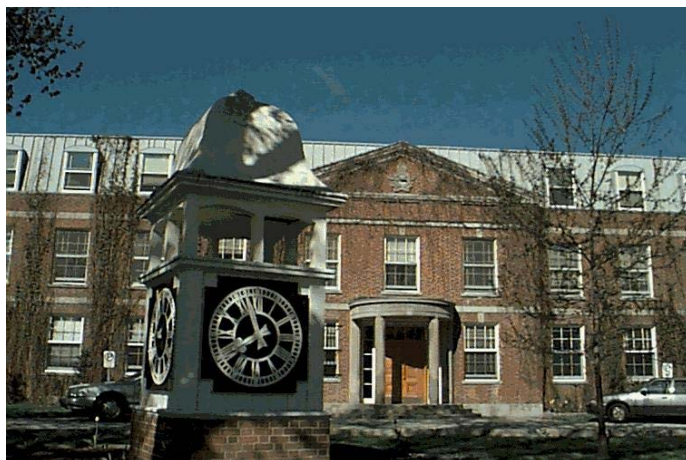


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THE AIR-SEA BATTLE CONCEPT AND ITS APPLICABILITY TO CANADA – LE CONCEPT AIR-SEA BATTLE ET SON APPLICATION AU CANADA

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JCSP 40

Exercise Solo Flight

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES
JCSP 40 – PCEMI 40
2013 – 2014

SOLO FLIGHT PAPER – ESSAI SOLO FLIGHT

**THE AIR-SEA BATTLE CONCEPT AND ITS APPLICABILITY TO CANADA –
LE CONCEPT AIR-SEA BATTLE ET SON APPLICATION AU CANADA**

By Lieutenant Commander C.G. Taitt
Par le Capitaine de Corvette C.G. Taitt

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INTRODUCTION

“Our nation is at a moment of transition...” said President Obama in the opening statement of the 2012 DoD Strategic Guidance (DSG), *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*.¹ Following the drawdown of protracted national efforts in the Middle East and the worst economic downturn in generations, U.S. planners are at a moment of introspection. Identifying power projection as a vital national interest, they recognize that the technological gap between the U.S. and potential adversaries has narrowed such that the U.S. may soon be denied freedom of action in certain theatres of strategic import. To address the “Anti-Access/Area Denial” (A2/AD) problem and bolster the confidence of regional partners, a family of doctrine culminating with Air-Sea Battle (ASB) was developed. Though still in its infancy, ASB has been criticized as unaffordable and strategically provocative towards China. Accordingly, in potentially subscribing to ASB, erstwhile allies are considering whether to hedge their bets with Washington or Beijing as the guarantor of regional stability.

Canada faces a similar choice as respects ASB. The geo-strategic situation that gave rise to it likewise affects Canada, having closed the mission in Afghanistan and struggling to weather economic turmoil. Unlike the U.S. however, Canada is not burdened with the requirement to build confidence amongst bilateral allies like Taiwan,

¹ United States, The White House, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities For 21st Century Defense*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 2012), cover letter.

South Korea and Japan. Furthermore, Canada has much to lose by alienating China as a trading partner given tenuous but improving relations.² Determining the future direction of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), while balancing economic opportunities in China against the need to maintain a favourable position with the U.S., is Canada's concern when approaching ASB. The strategic risk associated with adopting ASB in name is unacceptable; however, interoperability with the U.S. must remain a priority for the CAF. Corollary benefits offered by ASB merit consideration as the impetus for further joint integration and force development.

This paper will discuss the applicability of ASB to Canada. First, ASB will be examined within the geo-strategic context that gave rise to it. The doctrine will be analyzed in contrast with its chief criticisms and corollary benefits. The same geo-strategic situation will then be examined as it affects Canada. The affordability and political acceptability of ASB will be described in relation to possible frontline and supporting roles that the CAF could undertake using current and envisioned capabilities. Finally, the risks of adopting ASB or not will be discussed, followed by a brief analysis of Australia's approach to ASB as a like-minded nation.

² Kim Richard Nosal and Leah Sarson, "About Face: Explaining Changes in Canada's China Policy, 2006-2012," (Queen's University, 2013), 10-11.

THE AIR-SEA BATTLE CONCEPT

Why Air-Sea Battle?

The U.S. has enjoyed an unchallenged position of global hegemony for a generation. The scope of its power was demonstrated during both Iraq wars and in Afghanistan, for which U.S. and coalition militaries were able to muster an overwhelming force over several months from relatively unassailable forward positions. The ability to mass forces in safety while retaining the initiative to strike when strategically advantageous has been the hallmark of post-Cold War American military power, but U.S. planners foresee this era drawing to a close.

