest is heightened as tensions in the region flare. Despite Mercator projection distortions, they are equidistant from the strategic hotspots of Northeast Asia. They are close

allies of the United States and supporters of the so-called rules-based global order, most visibly through the United Nations. They also have similarly sized and structured armed forces, employing comparable and compatible equipment and protocols and repeatedly finding themselves on many of the same operational deployments.

Like Australia, Canada has a distinctive military legacy in the Indo-Pacific, although for many years that has been obscured by trans-Atlantic security ties. Both have an enduring obligation, through the United Nations, to the defence of South Korea. With Northeast Asian trade dominant, Canada's economic centre of gravity has been shifting westward toward the "Far East," not that far across from Canada's west coast. Yet notwithstanding its 2022 paper, *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy,* the Canadian government has shown little real interest in "pivoting" to the Pacific in this way. Strategy, without money allocated to bring it into being, is just talk. So, Canada's renewed focus, if it proves to be a genuine and sustained one, is of intrinsic interest to Australia. Both Canada and Australia are middle powers with limited industrial capacity and ability to launch and sustain major capital works, such as ship or submarine building as well as defensive and offensive cyber capabilities. Efficiencies could arise through collaboration.

Shared legacy

As Australia and Canada contemplate the implications, it is worth reflecting on their shared experiences in the Indo-Pacific. Their combatants are commemorated at Commonwealth war graves in Myanmar, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and elsewhere. Canadians lost a whole brigade in the defence of Hong Kong in December 1941, while Australians lost a division of two brigades in the defence of Singapore. The losses occurred with little forethought about improving bilateral collaboration. Canadian forces later stormed ashore at Kiska Island in the Aleutians and contemplated sending one or two combat divisions to fight in the Pacific alongside the Australians, had the Pacific War extended into 1946. As the war progressed, both were left with little voice in the direction of grand strategy. In the end, the Canadians sent a special wireless battalion to Darwin. But this was a secret organization, so few knew about this Canadian contribution to Australia's defence, even though the bonds established then in the realm of special intelligence endure to this day—now publicly identified as the Five Eyes arrangements.

Afterwards, Canada contributed a brigade-sized land force plus naval and air elements during the Korean War, fighting alongside Australians and together inflicting a setback on the enemy at the Battle of Kapyong in 1951. During the Vietnam War, Canada was the principal Western country sending monitors to Vietnam to work with the International Commission for Supervision and Control, largely as a favour to the US—and in a manner that faintly echoed Australia's contribution alongside the Americans. Later, Canadians and Australians bumped into each other on UN peacekeeping missions around the globe. In 1999, Canada sent an infantry company (Van Doos) with air and sea logistic support to participate in the International Force East Timor (INTERFET). Canada and Australia contributed forces to the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and for the mission that followed. As a NATO member, Canada advocated on Australia's behalf for greater access and influence within the organization. The two navies have worked alongside in the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean and the Pacific for decades. These events usually happened at short notice, with little time to coordinate policy or plans, but they demonstrate the congruence in the two countries' strategic outlooks for more than a century.

In Australia, few have seen Canada as a serious player in the region in recent years. Yet there is a wide network of low-profile collaboration including through intelligence and police links and such working-level arrangements as the collaborative standardization program between the armies of America, Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (ABCANZ). Officers on both sides need to have a clearer understanding of the utility of collaboration.

Proposed measures: Engagement and capabilities

The following measures should be explored by defence policy-makers to capitalize on each other's strengths, commonalities and interests in a way that will also enhance their ability to engage with the great powers. There are two areas that Canada should focus on: *bolstering regional engagement* and finding *mutual capability enhancements and efficiencies.*

There are several ways to bolster Canada's engagement with the Indo-Pacific:

Defence attaché presence: For Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and member states of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), appearances sometimes matter more than substance; form precedes function. To

burnish its credentials regionally, Canada should increase its representational defence presence across Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Increasing the number of attachés, preferably with language training, would help Canada gain greater access to officials and provide a better understanding of local circumstances.

