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Dragon Risen: Chinese Maritime Power Viewed Through Neorealist Balance of Threat Theory and Its Impact on Canada

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DRAGON RISEN: CHINESE MARITIME POWER VIEWED THROUGH NEOREALIST BALANCE OF THREAT THEORY AND ITS IMPACT ON CANADA

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ABSTRACT

China's perceived aggressive application of maritime power in the period from 2010 to 2021 has alarmed many nations, including Canada. Prior to 2010, China's behaviour had largely conformed with international law and multilateralism; however, since that time, it has deviated starkly from these norms. This research paper aims to determine to what extent does China's application of maritime power threaten Canada's maritime strategic interests. In this context, the core tenets of the rules-based liberal international order (RBLIO) are adherence to international law, respect for multilateral institutions, and the collective will to defend this order. Further, Canadian maritime security and prosperity are underwritten chiefly by the robustness of this order.

To answer the research question, Stephen Walt's "Balance of Threat" theory was used to determine the overall threat level. The theory considers three objective factors- *aggregate power, geographic proximity*, and *offensive capability* to determine potential threat, and the interpretation of offensive *intentions* to give meaning to that potential. Viewed from the Canadian perspective, the analysis showed that China's application of maritime power from 2010 was aggressive and revisionist. While not directly threatening specific Canadian assets, China has deliberately eroded the foundations of the RBLIO in its near-abroad and is beginning to do so more broadly.

The paper concludes that Canadian efforts in the Indo-Asia Pacific could focus on reinforcing the RBLIO to prevent bandwagon behaviour favourable to China. An approach grounded in defensive neorealism suggests engagement with China on issues of mutual concern but strong condemnation for deviation from the core tenets of the RBLIO. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue offers the best opportunity for Canadian defence and security engagement, where Canada can demonstrate regional commitment and influence the course of this United States-led body.

DRAGON RISEN: CHINESE MARITIME POWER VIEWED THROUGH NEOREALIST BALANCE OF THREAT THEORY AND ITS IMPACT ON CANADA

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Rise of China. A simple internet search yields a trove of returns, academic, journalistic, and political, that attempt to explain the rapid growth of this Asian giant. Some look at its impressive year-over-year economic growth in recent decades, while others cast a wary eye at its swiftly expanding military, questionable policies within its borders, or heightened tensions with its numerous land and maritime neighbors. As an aggregate, these themes elicit debate from around the globe. Beyond the vastness of the Pacific Ocean sits Canada, one of a handful of "middle-power" liberal democracies that finds itself grappling with the apparent dyadic foreign policy question of the early 21st century- how to square significant economic ties with China and its trajectory to become a regional, if not global power, to its perceived threat to Canadian national security and prosperity. This is a simple question, yet the solution, if such a thing exists, is enormously complex- certainly on the scale of a "wicked problem."[1] The problem is compounded by an increasingly multipolar international environment and a Canadian public and government repeatedly shocked by Beijing's flagrant disregard of human rights and international law.

In the months leading into 2021, Canadian news media and politics were consumed with the purported genocide of minority Uyghurs in Xinjiang, the "hostage

[1] A *wicked problem* is a social or cultural problem that is difficult or impossible to solve for as many as four reasons: incomplete or contradictory knowledge, the number of people and opinions involved, the large economic burden, and the interconnected nature of these problems with other problems. https://www.wickedproblems.com/1_wicked_problems.php

diplomacy" behind the arbitrary detention of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor in retaliation for Canada fulfilling its extradition treaty obligations with the United States (US), the assault on democracy in Hong Kong, and the economic relationship between Canada and China. Therefore, questions of human rights, democratic freedoms, economic impacts, and national defence and security have taken centre stage in the debate surrounding Sino-Canadian relations. These are pressing and important challenges that will shape the complex nature of the future of Sino-Canadian relations, deserving a whole of government (WoG) effort. In defining any WoG approach, the maritime nature of both countries, including strategic interests and the application of maritime power, will be a necessary feature of a holistic product. However, with public and government attention so strongly fixated on specific Chinese actions that palpably affront liberal, democratic Canadian values, there exists a dearth of discourse on the wider impact of China's application of maritime power in the first decades of the 21st century. With a view to enhancing defence and government policy making, this research paper will examine to what extent the China's application of maritime power from 2010 to 2021 threatens Canada's maritime strategic interests.

One of the reasons China's maritime power has received little press in Canadian media or political discussion is its relatively recent emergence to Western observers, making it difficult to accurately assess. This perception is linked to the *Rise of China* narrative, where China's minimal maritime presence seemingly rather suddenly burst onto the international scene in the latter part of the 20th century. Indeed, there was a significant recent historical period where China's national power was not among the world leaders. Described as the "Century of Humiliation", "a period that roughly began

with the Opium Wars against the British in 1839 and ended with the CCP's victory over the Kuomintang in the Chinese Civil War and the establishment of the PRC in 1949", the CCP has long been seeking to return China to its "rightful place" as a leading world power.[2] The idea that a "rising China" is unique ignores the historical fact that it "had consistently been one of the world's largest economies over the past 2,000 years—and still was well into the 19th century."[3] A more accurate intonation would be "the Return of China," or a "restoration", not unlike the several other returns to regional dominance and global influence after periods of decline throughout Chinese history.[4] Indeed, "From the standpoint of Chinese history, what's unusual about modern Asia is the dominance of the West, not the return of China as a regional powerhouse."[5] It is from this historical context that the contemporary People's Republic of China (PRC) emerged following the Second World War and Civil War in 1949. In the subsequent decades, despite the CCP being in power, the convenient friendship between the US and China in the face of the USSR kept Western attitudes amiable towards China during the Cold War.[6] When the Cold War ended, heralding the "unipolar moment" of US supremacy, the two countries suddenly found themselves in a "situation of strategic suspicion," but relations between China and the US, Canada, and other Western nations remained calm.[7] Indeed, the US and its democratic partners intensified liberal institutionalist engagement with China intending to "shape China's relationship with the established world order," believing such an effort

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[2] David A. Beitelman, "Living with Giants and Inconvenient Truths: The US, China, and Everyone Else," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 50, no. 1 (2020): 90.

[3] Michael Schuman, "China's Inexorable Rise to Superpower Is History Repeating Itself," *Bloomberg*, 27 October 2020.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] John J. Mearsheimer, "Realism and Restraint," *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development,* Summer 2019 issue 14, 22.

[7] Beitelman, 90.

was realistic and, if not democratize China, at least liberalize its economy to some extent.[8] As this "shaping" period progressed and China experienced extraordinary economic growth into the 21st century, so too did China's maritime capabilities and presence. Indeed, within a few decades China transformed "its navy from a brown-water to a green-water navy that possesses capabilities to operate regionally," and it continues to expand into 2021.[9] While remarkable by virtue of the speed of development, a historically regional power with global reach expressing a commensurate maritime presence is hardly surprising or inherently threatening. Yet, Canada's deputy defence minister stated in March 2021 that China is a "growing threat" to Canadian domestic and international maritime interests.[10] Canada's defence partners share these concerns, with the US observing China's rapid gains "will have serious implications for U.S. national interests and the security of the international rules-based order."[11] The 2016 Australian *Defence White Paper* notes "China's policies and actions will have a major impact on the stability of the Indo-Pacific to 2035."[12] Why, then, has China's maritime power become such a concern for Canada, the US, and other defence partners? The answer lies in the trajectory of the Chinese regime, which has radically diverged from how the US and other subscribers to the rules-based liberal international order (RBLIO) had hoped to influence China's eventual place in the world.