The isolated nature of U.S. geography necessitates expeditionary military policies to support broader political goals. Practically, this reality has meant maintaining a significant standing military with global reach. While quantity of force enables the U.S. to operate literally anywhere, their technological quality allows them to do so in significantly fewer numbers than might otherwise be required. As such, potential adversaries are adopting doctrine aimed at preventing the buildup of U.S. forces within striking distance: “A2/AD.” Such doctrine is based on the technological gap with the U.S. having narrowed of late, making more advanced weapons systems readily available to “Rest of World” militaries. Generally, A2/AD measures include sea mines, anti-ship

cruise missiles, long range ballistic missiles, precision munitions, coastal artillery, space-based weaponry and cyber-attacks.³

Exacerbating this perceived decline is the rise of regional powers like China and Iran, whose policies and ideologies run counter to those of the U.S. Neither country espouses global military aspirations and therefore are unburdened by the need to sustain globally-deployable forces, competent in every domain of warfare. Having only to focus on specific geographic objectives (controlling the Strait of Hormuz in Iran's case, and China's "string of pearls") has allowed these countries to organize, train and equip their militaries for that express purpose. Maintaining the "global commons" takes a central place in U.S. defence policy.⁴ Hence, these regions are of particular concern given their economic importance and the potential for access to strategic waterways being used as leverage. Although U.S. planners currently assess the U.S. military as being capable of dominating in these regions, they anticipate that their technological advantage may soon be exhausted.

What is Air-Sea Battle?

By 2009, the U.S.-led missions in Iraq and Afghanistan had evolved towards a Counter-Insurgency Operations (COIN) strategy that was less reliant on heavy forces intended for intense combat. The realization that these missions would conceivably end represented an opportunity for the USAF and USN in particular to take stock of their

³ United States, Department of Defence, *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), version 1.0*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 17 January 2012), 9-10.

⁴ United States, The White House, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities For 21st Century Defense*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 2012), cover letter.

strategic directions for the first time since 2001. Following a series of classified memoranda of understanding, the two services introduced into the 2010 Quadrennial Defence Review their new concept to meet the emerging defence challenges of the 21st century: ASB.⁵ Intended to “...preserve U.S. ability to project power and maintain freedom of action in the global commons,”⁶ ASB represented a re-focussing of efforts towards the geo-strategic situation that had emerged while the U.S. was distracted in the Middle East. Specifically, the concept would align USAF and USN force development towards a joint doctrine designed to address the A2/AD threat.

Building on lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, DSG emphasizes the need for a whole-of-government approach to future operations, employing all elements of American power.⁷ Most importantly, this policy commits the U.S. to focusing on peace and security in the Asia-Pacific as part of the broader foreign policy “pivot” towards that region, announced in November 2011.⁸ Leading towards ASB, the policy commits to “...continue to lead global efforts with capable allies and partners to assure access to and use of the global commons...”⁹

Following the national strategy outlined in DSG came *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020* (CCJO) that committed DoD to *globally integrated operations* where “...Joint Force elements, globally postured, combine quickly with each other and mission partners to integrate capabilities fluidly across domains, echelons,

⁵ United States, Department of Defence, *Quadrennial Defence Review Report – February 2010*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 2010), 32.

⁶ United States, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership...*, 1.

⁷ United States, The White House, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities For 21st Century Defense*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 2012), cover letter.

⁸ Keith B. Richburg, “U.S. pivot to Asia makes China nervous,” *Washington Post*, 16 November 2011. Last accessed 11 May 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/us-pivot-to-asia-makes-china-nervous/2011/11/15/gIQAsQpVRN_story.html.

⁹ United States, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership...*, 3.

geographic boundaries and organizational affiliations.”¹⁰ In essence, the intent of this document is to set the strategic conditions by which joint integration can be pushed down below the operational level and across combatant commands. To conserve forward deployed high readiness forces, DoD seeks to streamline the means by which they can integrate across commands into a cohesive fighting force on relatively short notice. Further amplifying this doctrine is the Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), that seeks to achieve “...Cross-Domain Synergy – the complementary vice merely additive employment of capabilities in different domains such that each enhances the effectiveness and compensates for the vulnerabilities of the others...”¹¹ More than improve organizational effectiveness as intended by CCJO, JOAC sets the conditions by which planners can devise practical methods to push joint integration down to the tactical level. Two subordinate doctrinal concepts are introduced to achieve this: the Joint Concept for Entry Operations (still under development and likely classified) and ASB.¹² Simply put, this family of doctrine is intended to re-align the U.S. military such that in 2020 it is able to forcibly enter a contested theatre.

