

Canadian
Forces
College

Collège
des
Forces
Canadiennes



LOOKING WEST TO THE EAST: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY REBALANCE IN FAVOUR OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC ON THE ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

Lieutenant Commander J.R. Ruggles

JCSP 45

Service Paper

Disclaimer

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of National Defence, 2019.

PCEMI 45

Étude militaire

Avertissement

Les opinions exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite

© Sa Majesté la Reine du Chef du Canada, représentée par le ministre de la Défense nationale, 2019.

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 45 – PCEMI 45

2018 – 2019

DS 545 COMPONENT CAPABILITIES / DS 545 CAPACITES DES COMPOSANTS

LOOKING WEST TO THE EAST:

**EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY REBALANCE IN
FAVOUR OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC ON THE ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY**

By Lieutenant Commander J.R. Ruggles
Par le capitaine de corvette J.R. Ruggles

“This paper was written by a candidate attending the Canadian Forces College in fulfilment of one of the requirements of the Course of Studies. The paper is a scholastic document, and thus contains facts and opinions which the author alone considered appropriate and correct for the subject. It does not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of any agency, including the Government of Canada and the Canadian Department of National Defence. This paper may not be released, quoted or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defence.”

Word Count: 2512

“La présente étude a été rédigée par un stagiaire du Collège des Forces canadiennes pour satisfaire à l'une des exigences du cours. L'étude est un document qui se rapporte au cours et contient donc des faits et des opinions que seul l'auteur considère appropriés et convenables au sujet. Elle ne reflète pas nécessairement la politique ou l'opinion d'un organisme quelconque, y compris le gouvernement du Canada et le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada. Il est défendu de diffuser, de citer ou de reproduire cette étude sans la permission expresse du ministère de la Défense nationale.”

Nombre de mots: 2512

LOOKING WEST TO THE EAST:

EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY REBALANCE IN FAVOUR OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC ON THE ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

AIM

1. The aim of this service paper is to reason that the United States Navy's (USN) rebalance of assets and subsequent increased activity in Asia-Pacific since 2011 requires a re-evaluation of Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) engagement in the region. This paper has as its focus establishing that greater persistent operations by the RCN is required to establish credibility amongst the United States and Asian nations and that these operations are consistent with Government of Canada objectives and partner nation expectations. Not addressed in this service paper, though particularly important areas of study, are the RCN's theoretical requirement to rebalance naval assets and the personnel, materiel and infrastructure costs that would be associated with a redistribution of the Navy.

INTRODUCTION

2. In October 2011, United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, aligned with the President of the United States' views, suggested that the United States needed to pivot from the traditional focus of engagement in Europe and the Middle East to the emerging economies and political powers forming in the Asia-Pacific region.¹ Secretary Clinton argued that the United States' regional strategy was "for a sustained commitment to what I have called "forward-deployed" diplomacy [...] to every country and corner of the Asia-Pacific region."² She suggested that the United States must renew efforts to engage with partners and competitors alike to protect the country's interests. The USN rebalanced its forces in a 60-40 split favouring the Pacific coast as a result of this strategic policy pronouncement.³

3. This service paper will evaluate the reasoning behind the American move toward greater military engagement in the Asia-Pacific region and the consequential shift of USN policy toward the Pacific and Indian Oceans. This service paper will address the impact of this shift on the RCN's global engagements and review the impact on the RCN's obligations for securing the continent along with Canada's southern partner. A recommendation will follow the main discussion on suggested RCN posture in the Asia-Pacific region to signal Canada's commitment in concert with Allies.

DISCUSSION

4. The importance of the Asia-Pacific region to global security has been borne out by recent events. North Korea has developed a nuclear capability; and media accounts, conceded by

¹ Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy Magazine* (October 2011), last accessed on 09 October 2018 at <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century> .

² Ibid.

³ Elinor Sloan, "America's Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific: The Impact on Canada's strategic thinking and maritime posture," *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, 70, issue 2 (March 2015): 271.