Southeast Asian and Pacific engagement: Canada must work hard to gain access to ASEAN-related working groups to demonstrate its genuine commitment to regional engagement. Further collaborative projects with countries like Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, PIF states and others, would likely reap considerable benefits for Canada. Such engagement would also make it easier for Australia to partner with Canada in related regional security activities where great power contestation, looming environmental catastrophe and governance challenges loom large. In considering ways to do this, close examination of Australia's Defence Cooperation Program may be of use.

Further engagement with INDO-PACOM: Like Australia, Canada has chosen to work closely with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDO-PACOM), collaborating on a range of activities and exercises. But there is scope for an even greater focus on the INDO-PACOM domain for Ottawa policy-makers, paralleling its equivalent arrangements in NATO. Hawaii is far closer to Canada than it is to Australia. Canada should further increase its participation in US and Australian organized military training exercises.

Participation in regional multilateral exercises: One useful way to boost regional profile is to participate in regional multilateral exercises. Exercise Cobra Gold is a bilateral exercise arranged between the United States and Thailand. It has become more of a multilateral activity in recent years. Bolstering collaboration on peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief-related components of the exercise would be worth targeting.

Collaboration with amphibious capability development: With Australia's amphibious capability maturing, a tri-service *Indo-Pacific Endeavour* activity has seen Australian regional engagement bolstered, becoming increasingly multinational. This has seen the Australian Defence Force (ADF) use its amphibious ships as the pivotal platforms for engaging on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities as well as a range of other exercises, and collaborative activities in and around the home ports of regional partners. Canada could consider participating more actively alongside, or launching its own *Indo-Pacific Endeavour* activity, preferably coordinated with allies to deconflict and best capitalize on complementary capabilities.

Similarly, there are a number of ways that Canada could search for mutual capability enhancements and efficiencies:

Shared education and training exchanges: Additional efficiencies and savings can be made by sharing undergraduate officer education and training. Canadian officer cadets could be invited to study at the ADF Academy and Australian cadets could be similarly invited to study for a term at the Royal Military College of Canada. This has been tried before, and participants have benefitted considerably from the experience. The alternate hemispheric seasons make coordination difficult but not impossible and the utility of such an arrangement is greater now than ever. For mid- and late-career military courses, such as staff college and defence college, exchanges remain in place, having proven to be beneficial. There's merit in a similar arrangement for career-entry level exchanges as well.

Developments relating to the Arctic and Antarctic: Global climate change is leading to a heightened strategic competition over not just the Arctic but the Antarctic as well. Canada has a wealth of experience in managing its Arctic territorial responsibilities. Canada and Australia should collaborate closely to further develop their ability to operate in and around the Southern Ocean and Arctic waters.

Indigenous exchanges: Similarly, there are lessons to be learned from the Canadian Rangers and its Junior Rangers program. These indigenous units that operate in Canada's far north have strong parallels with Australia's counterpart regional force surveillance units, with many lessons to exchange and learn from. Such exchanges already exist but could be expanded significantly.

Enhancing cyber security collaboration and responding to foreign interference: Canada is a world leader on IT and cyber security, and cyber security challenges have become mainstream. No longer is the information security responsibility a second-tier corporate function. Across society as well, our societies have become addicted to our personal devices—providing us with unimagined convenience, coupled with unprecedented risk and vulnerability to interference, manipulation, and disruption. Canada and Australia are two of the most multicultural countries in the world. As great power contestation heats up, wars proliferate and governance challenges surge, imaginative and carefully thought through responses are called for to avoid divisions and differences to be exploited by malevolent state and non-state actors. Canada, like Australia, benefits from its robust cyber security architecture which emerged

from their secretive signals intelligence domains. So, they are well placed to work collaboratively to develop cyber defence measures and strategies for countering foreign interference and responding to the threats posed to their vibrant but fragile societies.

To maintain honed forces and cutting-edge capabilities, maximum use will need to be made of simulation, networked IT facilities and online training resources. Australia and Canada should look toward further developing shared online training programs where commonalities exist across the three services. Such shared arrangements can readily build on existing high levels of compatibility.