ASB doctrine describes the problem thus:

...Adversary capabilities to deny access and areas to U.S. Forces are becoming increasingly advanced and adaptive. These A2/AD capabilities challenge U.S. freedom of action by causing U.S. forces to operate with higher levels of risk and at greater distances from areas of interest. U.S.

¹⁰ United States, Department of Defence, “Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020,” (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 10 September 2012), iii.

¹¹ United States, Department of Defence, *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), version 1.0*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 17 January 2012), cover letter.

¹² Information provided herein on ASB is from an UNCLASSIFIED summary provided by DoD. More detailed planning is being conducted at the classified level by the Air Sea Strategy Office.

forces must maintain freedom of action by shaping the A2/AD environment to enable concurrent or follow-on operations...¹³

Conceptually, this is to be achieved by equipping and organizing forces to be *networked* (“...tightly coordinated in real time...,”)¹⁴ *integrated* (“...a force that operates networked across domains as a whole...,”)¹⁵ and capable of *attack-in-depth* (focus on effects chains)¹⁶ to *disrupt* adversary C4ISR, *destroy* adversary A2/AD measures and *defeat* adversary weapons and tactics.¹⁷ For ease of interpretation this construct is abbreviated NIA-D3.

The U.S. Army already possesses doctrine concerned with Joint Forcible Entry Operations¹⁸ but it is chiefly concerned with securing a point of entry to facilitate the inflow of land forces. However, delivery of those forces into the theatre of operations must still be conducted by sea or air. In contrast, ASB is concerned with the broader problem of entering a contested theatre to achieve any effect. Moreover, it recognizes that the effect to be achieved may be fleeting and so it espouses more of an area control concept focussing on particular effects of limited duration.¹⁹ The desired effect could well be the insertion of land forces though it may be speculated that recent experience in Iraq and Afghanistan has burdened that prospect with unwanted baggage. As such, ASB

¹³ United States, Department of Defence – Air-Sea Battle Office, *Air-Sea Battle: Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access & Area Denial Challenges*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, May 2013), 3.

¹⁴ United States, Department of Defence – Air-Sea Battle Office, *Air-Sea Battle: Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access & Area Denial Challenges*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, May 2013), 5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁸ United States, Department of Defence, Joint Publication 3-18: Joint Forcible Entry Operations, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 27 November 2012), I-1.

¹⁹ United States, Department of Defence, *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), version 1.0*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 17 January 2012), 23.

reads more as a doctrine of compellence and limited warfare in the face of a near-peer adversary – the unlikely (and extremely undesirable) worst case.²⁰ In this case, compellence would be a means of coercing an adversary from escalating a crisis. The limited nature of the warfare described in ASB involves deep-penetrating strikes against key targets for strategic effect by pre-deployed (or strategically based) high-readiness forces, postured and hardened to survive in an A2/AD environment.

Criticisms of Air-Sea Battle

The problem of entering a contested theatre is indeed complex and ASB has had its share of criticism. First and foremost is affordability.²¹ One estimate by G2 Solutions found that implementing ASB would cost \$524.5B usd by 2023, in comparison with \$355B usd to modernize the nuclear triad over the same period.²² While much of the equipment analyzed in that report is useful beyond ASB alone, ASB places heavy reliance on the most expensive platforms including stealth aircraft, mine clearance vessels, submarines and ballistic missile defence systems. Moreover, the requirement for strategic basing and persistently deploying high-readiness units in anticipation of conflict

²⁰ The efficacy of compellence as a form of coercion merits discussion in its own right but falls beyond the scope of this paper. For more information on modern coercion theory, read: David E. Johnson, Karl P. Mueller, and William H. Taft, *Conventional Coercion Across the Spectrum of Operations: The Utility of U.S. Military Forces in the Emerging Security Environment*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2002).

²¹ Richard A. Bitzinger and Michael Raska., “RSIS Policy Brief: The AirSea Battle Debate and the Future of Conflict in East Asia,” (Nanyang Technological University, 2013), 6.