United States officials, indicate that the country is attempting to miniaturize a nuclear device so that it could be placed on a ballistic missile capable of hitting most of North America.⁴ Piracy in the Strait of Malacca continues to threaten sea lines of communication through which nearly a third of international trade on the high seas passes each day.⁵ And China has continued with an unprecedented commitment to developing and launching naval assets that will see its ability to project out from its shores to greater distances than ever before. Further, China has begun reclamation processes of the sea floor around reefs in the South China Sea, building militarised islands and then claiming territorial and economic rights around these islands.⁶

5. In their article “Beyond Balancing: China’s Approach towards the Belt and Road Initiative”, Weifeng Zhou and Mario Esteban argue that China has three strategic ambitions driving the initiative:[one, frustrating] the US containment and encirclement of China [two,] fostering the legitimacy of its rising power [and three, reshaping] global governance and transforming the existing international system [to] reflect its values, interests and status. The United States government required a counter-balance to Chinese ambitions to ensure its own standing in the region and to remain the guarantor of the global order that has ensured United States political, economic and military ascendancy since 1945.

6. Dr Elinor Sloan, a professor of international relations at Carleton University in Ottawa, suggested that the United States’ move towards Asia came as a result of the Obama administration’s desire to move beyond the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. She argued that the United States government believed that “a pivot to new global realities” was required to address the enhanced economic and military status of Asian nations.⁷ The Obama administration’s participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) was intended to demonstrate American commitment to the region.⁸ The TPP would have created an economic alliance binding like-minded nations along the Pacific rim together in a wide-ranging enterprise. The United States under the current administration decided not to pursue the TPP⁹, however USN engagement continued unimpeded.

7. In 2015, the United States Department of Defense released the Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy intended for the United States Congress. The strategy delineated four maritime lines of effort to achieve the desired effects: one, increase the capacity to prevent conflict and respond militarily when required; two, work with allies in the region to build partner capacity;

⁴ Samman Chung, “North Korea’s Nuclear Threats and Counter-strategies,” *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*, 30 issue 2, (Fall 2016): 94-95.

⁵ Robert Curley, *The Science of War: Strategies, Tactics and Logistics* (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2012): 142.

⁶ Kristina Daugirdas and Julian Davis Mortenson, “US Navy Continues Freedom of Navigation and Overflight missions in the South China Sea Despite China’s Island Building Campaign,” *The American Journal of International Law*, 109 issue 3 (July 2015): 668-669.

⁷ Elinor Sloan, “Impact of US Pivot on Canada’s Strategic Thinking and Maritime Posture” in *Assessing Maritime Power in the Asia-Pacific: The Impact of American Strategic Rebalance*, ed. Greg Kennedy and Harsh V Pant (Surrey, England: Routledge, 2015): 80.

⁸ Matteo Dian, “The Strategic Value of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Consequences of Abandoning it for the US role in Asia,” *International Politics*, 54 no. 5 (September 2019): 5

⁹ Though the Trump administration decided not to pursue the TPP, other members continued the effort and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership was signed by 11 countries, including Canada, in 2016.

three, use military diplomacy to reduce the likelihood of miscalculation; and four, promote “regional security institutions and encourage the development of an open and effective security architecture.”¹⁰

8. In practical terms, the USN has conducted freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea to challenge what is suggested to be “excessive maritime claims that, if left unchallenged, could restrict the freedom of the seas”.¹¹ In addition, the United States holds regular bilateral and multilateral exercises with Asia-Pacific nations and every two years the Rim of the Pacific exercise that brings together nearly two dozen countries to participate in a range of naval, air and land exercises.¹² The USN also has ships stationed around the Pacific for anti-ballistic missile defence and regularly conducts presence and maritime security patrols through vital waterways to ensure the continued flow of trade along the sea lines of communication. Increased US operations in the Asia-Pacific region have implications for Canada and the RCN.

9. Canada’s military policy document, *Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE)*, notes the importance of the Asia-Pacific region and encompasses many of the same arguments for engagement that are put forth in the United States Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy. *SSE* states that, in Asia, “Canada is committed to being a reliable partner in the region, through consistent engagement and strong partnerships [...] This will include a continued presence in the region through high level visits and participation in regional exercises.”¹³ This is Cabinet endorsement of previous Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) engagements in the region that have focused on bilateral and multilateral defence relations and exercises and on the military training and cooperation program.¹⁴

10. Dr James A Boutilier, adjunct professor of Pacific Studies at the University of Victoria and special advisor on the Asia-Pacific to Commander, Maritime Forces Pacific, suggested before the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee in April 2018 that the CAF and the RCN in particular have a vital part to play in Canada’s increased presence in Asia. Dr Boutilier stated:

Pragmatism and prioritization should be the guiding principles in our engagement with the region. [...] I suggest that the Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Navy – not because I work for the navy, but because it is a vehicle of national power that is remarkably flexible, in every sense of the word – should be instruments in telegraphing Canada’s commitment to the region. It’s not enough to send ships to Asia; we have to do it in an orchestrated way which maximizes the value in terms of a full array of other activities.¹⁵

¹⁰ US Department of Defense, *Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2015): 19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

¹² Eric Lerhe, “The Asia-Pacific and the Royal Canadian Navy” (Ottawa: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2015): 5.