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[8] Beitelman, 92.

[9] Kentaro Sakuwa, "The Regional Consequences of Territorial Disputes: An Empirical Analysis of the South China Sea Disputes," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 4, no. 3 (2017): 322.

[10] Robert Fife and Steven Chase, "Top defence official says China is a threat to Canadian Arctic," *The Globe and Mail*, 11 March 2021, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-top-defence-official-says-china-is-a-threat-to-canadian-arctic/.

[11] Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020* (Washington: Office of the Secretary of Defense DOD, 2020), ii.

[12] Australian Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2016), 42.

China within the emerging security environment

China rejected US-led liberal institutionalism, or as political scientist Francis Fukuyama put it in his "End of History" concept, "mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."[13] Canadian economist Wendy Dobson pointed out in 2019, "As China engaged with the rest of the world, we expected it would change, adopt liberal values, and become more open and democratic."[14] Instead of integrating more closely with the RBLIO of the unipolar era, a divergent China and a resurgent Russia have shaped the emerging security environment the West now faces. It is arguable that such a goal was unrealistic, and that its fatal flaw was in treating China like an embryonic or immature country, rather than the storied and ancient culture that it was, with its own sense of place in the world and views on global governance.[15] Indeed, the PRC has seemed resistant "to be a rule-taker in the largely US established so-called liberal rules-based order," and rather appears intent on becoming "a rule-maker in its own right."[16] Charting the CCPs rise ("rise" being applicable in this case) and path to 2021 is another topic worthy of its own project and would provide a deeper cultural understanding of its goals or intent. Rather, this research paper will explore the nature of the PRC's application of maritime power and make assessments of intent in the maritime domain relative to the RBLIO, including multilateralism and international law, from 2010 to 2021. Indeed, as early as

[13] Colin Robertson, *Positioning Canada in a Messy and Meaner World* (Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, September 2019), 3.

[14] Wendy Dobson, "China's not changing, so we need to learn how to get along," *The Globe and Mail*, 12 November 2019.

[15] Schuman.

[16] Frederick Kliem, "Why Quasi-Alliances Will Persist in the Indo-Pacific? The Fall and Rise of the Quad," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 7, no. 3 (2020): 272.

2011 Elinor Sloan noted that China's military buildup went from being assessed as defensive to a focus on Taiwan, and now is "commensurate with great powership and focused well beyond China's shores. The latter is particularly true with respect to the Chinese naval leadership."[17] It appeared, then, as though China's tolerance of the extant RBLIO was ebbing. Together with the rapid expansion of Chinese maritime capability, serious concerns have emerged within Western maritime nations and defence partners about what this means— possibly an erosion or revision of the very RBLIO itself.

In addressing these concerns, Canada has been noted to lack a clear position on security engagement in the Indo-Asia Pacific (IAP) broadly and with China more specifically. IAP, Indo-Pacific, and Asia-Pacific tend to be used interchangeably. Here, the term IAP will be used in this paper to acknowledge the fact that the "region is an ever interconnected strategic system, with resource flows, trade, and geopolitics increasingly tethering the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions together."[18] In 2013 James Manicom, with the Centre for International Governance Innovation, noted that "Absent from this debate has been a public discussion of the strategic or military implications of China's rise for Canada."[19] He concluded with two observations that remain salient now. He first stated that "Canada has not yet engaged in a public debate about the security dimension of China's rise."[20] Second, he found that of those states that have engaged in policy discussions, they end up at a common response: "a hedging strategy that blends

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[17] Elinor Sloan, "US-China military and security developments: Implications for Canada," *International Journal* 66, no. 2 (2011): 282.

[18] Adam P. Macdonald and Carter Vance, "Navigating a world of structural change, strategic rivalry and uncertainty: determining a Canadian Indo-Pacific orientation," *CDA Institute Vimy Paper*, volume 46 (October 2020), 2.

[19] James Manicom, "Canadian debates about China's rise: Whither the "China threat"," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 18, no.3 (2012): 287.

[20] *Ibid.*

deepening engagement with elements of internal and external balancing."[21] Yet, from 2013 to 2021, debate has failed to yield specific strategic policy that fully assesses the impact of China on Canadian security and prosperity, maritime or otherwise. Canada's approach to China has been characterized as one behaving "as if it were possible to pursue closer economic engagement with China while avoiding being drawn into the US-Sino strategic competition" or, more succinctly, to avoid "picking sides."[22] Indeed, even as recently as October 2020, Jeremy Nuttall reported in the Toronto Star that "The federal government has been quietly working on an Indo-Pacific strategy — perhaps since last year," but there has been little to show for the effort.[23] An April 2021 Globe and Mail article remarked "Jonathan Berkshire Miller, director of the Indo-Pacific program at the Macdonald Laurier Institute, noted that the Canadian government has yet to release a strategy outlining its intentions for the Indo-Pacific region."[24] David Beitelman of Dalhousie University's Centre for the Study of Security and Development surmised that "The current reality of a less-engaged United States and an increasingly assertive China is forcing other states to confront some inconvenient truths," one of which is the return to great power politics.[25] While the debate and policy development continues regarding Canada's "China Policy," international scholars and Canadian military policy have begun to echo this changed security paradigm, signaling an end to the unipolar security environment led by the US since the end of the Cold War. It is within this growing

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[21] *Ibid*., 288.

[22] Beitelman, 87.

[23] Jeremy Nuttal, "As relations with Beijing sour, Canada works on an Indo-Pacific strategy. But no one will talk about it," *Toronto Star*, 3 September 2020.

[24] Robert Fife and Steven Chase, "Canada urged to play bigger role with allies to counter China in the Indo-Pacific," *The Globe and Mail*, 4 April 2021.

[25] Beitelman, 87.

multipolar paradigm that Canada finds itself grappling with its relationship to China and producing clear policy guidance.

Although absent discrete IAP policy, the significance of this emerging security environment is beginning to be featured in Canadian government and military documents, providing a broad understanding of how Canadian institutions intend to navigate, including in the maritime domain and the IAP region. The Global Affairs Canada (GAC) *Departmental Plan 2020-21* calls for "a strong focus on maritime security issues" across Asia and the Pacific and "defence of Canada's broader values and interest in China."[26] *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (SSE) finds a "degree of major power competition has returned to the international system" and notes that "China is a rising economic power with an increasing ability to project influence globally."[27] The Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) *Pan-Domain Force Employment Concept* (PFEC) states "today's great power rivalry has become increasingly antagonistic," yet does not explore the impact of China specifically. *Leadmark 2050*, the Royal Canadian Navy's (RCN) 2017 vision of the emerging security environment, is sharper in defining challenges in the IAP, stating "one of the defining issues of our times will be how the relationship between China and the U.S. evolves around issues of great power cooperation, competition and confrontation."[28] Scholars echo these views, including the maritime aspect of this emerging security environment. Offensive realist John Mearsheimer stated in 2019 that "China is the only country on the planet with the

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[26] Global Affairs Canada, *2020-21 Departmental Plan*, (Ottawa, 2020), section 3.

[27] Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: Minister of National Defence, 2017), 50.