²² G2 Solutions, “Air-Sea Battle FY 2014: Concepts, Key Programs and Forecast,” last accessed 11 May 2014, <http://www.g2globalsolutions.com/Executive%20Summaries/Air%20Sea%20Battle%20FY%202014%20Exec%20Summ.pdf>.

increases the cost. Just how much of the nation's inventory would be dedicated to an ASB mission is situationally dependent but war with China would be a national effort and possibly represents an unacceptable cost. Finally, in the current zero-sum fiscal environment, embarking on a strategy like ASB without including the Army and Marine Corp could harden inter-service rivalries.

ASB could be viewed as the logical outcome of U.S. strengths in the air and at sea but unfortunately, intra-departmental realpolitik at DoD is muddying the waters. Excluding the Army and Marine Corp can hardly be considered joint, even if the intent is to set the conditions for follow-on land forces. The Army has made efforts to include itself in ASB while developing its own doctrine in parallel, but this is largely redundant considering the very intent of ASB is to set the conditions for possible follow-on operations, which implies flexible, long-range deployments of specialized forces.²³ It is difficult to envision a role for land forces in this concept beyond the use of SOF.

Another criticism of ASB is that it simply isn't new.²⁴ Parallels with Air-Land Battle (ALB) are easily drawn given their monikers; however, ALB was a manoeuvrist reaction to the U.S. experience of indecisive attrition in Vietnam while ASB is intended to address the proliferation of advanced weaponry. Generally, ALB involved deep-penetrating strikes against rear echelons in advance of heavy manoeuvre forces in the event of total war with the Soviet bloc.²⁵ In contrast, ASB is intended to synchronize all available effects into a non-specific area for limited duration. While both doctrines

²³ United States, Department of Defence – Air-Sea Battle Office, *Air-Sea Battle: Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access & Area Denial Challenges*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, May 2013), 4.

²⁴ Jose Carreno, Thomas Culora, George Galdorisi and Thomas Hone, "That's New About the AIRSEA BATTLE CONCEPT?" *U.S. Naval Institute – Proceedings* 136, Issue 8, August 2010, 1.

²⁵ United States, *Air-Sea Battle...i*.

espouse tighter joint coordination, ALB was chiefly concerned with close air support while ASB takes a more sweeping approach to quickly integrate forces from any domain and across combatant commands as the situation dictates. Moreover, ASB seeks to push joint integration below the operational level of war. Joint and combined integration have certainly come a long way since the Cold War, but it has advanced as far as legacy doctrine will allow and is in need of a refresh.

Within the NIA-D3 construct of ASB, deep-penetration is to be achieved with smaller units predicated on robust command and control (C2) facilities that provide deployed forces with the support that they can't maintain organically. This represents a critical vulnerability for ASB in that disruption of friendly C2 could isolate deployed forces, leaving them vulnerable to overwhelming opposition. ASB recognizes this vulnerability but does not yet offer much mitigation beyond delegating mission command to tactical leaders and emphasizing realistic training in which friendly forces don't necessarily enjoy superiority over the air and EW spectrum.²⁶ Given the high risk for casualties presented by this doctrine, JOAC at least recognizes that the other elements of national power (Diplomatic, Informational and Economic)²⁷ should be exhausted first before embarking on military expeditions against a near-peer. However, this doesn't address the criticism that ASB is inherently escalatory.²⁸

²⁶ United States, Department of Defence – Air-Sea Battle Office, *Air-Sea Battle: Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access & Area Denial Challenges*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, May 2013), 10.

²⁷ United States, Department of Defence, *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), version 1.0*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 17 January 2012), 18.

²⁸ Amitai Etzioni, "Who Authorized Preparations for War with China?" *Yale Journal of International Affairs* (Summer 2013), 42.

It would be foolish to assume that U.S. forces could take such bold action as to bomb critical targets in the enemy's homeland without expecting that additional forces would be reallocated in defence. Thus, the prospects for expansion and escalation of the conflict run their course and total war is conceivable. This possibility is particularly dangerous in the Asia-Pacific region where, through bilateral pacts with Taiwan, Japan and South Korea, the U.S. could quickly find itself at war with China. This latter point is of particular concern to strategic planners for two reasons: first, it has caused ASB to take centre stage in the "Pacific Pivot" policy, obscuring its broader economic and diplomatic goals;²⁹ and second, the political baggage that such bilateral alliances carry makes it difficult for some regional partners to subscribe to the doctrine for fear of being drawn into an unwanted war with China. As the U.S. tries to re-establish itself in the Asia-Pacific, members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) not party to bilateral defence arrangements with the U.S. are having to hedge their bets between supporting an international system arbitrated either by Washington or Beijing. While ASB demonstrates U.S. re-focus on providing credible defence in the region, strategic baggage may prevent erstwhile partners from fully subscribing. Valid though as criticisms of ASB as strategy may be, as operational doctrine the concept offers numerous corollary benefits.