¹³ Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2017): 90,92.

¹⁴ Canada, Department of National Defence, “Canada’s Defence Relations in the Asia-Pacific Region”, last accessed on 09 October 2018 at <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=canada-s-defence-relations-in-the-asia-pacific-region/hob7h9ya> .

¹⁵ James A Boutilier (testimony, House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, Ottawa, ON, 17 April 2018).

11. As the RCN's *Leadmark 2050* states "The ties we share with the U.S. for continental defence and maritime security are unique in their scope and breadth, virtually without parallel anywhere in the world."¹⁶ RCN vessels must be able to operate effectively with USN assets for continental defence and on all of the high seas. Mandated by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, this interoperability can be garnered for greater effect while operating in other theatres around the globe. As liberal-based democracies, Canada and the United States generally share common aspirations for the promotion of stability and global rules-based order.¹⁷ As such, the USN's maritime lines of effort can be evaluated against Canadian defence objectives and the RCN's ability to contribute.

12. The first maritime line of effort in the United States' Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy is to increase capacity and to respond militarily when required.¹⁸ *Leadmark 2050* identifies deploying forward as providing the Government of Canada with options that can assist in deterring conflict.¹⁹ The recent launch and anticipated operationalization of the *Harry Dewolf-class* offers the RCN an opportunity in the Asia-Pacific. In addition to the numerical increase in platforms, the Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) will be able to take on RCN constabulary roles and presence patrols in the defence of North America while freeing the *Halifax-class* – and in time, the Canadian Surface Combatant – to proceed in greater numbers for expeditionary operations. The additional expeditionary operations will meet strategic objectives of deploying forward for contingency purposes.

13. The second United States line of effort focuses on building partner capacity. Building partner capacity is one of the identified core missions of the CAF as identified in *SSE*.²⁰ The RCN is one of a select number of navies that deploy warships across the globe to participate in exercises and operations in support of United Nations, NATO and coalition efforts. The RCN focuses heavily on training its sailors across the spectrum of conflict from delivering humanitarian assistance to multidimensional warfare. The RCN has been actively engaged in partner capacity building in Africa and the Caribbean. A strong presence in the Asia-Pacific would provide the RCN with the opportunity to conduct similar activities in this region, lending credence to Canadian whole of government engagement. When asked why Canada was denied participation in the East Asia Summit, the Secretary-General of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) replied "Canada has good will in the region but it hasn't had the sustained presence [that is necessary]".²¹

¹⁶ Canada, Department of National Defence, *Leadmark 2050: Canada in a New Maritime World* (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, 2016): 19.

¹⁷ Eric Lerhe, "The Asia-Pacific and the Royal Canadian Navy" (Ottawa: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2015): 13.

¹⁸ US Department of Defense, *Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2015): 19.

¹⁹ Canada, Department of National Defence, *Leadmark 2050: Canada in a New Maritime World* (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, 2016): 23.

²⁰ Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2017): 17.

²¹ Elinor Sloan, "America's Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific: The Impact on Canada's strategic thinking and maritime posture," *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, 70, issue 2 (March 2015).

14. The third United States pillar for Asia-Pacific engagement is using military diplomacy to reduce chances of miscalculation. Dr Sloan, in her article on the effects of USN rebalance on the RCN, indicates that Canada has quadrupled efforts to engage in dialogues with Asia-Pacific regional partners, including obtaining membership in the Western Pacific Naval Symposium where issues such as unplanned encounters at sea protocols are discussed.²² Military diplomatic engagement provides the institutional and interpersonal links between militaries that can be used to resolve disputes as these ties are often longer-lasting than inter-governmental ties due to elections and other means of changing government.