[28] Department of National Defence, *Canada in a New Maritime World: Leadmark 2050* (Ottawa: Commander, Royal Canadian Navy, 2016), 7.

potential to challenge U.S. power in a meaningful way."[29] Jonathan Caverley and Peter Dombrowski of the US Naval War College found "For the first time since World War II the most likely friction points between a rising, potentially revisionist power and a declining, largely status-quo power are located at sea."[30] They later quote former Defense Secretary James Mattis, who "testified to Congress to justify a 2018 increase in the United States' naval shipbuilding budget, 'I believe we are moving toward a more maritime strategy in terms of our military strategy to defend the country. It is the nature of our time.'"[31] Given the emphasis of the maritime element in these comments, issues in the IAP take on particular salience, given that "The most common link that binds the diverse subsystems within this strategically significant Indo-Pacific region is the sea."[32] However, despite even the clear mention of China as a security challenge, there is little qualitative or quantitative analysis of the threat Chinese maritime power poses to Canadian strategic interests, although Benjamin Lombardi's "The Future Maritime Operating Environment and the Role of Naval Power" provides some valuable insights[33]. Adam MacDonald of Dalhousie University and Carter Vance broach the wider problem in their October 2020 *Vimy Paper* submission, suggesting the challenge posed by China could be geo-economic, geopolitical ("employing its growing economic and military power to alter states' political and strategic alignments") or a larger systemic/hegemonic threat ("determined to introduce a new global order pillared on norms, rules, institutions

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[29] Mearsheimer, "Realism and Restraint," 24.

[30] Jonathan D. Caverley and Peter Dombrowski, "Too Important to Be Left to the Admirals: The Need to Study Maritime Great-Power Competition," *Security Studies* 29, no. 4 (2020): 579.

[31] *Ibid.*, 580.

[32] Parvaiz Ahmad Thoker and Hilal Ramzan, "Indo-Pacific and the Emerging Maritime Geopolitics: Contending Sino-Indian Strategic Interests," *The IUP Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2018): 8.

[33] Benjamin Lombardi, "The Future Maritime Operating Environment and the Role of Naval Power," *Defence Research and Development Canada Scientific Report*, May 2016, 1-114.

and relations of their own making which others must operate within").[34] This conundrum poses two questions that are addressed in this study.

First, this paper considers whether Canada is directly threatened by China's growing maritime power, or rather is it the extant RBLIO, and if it is the latter, how much of a problem is that for Canada? Second, measuring threat at the international level requires a clearly defined framework, yet no accepted "standard" exists. Is it an assessment of maritime capabilities, representing power projection capability? Or rather by intent, using predictions based on past and present actions, or stated national strategic goals? What is needed is a holistic view, based on established international relations (IR) theory, that fuses all elements of determining threat.

To clarify who or what is threatened empirically, this research paper will use IR theory, specifically Stephen Walt's "Balance of Threat" (BoT) theory, to establish that a revisionist China's increasingly aggressive application of maritime power within the emergent multipolar security environment threatens Canada's strategic interests directly, in tangible and material ways, but more significantly is actively being used to alter the foundation that underpins Canadian maritime security and prosperity- the RBLIO. While the physical distance between the two countries mitigates the impact of Walt's geographic proximity factor, China's impressive aggregate power and offensive capabilities, paired with its demonstrable aggressive and revisionist intent in the maritime domain provides the detailed analysis to support this thesis. Several options exist for Canada to navigate this hazardous maritime domain, but Canada must square the

[34] Adam P. Macdonald and Carter Vance, 7.

disparity between preserving core tenets of the RBLIO that underwrite national security with the reality that this world order is evolving, and a Chinese restoration will be a major feature of it.

Methodology and Roadmap

To provide a holistic foundation for this paper's thesis, sources include academic peer-reviewed journals, academic (but not peer-reviewed) dissertations and institutional reports, and non-academic news articles. The former, such as *Security Studies, Asian Security,* and *International Security,* comprises 26 of this paper's 81 sources and were favoured for their scholarly rigour. They primarily inform the sections parsing specific issues, such as China's behaviour in the South China Sea, and the original 1985 source for Stephen Walt's "Balance of Threat" (BoT) framework, although they do not provide direct connections to Canada's strategic interests. Further, publication timelines preclude their impact on some events that occurred in 2020 or 2021. Analysis of proceedings from the Canadian perspective, especially those since 2020, chiefly fall to institutional academic reports, such as those published by the CDA Institute, Canadian Global Affairs Institute, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, and the Defence and Security Foresight Group. While lacking the rigour of peer-review, these reports provide timely scholarly analysis from a variety of viewpoints. Indeed, this paper includes an analysis of these competing conclusions about the level of threat China's maritime power poses to Canada and appropriate Canadian responses, although in general, they did not follow a specific analytical framework, such as BoT. News articles, government documents, and United Nations (UN) fact sheets complete the backbone of this research paper by providing data points or quoting expert observations of events that occurred through 2020 and 2021.

Notably, Canadian government or military documents make vague mention of the threat or challenge posed by China, but it is rarely discussed in detail. Therefore, this research paper's design uses a specific and deliberate analytical framework grounded in IR theory— Walt's BoT, to explore the relationship between China's maritime power and Canada's strategic interests in a more empirical way. It is worth noting the open temporal nature of this research question, and this paper uses a cut-off date of 6 April 2021 to avoid being influenced by "breaking" but potentially incomplete news coverage.

To support this methodology, Chapter Two will explore several core IR theories and their benefits and limits as a framework for assessing the extent of the threat China's application of maritime power poses to Canadian strategic interests. In this analysis, Walt's BoT theory, which uses the four factors of aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capability, and offensive intentions to argue state relations are a product of both objective capabilities but also a subjective interpretation of intent, emerges as a pragmatic defensive neorealist framework for understanding threat at the international level. For clarity, BoT theory has been used in scholarly analysis to explain interstate behaviour as recently as 2020, demonstrating its validity in academia.

To continue framing the problem, Chapter Three provides the necessary Canadian context by examining Canadian strategic maritime interests and what factors or institutions underpin their security. It establishes that multilateral cooperation with allies and partners in asserting maritime power and reinforcing the RBLIO grants agency to "middle powers" like Canada and is essential to its security and prosperity. Understanding that world order is not fixed, the core tenets of the RBLIO are what natter

most to Canada— adherence to international law, respect for multilateral institutions, and the collective defence of the order by partners committed to it.

From the Canadian standpoint, the fourth and fifth chapters analyze China's maritime power, leading to several conclusions about the nature of the Sino-Canadian international power dynamic within the maritime domain. Chapter Four focuses on the first three objective factors, finding that China's maritime power represents a significant *potential* threat to Canada's maritime strategic interests. Chapter Five dives deeper into Walt's most important factor- that of subjective intent, giving meaning to that *potential*, concluding that China's assertive and revisionist intent paired with its significant maritime power represents a fundamental threat to the RBLIO and Canada's maritime interests.

Finally, Chapter Six explores maritime options for how Canada could reinforce the RBLIO in the maritime domain. It first considers which of Walt's four factors can reasonably be influenced by Canadian action, concluding that shaping China's intent, or *how* it applies its maritime power, is the only rational choice. Next, the chapter explores Ends, Ways, and Means within the range of Canada's control. In defining "the Ends" favourable to Canadian security and prosperity, defensive realism's "balancing or bandwagoning" response to external state threats suggests Canada could support shaping efforts in the IAP that encourage regional balancing favourable to the core tenets of the RBLIO and discourage bandwagon behaviour favourable to China's revisionist agenda. Finally, the chapter explores the "Ways and Means" for Canada to achieve this, fusing the diplomatic, military, and informational instruments of national power into a holistic solution.