²⁹ Despite this, ASB survived QDR 2014 although its wording was less provocative respecting China.

Corollary Benefits of Air-Sea Battle

One way of viewing ASB is as a natural exercise in introspection following a protracted national effort. With the passage of a decade and the drawdown of missions in the Middle East, U.S. planners are asking themselves *what next?*, resulting in valuable discourse over what the military needs to be able to do and how. Identifying power projection as a vital national interest then analyzing the potential impediments to it centres the discussion towards a specific problem. Endorsement of this approach by the political level sends the message that the U.S. must look beyond COIN to address future threats. That's not to say that ASB invalidates COIN as a strategy, but it could be interpreted as a political signal that the U.S. is less eager to re-embark on such missions.

ASB has renewed dialogue on U.S. command philosophy. Recognizing the need to operate smaller, mission-tailored units further from home bases raises the question of how decisions need to be made in order for such units to be effective. JOAC espouses *mission command* that "...enables subordinate commanders to act independently in consonance with higher command's intent and effect the necessary cross-domain integration laterally at the required echelon..."³⁰ In theory, technology will allow for more independent decision-making in the field while high command remains fully aware of the situation. However, culture and the personalities of superior commanders may circumvent decision-making by junior leaders, especially in situations with high political risk. Micro-managing is a common complaint amongst tactical leaders and so it is easy

³⁰ United States, Department of Defence, *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), version 1.0*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 17 January 2012), 28.

to be cynical about doctrine that aims to reduce it while touting the importance of operational situational awareness. It is important to remember, however, that the original concept of *mission command* (*Auftragstaktik*) was intended for combat situations too complex for a superior commander to control alone rather than for limited conflicts or COIN. Given the escalatory nature of ASB, a renewed discussion on *mission command* seems appropriate.

As part of *mission command*, JOAC seeks to achieve synergies across commands and domains at lower levels than has previously been achieved. This requires not only a change in command relationships but also a re-alignment of force development processes to ensure that tactical-level synergies can be realized. Identifying enabling capabilities is a key tenet of this doctrine and in an era of fiscal austerity, it makes sense for the services to cooperate in procurement to the greatest possible extent. This is easier said than done given inter-service tribalism, but technology is making it ever easier for disparate forces to integrate jointly and the articulation of a common problem (as stated above) should at least guide the different services towards a common solution.

The conditions for which ASB was envisioned requires sustainment of forces over vast distances, no more so than across the Pacific. The farther a force is deployed, the longer become its internal lines of communication, which present the adversary with a temptingly decisive target. As such, JOAC identifies the increasingly high volume of resources that will have to be dedicated to protecting these lines.³¹ Equally important is the requirement to have the right forces in the right place at the right time.³² Maintaining

³¹ United States, Department of Defence, *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), version 1.0*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 17 January 2012), 33.

³² *Ibid.*, 19-20.

sufficiently high-readiness forces forward deployed is resource intensive and doesn't mitigate the vulnerability of internal lines. Thus, strategic basing is employed to provide stepping-off points of relative safety closer to the anticipated theatre of operations. The U.S. already has bases in Japan, Guam, Korea and Diego Garcia. Concerning ASB, the U.S. is deploying approximately 2,500 Marines to Australia and will base ships in Singapore.³³ This not only serves to support forward deployed forces but is also a powerful confidence building measure for regional allies.

Inasmuch as ASB raises reservations amongst potential regional partners, to those allies with whom the U.S. has bilateral defensive agreements it demonstrates a strong resolve towards regional security. Subscribing to ASB on the part of Taiwan, South Korea and Japan will not likely effect their relationships with China in the same way as it might that of the U.S. As frontline nations in China's grand strategy, it is understandable that these countries may have to hedge their bets as China gains influence. In order for the U.S. to remain a credible regional actor, it must continually demonstrate its commitment to supporting these countries' interests, especially given that they represent the region's next largest economies.

³³ Mariko Oi, "USS Freedom arrives in Singapore as port of US 'pivot'," *BBC News*, 17 April 2013, last accessed 11 May 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-22156283>.

APPLICABILITY TO CANADA

Canada's Geo-strategic Situation

The geo-strategic situation in which Canada currently finds itself bears striking similarity with that of the U.S., namely calls for fiscal austerity in a sputtering economy;³⁴ a period of introspection following the end of a major national military effort; and, a desire to diversify our economy into the Asia-Pacific. As in the U.S., defence planners are asking *what next?* But unlike the U.S., Canadian foreign policy is not so specific as to point towards a particular adversary, least of all China.