Enhancing engagement

Whatever collaborative work is undertaken between Australia and Canada will always pale in comparison with the bilateral undertakings each has with the United States, notwithstanding the domestic political upheavals in that country. To date, Canada and Australia have relied primarily on US-led multilateral arrangements to provide the venue for engagement. But with the United States distracted by its own protracted domestic political manoeuvrings, there appears to be considerable utility in Canada and Australia expanding their own arrangements. There are many areas where both Canada and Australia could contribute alongside the US to enhance regional security and stability in a way that could also help bolster Canada-Australia ties. These include three elements: (1) bolstering its collaborations as part of the integrated intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance network for the western Pacific; (2) enhancing cooperation on undersea warfare; and (3) increased cooperation and interoperability on precision munitions to allow for common stockpiling (experience in the Korean War and the war in Ukraine is instructive on this point).

Major acquisitions: There is also scope for closer collaboration on major acquisition projects. With Canada having decided to proceed with acquisition of the P8 Poseidon, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, and developing its own Type 26 derivative warships, let alone ongoing parallel requirement for land combat systems, close collaboration, including personnel and information exchanges, should feature prominently. This applies also to other such future acquisition decisions. There is much to be gained from close and more substantial exchanges.

Nuclear-propulsion submarines (SSNs): Doing the un-doable or the must-doable?

Canada is reflecting on its future submarine options. Countries with enormous coastlines like Australia and Canada have long seen submarines as a key capability for defending national interests. When it comes to the technology itself, it has long been understood that nuclear propulsion submarines provide stealth and endurance. But, like Australia, Canada long faced evidently insurmountable challenges in having such a program endorsed, resourced, and brought into service. Retired Vice Admiral Mark Norman is quoted as having declared in 2023 that "I don't believe we have the stomach to actually commit to this type of capability."

The Australian precedent suggests Canada should get serious about its submarine replacement program. It already has a civil nuclear industry, unlike Australia, and has the potential to make a significant contribution to the development and acquisition of nuclear propulsion submarines, alongside allies.

A compelling rationale for SSNs has not been well articulated so far. The Australian government's message on the rationale for SSNs appears lost in view of the other challenges. This appears to have been partly the case to avoid the trap of sounding like the previous government which was accused of speaking loudly and carrying a small stick. The government has also avoided focusing on how vulnerable the current fleet of diesel-electric propulsion submarines are. But there has been a dawning realization that such submarines are no longer viable. That is because of persistent and almost saturation satellite coverage, coupled with the prevalence of drones and artificial intelligence which has made the wake of the submarine funnels detectable from above. Persistent AI-enhanced satellite surveillance (much of it operating from Chinese facilities established in the Australian Antarctic Territory) makes conventional submarines too easy to find, leaving nuclear propulsion the only viable path for countries with vast ocean distances to transit even to cover their own EEZs. Others have suggested avoiding SSNs and simply purchase dozens of conventional subs. But these would be as vulnerable to detection as the existing fleet and devilishly difficult to find sufficient crew to operate them. The two countries have similar requirements and challenges in terms of economies of scale. Neither country can afford to go it alone.

Through AUKUS, Australia has plunged into an arrangement with the United Kingdom and the United States. My ANU colleague Darren Lim has

compellingly argued that the AUKUS nuclear propulsion submarines can be understood in terms of its ability to deter would-be adversaries, reassure neighbours, bind allies closer, build momentum towards defence preparedness, and bolster Australia's international credibility.[1] With respect to primacy versus the maintenance of stable order, Australia is pursuing the middle ground of strong deterrence to maintain the status quo. AUKUS, he says, is the only model that's politically feasible, for domestic politics and international security.

The benefits of a nuclear submarine fleet are considerable. An Australian submarine fleet would need to defend shipping lanes around the Indo-Pacific. SSNs can travel at much faster speeds (about 20 knots on average) compared to conventional submarines (6.5 knots) and stay on station for significantly longer periods of time. The main constraint is not water or air, but sufficient food for the crew. This means that a fleet of six to eight SSNs would give about three times the effective deployable time that can be achieved from the current fleet of six *Collins*-class submarines due to the far faster deployment time, the longer loiter time and the enduring ability to remain undetected, without needing to surface to recharge batteries or suck in fresh air.