CHAPTER 2: A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING "THREAT" AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The main themes outlined in Chapter One paint a complex international mosaic that appears daunting for a "middle power" to comprehend. An emergent regional Chinese hegemon, with possibly global ambitions and its own view of world order, is challenging the pre-eminent American superpower and upholder of the extant RBLIO. Indeed, there is broad consensus that the unipolar moment is over, and we have entered an increasingly multipolar international security environment. Canada finds itself betwixt the giants, with interests tied to both, and lacks a coherent policy on how to press forward in safeguarding its security and prosperity with ties to the IAP region. As a starting point, selecting a framework grounded in established IR theory will begin the process of defining the problem.

Numerous IR theories can be applied to explain past state behaviour, predicting future behaviour, and even recommending courses of action for states to follow, making the selection of a particular theory a formidable but necessary task. Further, IR theories can wax and wane in suitability, according to their proponents and opponents, based on circumstances internal and external to a state. This research paper seeks to address the threat posed by China's application of maritime power on Canada's maritime strategic interests in the emerging security environment, so the concepts of "threat" and "power" between states at the international level are central to theory selection. This would suggest a theory grounded in IR realism, yet other schools are worth considering, ensuring relevant aspects might be included in the final selection.

Social Constructivism

Social constructivism provides an alternative view to classical understandings of "power", which has drawbacks but also can contribute to a holistic framework. Indeed, "it is widely recognized that constructivism is strong, precisely where other approaches are generally weak, and vice versa."[35] The core deviation from realism is that "norms and ideas also constitute power and interests, that is, politics is not just material, but is truly social."[36] To further complicate the picture, developing and non-western powers are increasingly shaping the international scene, with their own norms and ideas. Social constructivism, then, becomes almost unbearably complex given the number of variables, and "is focused on explanation more than prediction."[37] However, the aspect of assessing "threat" based on the inter-state perception of intent is salient. Adam MacDonald of Dalhousie University provides a fitting example, where he suggests that should the United Kingdom (UK) and North Korea announce an expansion of nuclear capability, "The West will perceive Pyongyang's decision as a threat due to existing and ongoing antagonistic relations, while the UK's actions would entice curiosity and investigation but not apprehension."[38] To constructivists, the interpretation of intent, and not just the presence of increased power, matters.

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[35] Hoyoon Jung, "The Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science: Past to Present," *SAGE Open* (January-March 2019): 8.

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] Adam MacDonald, "Analyzing China's Rise in International Relations Theory: Social Constructivism – Part 4," *CDA Institute*, 18 November 2015, last accessed 18 April 2021, https://cdainstitute.ca/analyzing-china-s-rise-in-international-relations-theory-social-constructivism-part-4/.

[38] *Ibid.*

Liberal Institutionalism

Liberal institutionalism shares common origins with realism and may seem an attractive framework to use for nations that place great emphasis on the RBLIO and multilateral institutions for security and prosperity. Indeed, while liberal institutionalists "agree that states act in their own interests," they emphasize that "Globalization represents an increase in interconnectedness and linkages; this mutual interdependence between states positively affects behavioural patterns and changes the way states cooperate."[39] Further, institutionalists square the issue of relative military power between states as being managed "through security institutions signaling governments' intentions by providing others with adequate information."[40] In short, anarchy in the international system is reduced via interdependence and cooperation. However, while this may work effectively for nations in security alignment, such as NATO, this approach is limited when considering potential adversaries, such as China. Deepened economic linkages may limit a state's freedom of action, rather than enable it, particularly from the weaker state's perspective. In the case of the Sino-Canadian relationship, "China has applied economic coercion on Canada," which is part of the Chinese strategy of "Using 'sticks,' or punishments, on smaller foreign countries to extract compliance," in addition to "hostage diplomacy."[41] Liberal institutionalism requires honest cooperation between states and adherence to international laws and norms to achieve its purported benefits in the economic and security realms. China has diverged from this path. Therefore, real limits

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[39] Alexander Whyte, "Neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism: born of the same approach?," *E-International Relations*, 11 June 2012, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.e-ir.info/2012/06/11/neorealism-and-neoliberal-institutionalism-born-of-the-same-approach/.

[40] *Ibid*., 3

[41] Lynette H. Ong, "Navigating Canada-China Relations in a Turbulent Era," *Public Policy Forum*, 7 October 2020, 5.

exist to how effective an institutionalist approach would be in acting as a framework for assessing the impact of China's maritime power on Canada's strategic interests because one of the players is simply not acting as the model predicts. In a sense, China is *increasing* anarchy in the international system, and acting rationally according to its own worldview, suggesting a realist approach for analysis. However, adherence to multilateral institutions and deeper cooperation and economic networks remain instrumental to security and prosperity between states committed to the RBLIO. Therefore, liberal institutional values can be advocated by Canada, but grounded in a realistic approach when engaging beyond extant adherents to the RBLIO.

Realism

Realism, and its many derivatives, has enjoyed a prominent place in IR for decades. Defensive realism stands out as a framework option for Canada in the emerging security environment. While sharing the same core tenets as classical realism, it is more measured and balanced than the tone struck within offensive realism. It has a "slightly more optimistic view of international politics" where states "strive to maximize relative security, not relative power" and "can achieve security by pursuing moderate foreign policies."[42] "Moderation" and "balance" are very Canadian ways of approaching international issues, and realism is likely to become a more prominent IR theory in coming years. John Mearsheimer opined in 2019 that the restoration of Chinese power, and a resurgent Russia, are "likely to bring realism back to the fore in Washington since it is impossible to pursue liberal hegemony when there are other great powers in the

[42] Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Security Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited," *International Security* 25, no. 3 (Winter 2000/01): 159.

international system," with a particular goal of preventing "China from becoming a regional hegemon in Asia."[43] Further, approaches grounded in realism are noted to have emerged in New Delhi and Canberra, as these IAP democracies "both claim the regional strategic environment is worsening because China's assertiveness and even aggression are disrupting the international order."[44] Japanese foreign policy has been noted to follow "maritime realism."[45] Indeed, if Canada's defence partners have or are likely to adopt a realist bent, Canada could also consider exigent foreign policy problems through a realist derivative that pairs with the Canadian reality in world affairs.

"Balance of Power" (BoP) theory, proposed by Kenneth Waltz, is one of the most well-known theories within the defensive neorealist school. He proposed that states are the main unit of action on the international stage, they are rational, the state system is anarchic, and "states are not differentiated by their functions, but by their capabilities (power)."[46] Power, according to Waltz, was an aggregate of "size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence."[47] Further, "Power is the instrument that states use to fulfill their primary goal: survival, independence, sovereignty—in short, their security."[48] Finally, in the states system, equilibrium is achieved "when various states strive for security and expansion through power. This equilibrium is the balance of power. States seeking

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[43] Mearsheimer, "Realism and Restraint," 23.

[44] Purnendra Jain, "Hesitant Realism: China–India Border Tensions and Delhi's Deepening Strategic Ties with Tokyo and Canberra," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 8, no. 1 (2021): 89.

[45] Takuya Matsuda, "Explaining Japan's post-Cold War security policy trajectory: maritime realism," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 6 (2020): 687.

[46] Gregory James Cook, "Balance of Threat Theory and the Case of Yugoslavia, 1943 – 1964," (master's thesis, University of Virginia, 2000), 5.