Canada's relations with China have ebbed and flowed since officially recognizing the People's Republic in 1970. With its recent economic rise and insatiable thirst for resources however, China has become an important trade partner. Canada's current policies towards the Asia-Pacific region are principally focussed on trade through mechanisms like the Trans-Pacific Partnership, bilateral Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection deals and participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum.³⁵ As a net exporter accused of having a "Dutch economy,"³⁶ diversifying and liberalizing trade is of particular importance to Canada. As such, a concerted effort has been made to improve

³⁴ The Economist, 3 May 2014. "Maple, resting on laurels," last accessed 11 May 2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/americas/21601521-canada-has-not-learned-every-crisis-lesson-maple-resting-laurels>.

³⁵ Canada, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, "Canada and Asia-Pacific," last accessed 11 May 2014, http://www.international.gc.ca/asia_pacific-asie_pacifique/index.aspx?lang=eng.

³⁶ The Economist, 22 September 2005, "Of forest and mine," last accessed 11 May 2014, <http://www.economist.com/node/4424188>.

trade relations with China despite the rather lacklustre approach to the country following the 2006 election.³⁷ Currently, exports to China account for 4.3% of Canadian totals,³⁸ assisted perhaps in part by the fact that the world's largest expatriate Chinese community resides here.³⁹ It is for this reason that Canada would be unwise to subscribe to a military doctrine perceived by the Chinese as being intended for their containment.⁴⁰ Simply put, subscribing to ASB in name could spell disaster for Canadian efforts to access Asia-Pacific markets. Assuming then that Canada took a more pragmatic approach to ASB as a concept, the question of whether Canada should subscribe to it or not comes down to affordability and politics.

Affordability

Canadian defence policy calls for the defence of Canada first.⁴¹ Notwithstanding, much of the CAF inventory is useful in an expeditionary context and some of it could contribute to ASB in either a frontline or supporting capacity.⁴² For example, a key tenet of USAF doctrine adopted into ASB is the manned incursion of contested airspace, necessitating stealth capability. It is with this in mind that the F35 Joint Strike Fighter

³⁷ Kim Richard Nosal and Leah Sarson, "About Face: Explaining Changes in Canada's China Policy, 2006-2012," (Queen's University, 2013), 4.

³⁸ Canada's largest export market remains the U.S., who accounts for 74.5% of total. Canada, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, *Canada's State of Trade: Trade and Investment Update – 2013*, (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, 2013), 79.

³⁹ Nosal, *About Face*...11.

⁴⁰ John Lee (6:58 a m), "The Pentagon's plan for an air-sea battle with China," *China Spectator* (blog), 21 August 2013, last accessed 11 May 2014, <http://www.businessspectator.com.au/article/2013/8/21/china/pentagons-plan-air-sea-battle-china>

⁴¹ Canada, Department of National Defence, "Canada First Defence Strategy," (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2008), 3.

⁴² Peter Jones and Philippe Lagassé, "Rhetoric versus reality: Canadian defence planning in a time of austerity," *Defence and Security Analysis* 28, No. 2, (June 2012), 145.

was designed; without stealth, the RCAF would be relegated to a supporting role until air superiority was achieved (if ever, given the temporal nature of *control* called for by ASB).⁴³ Were it equipped with a self-defence suite, the recently modernized CP140 Auroras could also fill a frontline Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) role. Other frontline capabilities could include inshore ISR and strategic anti-surface warfare from the VICTORIA-class submarines. Unfortunately however, they face endurance issues as compared with more modern air-independent models and carry a relatively long logistics tail.

On the surface however, the modernized HALIFAX-class frigates feature better inter-operability with U.S. forces than most navies, a key entry requirement of ASB. Further, integration of the CH149 Cormorant helicopter will provide truly modern over-the-horizon anti-submarine and ISR capabilities. The greatest drawback of the HALIFAX-class is their lack of capability to generate inshore effects; however, this gap should be filled by Canadian Surface Combatant, which may possess Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence and Naval Gunfire Support capabilities.⁴⁴ Finally, whether supported from sea or air, Canadian Special Operations Forces Command possess the direct action and special reconnaissance capabilities to achieve effects in austere environments and could thus provide a frontline contribution to ASB. In a supporting role, the CC177 Globemaster and upcoming Joint Support Ships could supplement the U.S. logistics chain, a valuable contribution given the distances over which ASB is intended to be employed. Further, the expansion of operational support hubs towards a potential theatre

⁴³ United States, Department of Defence, *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), version 1.0*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 17 January 2012), 23.