Critics suggest Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) is a viable and economical alternative. They are definitely better than conventional diesel-electric submarines, but they still move slowly and eventually still need to surface to recharge. AIP submarines are useful for countries with small maritime zones.

Others suggest drones are the answer. But drones face significant command and control constraints, thanks largely to the attenuation of signals underwater, making communication with the underwater drones far more constrained. The Canadian Armed Forces, like the ADF, also has strict ethical constraints on drones requiring a human in the loop. There is an important distinction to be made between fully autonomous drones and semi-autonomous ones with a human in the loop. Over long ranges, drones are not expected to provide robust capability solutions to replace the crewed submarine.

Another ANU colleague, Roger Bradbury, and his colleagues have predicted that the seas will be transparent by 2050, suggesting that investment in submarines is moot. Yet the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) continues to build its fleet of submarines at a breakneck pace, as do many other countries that are eager to stay in the game. Besides, iterative measures and countermeasures would suggest that the progression is not likely to lead to a straight trajectory towards transparency.[2]

Perhaps the biggest apparent disincentive to contemplate SSNs is the exorbitant cost. Yet even here it is important to disentangle the rhetoric from the reality. Reports suggest the cost of the AUKUS submarine project over thirty years will amount to AUD$268–$368 billion (CAD$238–327). That is a breathtaking figure. But when compared with the cumulative expenditure expected for health, education, and disability insurance—a figure of about AUD$9 trillion—the figure appears more reasonable. Defence expenditure is estimated at AUD$1.5–$1.65 trillion over the same period.[3] On balance, the cost-benefit analysis is difficult to get right, particularly when the price of freedom is hard to calculate.

While expanding that arrangement to include Canada would be fraught, it is not that difficult to contemplate, and there are few viable alternatives for Canada to consider. For a long time SSNs have been seen as "undo-able" in both Australia and Canada. Australia may have done Canada a favour by making clear the pathway towards SSNs, demonstrating that the "un-do-able" is in fact "do-able." Given the changed technological and other dynamics at play, Canada doesn't have good alternative paths to consider. It is not only do-able, it is necessary and becoming increasingly urgent.

Conclusion

If Canada is serious about engaging in Indo-Pacific security, it needs to expand its capability (that is, have more platforms and force elements available) to participate more actively, mindful of the spectrum of challenges encountered—including great-power contestation, looming environmental catastrophe and a spectrum of governance challenges, all accelerated by the fourth industrial revolution. A number of low-cost steps could be taken by Canada to bolster regional security and stability, in turn facilitating increased trade and prosperity. Cyber security initiatives and countering foreign interference looms large. Canada should boost its military and diplomatic engagement. It should be more serious about developing and maintaining capabilities that may be employed in the region, including surface warships and even nuclear propulsion submarines, working closely with Australia and other regional security partners. With a demonstration of such resolve, considerable benefit may accrue from Australia and Canada working alongside to further shared interests

in regional security and stability, maintaining the rules-based order while also encouraging China's continued peaceful rise.

For further reading:

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Endnotes

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2. Roger Bradbury, Anne-Marie Grisogono, Elizabeth Williams, and Scott Vella, "Advances in detection technology could render AUKUS submarines useless by 2050," *The Strategist,* Australian Strategic Policy Institute, March 15, 2023, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/advances-in-detection-technology-could-render-aukus-submarines-useless-by-2050/.
3. AUKUS costings are AUD$268–368 billion over 30 years/0.15 percent of GDP; expenditures on health, disability, and education estimated to be AUD$9 trillion over the same period. For details, see Australia, Minister for Defence, "Joint media statement: Australia to pursue nuclear-powered submarines through new trilateral enhanced security partnership," September 21, 2021, https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/statements/2021-09-16/joint-media-statement-australia-pursue-nuclear-powered-submarines-through-new-trilateral-enhanced-security-partnership; Andrew Probyn, "NDIS to cost more than $30 billion by 2024–25,

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