[47] Brian Schmidt, "Competing Realist Conceptions of Power," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 538.

[48] *Ibid.*

survival balance against the power of revisionist states in order safeguard the status quo."[49] The theory is intuitive and formed the basis for many analyses in IR. However, Waltz's definition of power has its critics. Brian Schmidt argued that "Conceived in this manner, the capabilities of a state represent nothing more than the sum total of a number of loosely identified national attributes."[50] He also found that Waltz did not "provide a detailed discussion of state capabilities or indicate precisely how they should be measured."[51] Stephen Walt, in his 1985 "Balance of Threat" (BoT) theory, took this defensive neorealist approach a step further.

Stephen Walt's "Balance of Threat"

In analyzing classic realist *balancing* and *bandwagoning* behaviour between states, Walt found that framing actions "solely in terms of power" was flawed, because "it ignores the other factors that statesmen will consider when identifying potential threats and prospective allies."[52] Quite simply, "Rather than allying in response to power alone, it is more accurate to say that states will ally with or against the most *threatening* power."[53] Such a distinction adds an element of intent analysis to the problem. Indeed, as the US grew in relative power versus Canada into the 20th century, Canada did not balance against its rising neighbor. Instead, and for many reasons, Canada sought closer association and eventually became a staunch supporter of the US-led RBLIO through the Cold War and beyond. On the contrary, "if the weaker state perceives the stronger state as a threat, then the weaker state will balance against the stronger state in order to protect

[49] Schmidt, 538.
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] Walt, 8
[53] *Ibid.*

itself."[54] In determining threat, Walt defined four threat factors: aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capability, and offensive intentions.

BoT first assesses aggregate power, where "The greater a state's total resources (i.e., population, industrial and military capability, technological prowess, etc.), the greater a potential threat it can pose to others."[55] By the same token, "a state is not likely to be viewed as a threat if it is weak," even if its intentions are at odds with another state.[56] Indeed, while it is highly antagonistic and does pose a limited threat within the western Pacific region, with its vastly weaker aggregate power North Korea does not figure highly within Canadian discourse as an existential threat to the RBLIO or Canadian security and prosperity.

Second is geographic proximity, which is "also logical because a state that is further away will find it more difficult to project its power to threaten another state."[57] In a conventional sense, this remains true, although improvements to expeditionary staying power in the air and at sea have shrunk the battlespace. Further, the concept of proximity must now include nascent challenges of the emerging security environment. Space-based and cyber means of power projection, where the former can include covert and global coverage from orbit, and the latter which has virtually no geographic limitations (physical or satellite connections aside), are the principal drivers of this evolution.

Thirdly, BoT assesses offensive capability, where "All else being equal, states with large offensive capabilities are more likely to provoke an alliance than those who are

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[54] Cook, 7.
[55] Walt, 9.
[56] Cook, 11.
[57] *Ibid.*

either militarily weak or capable only of defending."[58] In addition to conventional military power, offensive capability can include other means of power projection within a particular domain, such as cyber and space-based assets, and other government department (OGD) assets.

The fourth factor, which Gregory Cook identified as the "key factor", is that of offensive intentions.[59] Indeed, it is this analysis of state intentions and consideration of subjective perception, rather than treating raw power as the primary factor, that fundamentally sets BoT theory apart from BoP or other realist theories. Petr Kratochvíl of the Institute of International Relations Prague found that BoT incorporates elements of constructivism, where "the questions Walt asks are virtually identical to those posed by constructivist scholars", and "The similarity is so striking that many authors pointed to the 'constructivist' features of Walt's work."[60] While critics may decry this approach as "degeneration and 'ad hocism' because balance of threat theory goes outside of the bounds of Neorealist thought", it attempts to "explain some of the many phenomena that structural realism has difficulty in explaining."[61] It considers that "Ideological antipathy, overt military build-ups, covert subversive activities, economic exploitation, revisionist strategies, and harsh rhetoric" are likely to be regarded as aggressive or hostile, while two states that "are alike, enjoy defensive advantages, face a common enemy, or share a common ideology" are "less likely to view each other as threats."[62] Other criticism has been levied against Walt's BoT theory. Kratochvíl argued in 2004 that "[Walt's] state-

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[58] Walt, 11.
[59] Cook, 12.
[60] Petr Kratochvíl, "The Balance of Threat Reconsidered: Construction of Threat in Contemporary Russia," *Institute of International Relations Prague,* September 2004, 3.
[61] Cook, 9.
[62] *Ibid.*

centric perspective, which clearly does not count with the rise of non-state threats, and his simple categorisation of the reaction to threat using [balancing and bandwagoning] further limit his contribution to current understandings of threat."[63] The point that BoT does not consider non-state threats is valid but is less important when making a comparison between two state parties such as Canada and China. He does, however, concede that "the underlying idea of asking both about the origin of threat and about the state's behaviour in face of the threat is an exceptionally good starting point for the construction of a model of threat politics."[64] A summary of Walt's four factors is displayed at Figure 1.

Walt's four factors in Balance of Threat theory	
Factor	Description
Aggregate Power	The greater a state's total resources (i.e., population, industrial and military capability, technological prowess, etc.), the greater a potential threat it can pose to others.
Geographic Proximity	Because the ability to project power declines with distance, states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away.
Offensive Capabilities	All else being equal, states with large offensive capabilities are more likely to provoke an alliance than those who are either militarily weak or capable only of defending.
Offensive Intent	States that appear aggressive are likely to provoke others to balance against them. Even states with rather modest capabilities may trigger a balancing response if they are perceived as especially aggressive.

Figure 1 – Walt's four factors in Balance of Threat theory
Source: Walt, p. 9-12

[63] Kratochvíl, 3.
[64] *Ibid.*

BoT theory, then, presents an approach that is grounded in defensive neorealism and incorporates objective capabilities with subjective interpretation of intent. Conceived in 1985 by Walt, it has proven to be more than just a theoretical exercise. It has found utility in the last 35 years.

Several scholars have used BoT theory in seeking to understand interstate behaviour. In his 2000 dissertation "Balance of Power vs. Balance of Threat: The Case of China and Pakistan," LCdr Micheal Watson of the US Navy found that BoT was an effective framework for explaining why China and Pakistan, despite several fundamental differences, worked together to balance against perceived Indian hegemonic intentions.[65]

In that same year, Gregory Cook's dissertation looked at Yugoslavia's actions between 1943 and 1964 through a BoT lens. He found the theory adequately explained why Yugoslavia "chose to become a de facto ally of the United States, the most powerful state in the world at the time, when it found itself the very likely target of Soviet aggression."[66] He concluded that Walt's theory "provides a scientific explanation of alliance choices and is intuitively sound."[67]

Tom Dyson used BoT theory in 2013 to explain European alliance choices in the post-Cold War environment. He argued that Cladi and Locatelli justly criticize the utility of BoP in explaining EU choices but found they did "not go into detail about alternative neorealist perspectives on the nature of systemic-level forces."[68] He drew two conclusions: firstly, that "'balance of threat' theory provides a very useful means to

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[65] Michael Watson, "Balance of Power vs. Balance of Threat: The Case of China and Pakistan," (master's thesis, United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 2000), iii.

[66] Cook, 89.

[67] Ibid, 91.