⁴⁴ Canada, Department of National Defence, "Canadian Surface Combatant," last accessed 11 May 2014, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/business-equipment/canadian-surface-combatant.page?>

of conflict could assist in sharing the U.S. logistical burden and facilitate inflow of forces.

Adopting ASB doesn't address CAF resource limitation, which is an inherently political issue. The organization and outfitting of the CAF is a source of constant debate, particularly as to whether or not Canada should retain a general purpose military or develop towards a specialized niche.⁴⁵ In either case, contribution to ASB is affordable with current and envisioned CAF capabilities and while force structure remains a political issue, the extent of any potential contribution to ASB would be likewise political.

Politics

The likelihood of escalation were ASB employed stands out as its foremost detractor as a political option since Canada doesn't have a history of using force for compellence. That's not to say that Canada shies away from using force to reach political ends, but it normally does so only once a crisis has reached a conflict stage rather than as a deterrent measure. Moreover, perceptions of national war fatigue following the Afghanistan campaign make it doubtful whether Canada would soon embark on a

⁴⁵ Peter Jones and Philippe Lagassé, "Rhetoric versus reality: Canadian defence planning in a time of austerity," *Defence and Security Analysis* 28, No. 2, (June 2012), 141.

mission requiring opposed entry into the theatre of operations.⁴⁶ The prospect for suffering casualties in an all-out conflict is immense and Canada is still coming to terms with the human and material costs associated with Afghanistan. Apart from the strategic risk to Canadian-Chinese relations were we even perceived as adopting ASB, Canada is not treaty-bound to defend Taiwan (whom we don't even recognize), South Korea (despite our continued contribution to United Nations Command there) or Japan. The only nation in which Canada arguably needs to instill confidence is the U.S., and that can be achieved without ASB provided we continue to place a priority on interoperability. Knowing that ASB is the likely direction that our most important ally is taking, the means by which we could contribute merits consideration. The only risk then is that in Canada as in the U.S., it is difficult to envision a role for the Army in ASB (depending on how responsibility for CAF unmanned aerial vehicles plays-out), which could harden inter-service tribalism.

Corollary Benefits to Canada

Pragmatically, the CAF could enjoy similar corollary benefits as the U.S. from aligning with ASB. Learning to make do with less is sound practice even when not in an era of fiscal austerity. The principal way of doing this will be to continue promoting joint integration at progressively lower levels of war. As compared with the U.S., Canada is (ironically) advantaged with a small force that should be more agile given lower organizational overheads and the relatively smaller scale of capital projects. As such, the

⁴⁶ Sean Maloney, "Was It Worth It? Canadian Intervention in Afghanistan and Perceptions of Success and Failure," *Canadian Military Journal* 14, No.1, (Winter 2013), 20.

CAF should overcome institutional inertia, especially if force development was aimed at solving a particular problem like ASB. Cyber and space capabilities in particular would benefit from the impetus to integrate into operational level processes and as in the U.S., a periodic re-think of command philosophy is healthy.

Strategically, improving interoperability with the U.S. will garner credibility for the CAF and likewise improve interoperability with like-minded ASEAN nations. This doesn't need to go so far as to commit Canada to new defensive relationships, but at least it could support a position as an honest broker in an increasingly tense area of the world. Were a return to "middle-powersmanship" politically desirable, this would offer political options in the Asia-Pacific region.⁴⁷ Beyond the Asia-Pacific, the ability to support as intense a concept as ASB could position Canada as a leader in emerging crises.

Australian Comparison

While Canada is generally considered as late in joining the Asia-Pacific table, Australia has always had to contend with the security realities of the region. Not being a frontline nation in China's grand strategy nor being treaty-bound for regional defence, Australia is in a similar position as Canada whereby it can afford to remain somewhat on the fringe of regional security issues. Since World War Two, Australia has sustained enough military force to remain a regional influence. While it can't hope to counter-

⁴⁷ Kim Richard Nossal and Leah Sarson, "About Face: Explaining Changes in Canada's China Policy, 2006-2012," (Queen's University, 2013), 8.

balance China, Australia's key concern is for the maintenance of regional stability to promote trade.⁴⁸ China is Australia's largest export market⁴⁹ but Australia is not as concerned with how their part in the U.S. pivot will effect Australian-Chinese relations.⁵⁰ Australia assesses that it has more to gain by hedging its bets with Washington than Beijing, hence the deployment of Marines to Darwin.