15. The final component of the United States' Asia-Pacific strategy is promoting regional security institutions and architecture. Canada has expressed the continued desire to pursue membership in ASEAN and the ASEAN defence ministers meeting as noted in *SSE*.²³ As indicated in the previously stated ASEAN Secretary-General's comments, a greater presence of Canadian assets in the region will assist in accomplishing the policy goal. As Vice-Admiral Norman quotes a senior US official in his interview with Dr Sloan for her article, Canada will not "get any pull from us [United States], but you [Canada] are leaning on an open door" with respect to a greater presence in Asia-Pacific.²⁴ Participation in these institutions will permit the RCN to exert greater influence in support of Canadian interests.

16. From the defence of North America perspective, the USN rebalance to the Pacific serves only to enhance continental defence. Significant USN resources remain staged on the East Coast and in Europe to counter threats posed to North America over the Atlantic. The RCN operating out of Halifax remains equally staged to contribute to this defence through combat-capable naval forces that operate above, on and below the sea. Actively engaging emerging economic and military powers from the Asia-Pacific region through defence diplomacy by the USN lessens the likelihood that inter-state conflict affecting North America will arise from the Asia-Pacific theatre. Canadian naval forces are equally ready to contribute to continental defence based out of Esquimalt. Deployment of these naval assets in support of an enhanced presence in the Pacific and Indian oceans will contribute to reducing the likelihood a war will need to be fought to defend the homeland.

CONCLUSION

17. The RCN is well positioned to take positive influences in the Asia-Pacific region in concert with the USN. As discussed, the strategic engagement strategies of Canada and the United States closely align and will permit cooperative activities in the pursuit of regional stability while assuring national priorities are safeguarded. Increased RCN operations in the region are in line with the priorities as stated by the Government of Canada in *SSE* and represent the expectations of leaders of the region and as implied by the United States, who favours concrete contributions to collective defence. The introduction of the AOPS and the intended

²² Ibid.

²³ Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2017): 92.

²⁴ Elinor Sloan, "America's Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific: The Impact on Canada's strategic thinking and maritime posture," *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, 70, issue 2 (March 2015).

overlap between the launch of the Canadian Surface Combatant and the *Halifax-class* will provide numerical advantage to pursue greater engagement in this critical part of the world.

RECOMMENDATION

18. The RCN should consider the uninterrupted, continuous deployment of at least one naval vessel in the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans as part of Operation PROJECTION as is current practice in the European theatre under the auspices of Operation REASSURANCE. The effects of this deployment will be equally as indicative to Canadian partners in the Asia-Pacific region of Canada's commitment to global stability as it is to Europe.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Boutilier, James A. Testimony, House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, Ottawa, ON, 17 April 2018.
- Canada. Department of National Defence. "Canada's Defence Relations in the Asia-Pacific Region." Last accessed on 09 October 2018 at <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=canada-s-defence-relations-in-the-asia-pacific-region/hob7h9ya> .
- Canada. Department of National Defence. *Leadmark 2050: Canada in a New Maritime World*. Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, 2016.
- Canada. Department of National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2017.
- Chung, Samman. "North Korea's Nuclear Threats and Counter-strategies." *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*. 30 issue 2. Fall 2016.
- Clinton, Hillary. "America's Pacific Century." *Foreign Policy Magazine*. October 2011. Last accessed on 09 October 2018 at <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century> .
- Curley, Robert. *The Science of War: Strategies, Tactics and Logistics*. New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2012.
- Daugirdas, Kristina and Julian Davis Mortenson. "US Navy Continues Freedom of Navigation and Overflight missions in the South China Sea Despite China's Island Building Campaign." *The American Journal of International Law*. 109, issue 3, July 2015.
- Dian, Matteo. "The Strategic Value of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Consequences of Abandoning it for the US role in Asia." *International Politics*. 54, no. 5, September 2019.
- Lerhe, Eric. "The Asia-Pacific and the Royal Canadian Navy." Ottawa: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2015.
- Sloan, Elinor. "America's Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific: The Impact on Canada's strategic thinking and maritime posture." *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*. 70, issue 2. March 2015.
- Sloan, Elinor. "Impact of US Pivot on Canada's Strategic Thinking and Maritime Posture" in *Assessing Maritime Power in the Asia-Pacific: The Impact of American Strategic Rebalance*. Ed. Greg Kennedy and Harsh V Pant. Surrey, England: Routledge, 2015.

US Department of Defense. *Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2015.

Zhou, Weifeng and Mario Esteban. "Beyond Balancing: China's Approach towards and Belt and Road Initiative." *Journal of Contemporary China*. 27, issue 112, 2017.