[68] Tom Dyson, "Balancing Threat, not Capabilities: European Defence Cooperation as Reformed Bandwagoning," *Contemporary Security Policy* 34, no. 2 (2013): 389.

understand European defence cooperation and overcomes some of the limitations associated with balance of power approaches."[69] Second, and similar to Kratochvíl, he argued that "realist scholarship that integrates the balance of threat and engages with moderate constructivism" will "develop a more nuanced understanding of the nature and relative importance" of variables in interstate analysis.[70]

Sangit Dwivedi revisited the Sino-Pakistan relationship in 2013. She found that Walt's theory was "an important study in demonstrating the role of perceptions in alliance politics" and that "India, by possessing the power coupled with its geographic proximity, offensive powers, and aggressive intentions posed a threat to Pakistan" in the post-Cold War period.[71]

David Scott used BoT theory in 2019 to explain and evaluate why Japan shifted significant attention towards the Indo-Pacific. He concluded the theory adequately explains Japan's behaviour from 2017, particularly the defence partnerships it has fostered with Vietnam and India because of the influence of geographic proximity and perceived Chinese intentions, and that "China still remains a threat to Japan. Walts' balance of threat criteria still point that way."[72]

Finally, Frederick Kliem applied BoT in his 2020 assessment of China vis-à-vis the US, India, Japan, and Australia.[73] He found that the formation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) defence and security partnership by these latter nations is a direct balancing result of high threat perceptions of Beijing's intent. Further, BoT has

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[69] *Ibid*.
[70] *Ibid.*, 390.
[71] Sangit Sarita Dwivedi, "Exploring Strategies and Implications of an Opportunistic Alliance: A Case Study of Pakistan and China," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 21, no. 3 (2013): 325.
[72] David Scott, "The Geoeconomics and Geopolitics of Japan's 'Indo-Pacific' Strategy," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 6, no. 2 (2019): 155.
[73] Kliem, 271-304.

permitted a "factual and empirically testable prediction of a current phenomenon of contemporary Asian geopolitics: Quad and Quad-like arrangements are the [Indo-Pacific region's] future."[74]

Clearly, Walt's BoT theory has proven useful in understanding interstate behaviour since its inception in 1985. It improved on Waltz's BoP theory by better defining the categories of power, and it incorporated that critical element of subjective intent to bind and give meaning to the objective factors of aggregate power, geographic proximity, and offensive capabilities. Such an analytical framework presents as ideal for assessing the threat of China's maritime power on Canada's maritime strategic interests within the emerging multipolar security environment and its attendant increase in system anarchy. China's aggregate power, geographic proximity to Canada and its present and future maritime capabilities can be objectively measured and compared to those of Canada, completing the first step of the analysis. Further, China's intent in the maritime domain can be established by assessing *how* and *why* Beijing has employed these factors in the period from 2010 to 2021. However, before proceeding it is essential to provide the perspective through which this question is viewed- the Canadian context. The next chapter will examine Canadian maritime interests and how Canada underwrites their security with a view to providing this focusing lens.

[74] Kliem, 273.

CHAPTER 3: THE CANADIAN CONTEXT

To properly employ BoT framework, a perspective must be established which focuses on aspects relevant to the research question- listing Canadian aggregate power and overall capabilities does not serve analysis tailored to Canada's maritime strategic interests. Rather, it is essential to define those interests and identify how their security is underwritten. Central to these interests is Canada's maritime character. Including the Arctic archipelago, it possesses the longest coastline in the world and its strategic interests are inexorably bound to this reality. Figure 2 provides a succinct perspective, with no other state approaching the total Canadian coastline of 243,042 km. Indonesia is a far second at 54,716 km.[75]

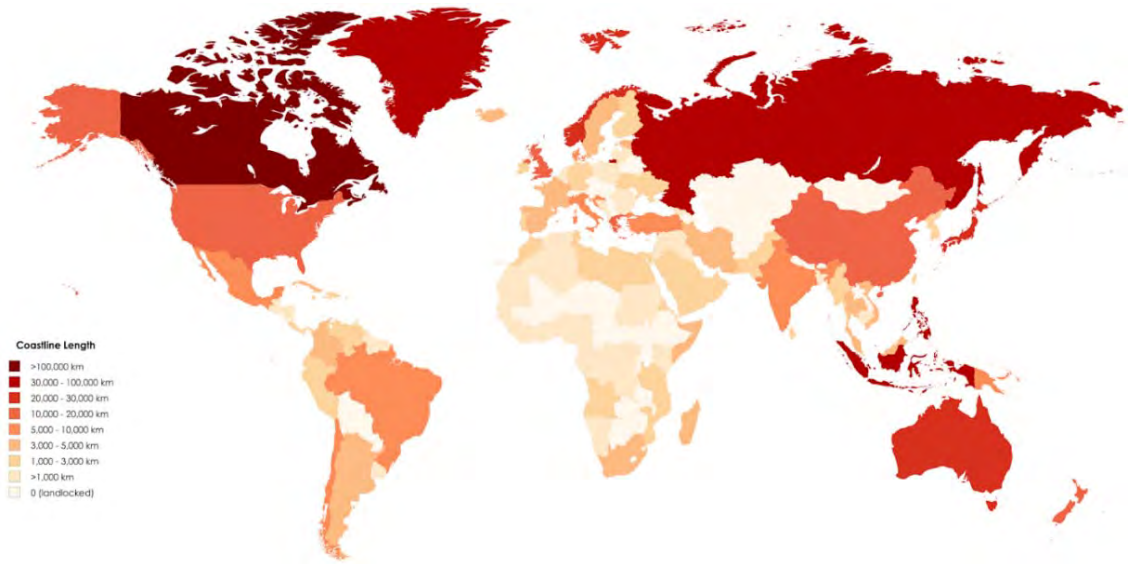

Figure 2 – Countries by coastline length
Source: https://vividmaps.com/countries-by-absolute-coastline-length/

[75] Statistics Canada, "International Perspective," last accessed 29 April 2021, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-402-x/2012000/chap/geo/geo01-eng.htm.

Maritime trade

Trans-ocean trade, which is a key component of prosperity among the global commons, is a vital strategic interest in Canada. Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper summed Canada's reliance in 2012, stating "Canada is a maritime nation, a maritime nation with trade, commerce and interests around the world. Surrounded as we are by three oceans, it can truly be said that Canada and its economy floats on salt water."[76] Within this sector, the IAP region has rapidly become a priority for commerce, with ratification in 2018 of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) a clear sign of the emphasis Canada is placing on it. As Jeff Kucharski wrote in 2018, the IAP "is on track for the largest economic transformation and the biggest shift in the distribution of wealth in history, presenting unprecedented opportunities for increased trade with the region."[77] It has already overtaken the value of trans-Atlantic trade and continues to grow.[78] One area in particular merits attention— the South China Sea (SCS). Through this vital artery that facilitated just over US$3 trillion of trade in 2016, "Canada accounted for US$21 billion – not an inconsequential figure as it represents 16 per cent of Canada's total Indo-Pacific trade."[79] Four regional states are among the 11 participants in CPTPP, meaning any disturbance in the SCS would impact the operation of this new agreement. Immigration to Canada also passes significantly

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[76] Joseph K. Spears, "In the 21st Century, ocean shipping matters to Canada," *Canadian Sailings: Transportation and Trade Logistics*, 9 September 2014, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://canadiansailings.ca/in-the-21st-century-ocean-shipping-matters-to-canada/.

[77] Jeffrey B. Kucharski, "Energy, Trade and Geopolitics in Asia: The Implications for Canada," *The School of Public Policy Publications* 11, no. 19 (July 2018): 2.