There has been more dialogue in Australia concerning ASB than in Canada, likely on account of Australia's role in the U.S. pivot to the region (that President Obama announced the policy in Australia's parliament was likely no surprise to Prime Minister Gillard). The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is already in the process of expanding its amphibious forces following their experience in East Timor. By 2016, the ADF will possess the capability to land 2,200 soldiers in a contested environment, although it is generally estimated that the subsequent sustainment of such a force would require a national effort.⁵¹ Regardless, ASB is intended to be able to set the conditions for the insertion of such a force and has therefore been debated as a policy option for the ADF.⁵² Thus far however, Australia has approached ASB in the same manner as is recommended here. That is, subscribing to ASB specifically would be disadvantageous for Australian-

⁴⁸ Jennings, Peter, Abraham M. Denmark, Yan Xuetong, Noboru Yamaguchi, Chaesung Chun, Alexander Chieh-cheng Huang, C. Raja Monahan, Barry Desker and Kittti Prasirtsuk. "ROUNDTABLE: Regional Perspective on U.S. Strategic Rebalancing." *Asia Policy* 15, (January 2013), 39.

⁴⁹ Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Trade at a Glance 2013: Australia's Trade and Economic Statistics," last accessed 11 May 2014, https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/trade/trade-at-a-glance-2013/trade_performance_at_a_glance/part03_australias_trade_and_economic_statistics.html.

⁵⁰ Benjamin Schreer, "Planning the unthinkable war: 'AirSea Battle' and its implications for Australia," *Strategy*, (Barton: Australia Strategic Policy Institute, April 2013), 31.

⁵¹ Benjamin Schreer, "Planning the unthinkable war: 'AirSea Battle' and its implications for Australia," *Strategy*, (Barton: Australia Strategic Policy Institute, April 2013), 33.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 32.

Chinese relations; however, a pragmatic approach may be taken to improve interoperability with the U.S. and promote further joint integration of the ADF.⁵³

Conclusion

Like the U.S., Canada is at an inflection point following the closure of our campaign in Afghanistan, the need for austerity following the 2008 fiscal crisis and the need to address new power dynamics in economically important regions. However, subscribing to ASB in name would be a strategic mistake given our aspirations in the Asia-Pacific region. China is growing in importance as Canada's second largest export market; therefore, adopting defence doctrine that is perceived by China as containment would undoubtedly damage an already tenuous relationship. At the same time, maintaining a favourable relationship with the U.S. as our closest ally must remain a priority. Choosing not to adopt ASB will not of itself threaten that relationship, but CAF force development must continue to place a premium on interoperability with the U.S. In the event of a conflict requiring the application of ASB, current and envisioned CAF capabilities are capable of playing frontline and supporting roles, provided that Canada deems it politically advantageous to do so. Time will tell if ASB achieves its desired effect as a confidence building measure among regional allies and partners, although Australia seems prepared to support it at least in principle.

Despite its strategic detractors, Canada may still take a pragmatic approach towards the U.S. rebalance given the potential corollary benefits offered by ASB. As a

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 32.

focal point for force development, ASB is renewing discussions on command philosophy and seeks to push joint integration to lower levels of war than was realized under previous doctrine. It provides the impetus for integration of cyber and space-based capabilities into joint planning and addresses the worst case strategic scenario, however unlikely it may be.⁵⁴ Whether ASB is strategically unsound or simply “old wine in a new bottle,”⁵⁵ at the very least it will provide DoD with a coherent operational direction for the coming decade, whether the political level chooses to employ it as such or not. Similarly, adapting the CAF to support a doctrine of opposed entry is not as daunting as it sounds, but the practical reality of Canada’s willingness to deploy into such conditions may not justify the associated expenditure of resources. With the Canada First Defence Strategy’s impending renewal, the spirit of ASB merits consideration as a means of doing more with less while supporting the relationship that matters most.

⁵⁴ Whether preparing for CAF for the unlikely worst case will allow it to effectively address the probable lesser case is a matter for debate beyond the scope of this paper. Read Berel Rondal, *The Somalia Experience in Strategic Perspective: Implications for the Military in a Free and Democratic Society*, (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997), 48.

⁵⁵ Richard A. Bitzinger, “AirSea Battle: Old Wine in New Bottles?” *RSIS Commentaries* 159, 23 August 2012, last accessed 11 May 14, <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/Perspective/RSIS1592012.pdf>

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