[78] *Ibid*., 5.

[79] *Ibid*., 7.

through this area.[80] In the event of instability in the SCS, mitigation via alternate routing south of the region and closer to Australia is possible. While the increased cost would not be substantial, it does not diminish the impact to Southeast Asian (SEA) nations who possess ports only within the SCS.[81] The free and smooth flow of marine traffic through the IAP to Canada represents a strategic interest that will only gain importance beyond 2021.

Within the broader IAP sits Canada's trade relationship with China. In 2020, exports to China were CAD$25.2 billion, representing just over five percent of total exports worldwide, and China was "the second largest market for Canadian canola in 2020 in terms of value" and the top export destination for canola seed, despite the Chinese ban on the product.[82] Imports from China were $76.4 billion, representing 16% of imports in 2020.[83] These facts are summarized in Figure 3.

Trade (Exports)	Jan-Dec 2019	Jan-Dec 2020	% Change
China	$23.3B	$25.2B	8.12
Others	$569.4B	$497.3B	-12.66
Total All Countries	$592.6B	$522.4B	-11.85

Trade (Imports)	Jan-Dec 2019	Jan-Dec 2020	% Change
China	$75.0B	$76.4B	1.91
Others	$526.7B	$465.3B	-11.65
Total All Countries	$601.7B	$541.8B	-9.96

Figure 3 – 2020 Canada-China Trade
Source: Tom Alton, "Canada-China Trade: 2020 Year in Review."

[80] *Ibid.*
[81] Rebecca Strating, *Defending the Maritime Rules Based Order: Regional Responses to the South China Sea Disputes* (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2020), 13.
[82] Tom Alton, "Canada-China Trade: 2020 Year in Review," *University of Alberta China Institute*, 22 February 2021, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.ualberta.ca/china-institute/research/analysis-briefs/2021/canada-china-2020-yearinreview.html.
[83] *Ibid.*

China has become Canada's second-largest trading partner in the world, second only to the US.[84] In 2019, Conference Board of Canada chief economist Pedro Antunes weighed in on the impact of the deterioration in this trade relationship. He stated, "we're not totally lost without China," but acknowledges that forging ahead without the Asian giant "would not be easy," particularly for specific sectors of the Canadian economy, such as canola, pork, or the 15% of British Columbian exports that head to China.[85] Within the broader IAP region, this trade relationship is meaningful to Canada and cannot easily be dismissed when assessing the potential impacts of Canadian efforts in the region.

Canada's Arctic region

Another major strategic interest with a maritime nexus is the security and prosperity of Canada's Arctic region. Within this domain, the Canadian Arctic and Northern Policy Framework outlines six key goals. Four of them are heavily influenced by international actors and are illustrative of key issues Canada faces globally. Goal 3 is to develop "strong, sustainable, diversified and inclusive local and regional economies" that "contributes to the resilience of Arctic and northern communities and sustainable growth that benefits all Canadians."[86] There is an acknowledgement that "International trade and foreign investment are important contributors to growth," but it must conform to Canadian regulatory frameworks in the Arctic. Resource development, including terrestrial minerals, offshore petroleum, and fisheries, immediately springs to mind.

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[84] Ethan Lou, "What a trade war with China would do to Canada," *Macleans,* 28 June 2019, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/what-a-trade-war-with-china-would-do-to-canada/.

[85] Lou.

[86] Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework," last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1560523306861/1560523330587#s6.

Enforcement of Canadian regulations using tangible assets such as ships or aircraft over such a vast and remote territory poses logistical challenges, leading to an increased reliance on the RBLIO to buttress normative behaviour in the region. Indeed, Goal 6 requires that "The rules-based international order in the Arctic responds effectively to new challenges and opportunities," including bolstering Canadian leadership in multilateral forums "where polar issues are discussed and decided upon."[87] Canada has already established itself a leader in this regard by being an active member of the Arctic Council and creating regulatory frameworks grounded in international law, such as the Arctic Safety and Pollution Prevention Regulations (ASSPPR).[88] While domestic capabilities will play a role in achieving Goal 5, reaching multilateral agreements on environmental protections will be essential to ensure "Canadian Arctic and northern ecosystems are healthy and resilient." Ecosystems simply do not conform to defined territorial zones, so compliance beyond Canadian jurisdiction for adjacent depends on adherence to international law. Goal 7, guaranteeing "The Canadian Arctic and North and its people are safe, secure and well-defended," relates more directly to the maritime security and the territorial sovereignty concerns of Canada. A statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy from a decade ago was unequivocal— "the first and most important pillar towards recognizing the potential of Canada's Arctic is the exercise of our sovereignty over the Far North."[89] While emphasis is made on Canadian intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities to fulfil this mandate, there is discrete

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[87] Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

[88] Kristin Bartenstein, "Between the Polar Code and Article 234: The Balance in Canada's Arctic Shipping Safety and Pollution Prevention Regulations," *Ocean Development and International Law* 50, no. 4 (2019): 335.

[89] Government of Canada, "Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy," last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/arctic-arctique/arctic_policy-canada-politique_arctique.aspx?lang=eng.

acknowledgement that collaboration with "with international allies and partners" is essential. The multilateral theme across these four goals is palpable.

Canada has a vested interest but less clout to impact Arctic development and activities in areas beyond its jurisdiction. As the Arctic continues to warm and new opportunities for navigation and resource development emerge, "competition for resources in the area outside countries' EEZ spaces, including in the Arctic region, has the potential to generate new conflicts."[90] Yen-Chiang Chang of Dalian Maritime University echoes this, noting "it is necessary to resolve the future of central Arctic Ocean fisheries governance."[91] While multinational bodies dedicated to prudent management of Arctic resources and its environment will be essential to minimizing damage and conflict in this international space, equally important is an enduring commitment to multilateralism and international law in the region.

Canada's fishing industry

The maintenance of a sustainable fishing industry remains a key Canadian maritime interest. Indeed, as a proponent of the United Nations "Sustainable Development Goals," Canada seeks to "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development."[92] Managing competing domestic interests has been a challenge, illustrated by the friction over the moderate livelihood industry being pursued by First Nations in Nova Scotia in 2020. International contests

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[90] Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, "Clashes at Sea: Explaining the Onset, Militarization, and Resolution of Diplomatic Maritime Claims," *Security Studies* 29, no. 4 (2020): 668.

[91] Yen-Chiang Chang, "The Sino-Canadian Exchange on the Arctic: Conference report," *Marine Policy* 99 (2019): 78.

[92] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development," last accessed 21 April 2021, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal14.

have been more muted, but climate change will likely pose new risks in the future. It is expected that "climate changes will negatively impact fisheries and increase competition over migratory fish stocks, a dangerous situation that escalated past maritime disputes."[93] Should traditional resource sites begin to diminish, hungry nations may begin to look further abroad to feed their populations. Canada has faced international tensions over fishing before, such as the Turbot War with Spain in 1995, but the scenario becomes much more complex if the competitor has a significant relative maritime power advantage, unlike Spain.

This account of specific Canadian strategic interests in the maritime domain highlights a challenge for a middle power to grapple with— how is it, then, that Canada secures these interests at home, within Canada and its littoral regions, and projects power abroad, upholding the RBLIO and freedom of the global commons? The potential answer is two-fold, comprising tangible and less tangible components, and completes the framing of the Canadian context.

Canada's tangible, "hard power" maritime assets

Firstly, and most tangible to an observer, are the "hard power" assets that Canada uses to underwrite maritime security and prosperity. Within the BoT framework, it is understood as "capability" and will play a comparative role when assessing commensurate Chinese capabilities in Chapter Four. The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), and Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) are the most visible elements. Although somewhat diminished from the small Task Group capability it

[93] Mitchell, 668.

possessed a decade ago, complete with frigates, destroyers, submarines, and support ships, the RCN boasts a modest twelve frigate, twelve patrol ship, and four conventional submarine capability to undertake domestic and expeditionary operations. The RCAF backs maritime support with ship-borne helicopters but truly extends the range of capabilities with its CP-140 Aurora long-range patrol aircraft, although they are advanced in age and limited to just 18 in number. The leasing of a commercial interim support ship, MV *Asterix*, has bridged some of the support gap that emerged following retirement of the *Protecteur*-class. It is intended to remain as an interim measure until the two new *Protecteur*-class, known as the Joint Support Ship (JSS), achieves operational capability in the 2020s. In addition, fleet recapitalization under the National Shipbuilding and Procurement Strategy (NSPS) includes six *Harry DeWolf*-class Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) to bolster patrol capability globally, and 15 Canadian Surface Combatants (CSC) to revive the capabilities of the retired *Iroquois*-class destroyers and replace the *Halifax*-class frigates.[94] Modernization of the *Victoria*-class submarines is likely to keep the class in service through the 2020s, fulfilling key strategic sea denial and ISR tasks, although this does not include Arctic capabilities and reach is limited to due the small class size. While the first AOPS is already in service, it is regrettable the CSC project is facing significant costing challenges, having ballooned from CAD$14 billion in 2008 to $77 billion in 2021.[95] The total package represents a potent mix of increased combat and surveillance capability, but that future is far from certain and is chiefly

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[94] Public Services and Procurement Canada, "Large vessel shipbuilding projects," last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/app-acq/amd-dp/mer-sea/sncn-nss/grandnav-largeves-eng.html.

[95] David Pugliese, "Billions in trouble: How the crown jewel of Canada's shipbuilding strategy became a possible financial disaster waiting in the wings," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 10 December 2020, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/billions-in-trouble-how-the-crown-jewel-of-canadas-shipbuilding-strategy-became-a-possible-financial-disaster-waiting-in-the-wings.

limited to non-Arctic waters. The miring of large capital projects like the CSC is alarming because "Given the time it takes to create a fleet, we need to act now because when future crises arise, the navy you start with is probably the navy you finish with."[96] It also remains a modest size for the vast scale of domestic territory and expeditionary ambitions, although domestically Canada benefits significantly from the maritime warning aspect of NORAD. All told, modern navies are required to be poised to conduct a range of tasks, such as constabulary roles, defence diplomacy, capacity building, war at sea, sea control, and sea denial.[97] CAF forces possess these capabilities but are limited in unilateral scope of action. Domestically, support to OGDs and national operations, such as Operation *Nanook*, will remain core tasks for the RCN and RCAF. Individual deployments, such as Operation *Projection*, and contributions to multi-national efforts, such as Operation *Reassurance* with NATO and Operation *Neon* enforcing the embargo off North Korea, will remain key methods of power projection for the RCN. These missions emphasize defence diplomacy, interoperability with allies, and support the rule of law, including exercises up to and including full spectrum operations, but tend to occur with single ships only, one at a time per coast. To fully express sea power, even within Canadian jurisdiction, the RCN and RCAF must look to cooperation with allies.

Domestically, the CCG possesses a robust mix of ships in its fleet, from the 11,000 tonne CCGS *Louis St-Laurent* heavy icebreaker, to the just over 50 small Search and Rescue (SAR) lifeboats. With a mandate as wide as the territory it must cover, the CCG is responsible for the maintenance of safety of navigation, environmental response,

[96] Robertson, 14,
[97] Lombardi, chapter 6.

SAR, and domestic maritime security.[98] It also provides support to other OGDs with maritime interests, such as the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Canada Border Services Agency. Like the RCN, the CCG is using interim solutions to bridge capability gaps until new ships under NSPS are delivered, such as the three medium icebreakers recently purchased from Norway and refitted to CCG needs.[99] NSPS has already yielded new hulls for the CCG, in the form of the three Offshore Fisheries Science Vessels. Future major projects include two AOPS built for the CCG, up to 16 Multi-Purpose Vessels for moderate icebreaking and other tasks, while the single largest hull is the *Polar*-class icebreaker of 23,500 tonnes, meant to replace the aging *Louis St-Laurent*. Also like the RCN, this latter major project is facing challenges. After the shipyard selected to build the ship, Seaspan of Vancouver, BC, dropped the order for the ship, the Canadian government has asked "Canadian shipyards to lay out why they should be chosen to build a new heavy icebreaker for the Coast Guard, setting the stage for a fierce new round of fighting among the country's major shipbuilders."[100] While the replacement of one-for-one of the heavy icebreaker and modest increases of fleet capabilities elsewhere represents positive movement, the fleet is still challenged to realise its presence over the vastness of Canada's three oceans, especially the Arctic.

Linking the RCN and CCG together, along with other elements such as the RCAF, OGDs, and US partners, are the three Maritime Security Operations Centres

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[98] Canadian Coast Guard, "Mandate," last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/corporation-information-organisation/mandate-mandat-eng.html.

[99] Canadian Coast Guard, "Canadian Coast Guard's latest icebreakers," last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/fleet-flotte/icebreaker-brise-glace-eng.html.

[100] Lee Berthiaume, "Federal government soliciting pitches from Canadian shipyards to build new icebreaker," *CTV News*, 29 February 2020, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://vancouverisland.ctvnews.ca/federal-government-soliciting-pitches-from-canadian-shipyards-to-build-new-icebreaker-1.4833554.

(MSOC), which provide a critical fusion function for domestic maritime domain awareness. Mandated to detect, assess, and respond to maritime security threats that affect Canada's safety, security, economy, and environment, they utilise a host of sensors to maintain this picture.[101] Notable is support from the Canadian Space Agency and its RADARSAT and RADARSAT-2 capability. It supports multiple agencies, providing "Arctic surveillance in support of Canada's sovereignty, near-real-time ship detection, and maritime surveillance" and "Combining RADARSAT-2 images with space-based Automatic Identification System (AIS) data [enabling] the identification of ships and the detection of dark ships (those that are supposed to transmit AIS signals but do not), both in Canadian waters and elsewhere."[102] Canada, therefore, has a demonstrable capability to monitor and track surface vessels operating in its domestic areas of responsibility and limited support for global operations. However, it lacks a subsurface monitoring capability in the Arctic. Furthermore, presence-based responses to threats are limited by vessel availability and the distances involved across all areas of responsibility, but especially in the Arctic. Retired Major-General David Fraser commented at the March 2021 Ottawa Security and Defence Conference that Canada "needs to have a bigger military presence in the Arctic, including continuous surveillance operations using autonomous underwater vehicles and regular Navy and Coast Guard patrols."[103] Further, beyond a minimal submarine capability, Canada lacks Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) tools such as shore-based anti-ship missiles, or aircraft possessing a credible anti-ship

[101] Transport Canada, "Marine Security Operation Centres," last accessed 21 April 2021, https://tc.canada.ca/en/marine-transportation/marine-security/marine-security-operation-centres.

[102] Canadian Space Agency, "RADARSAT data to serve Canadians," last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.asc-csa.gc.ca/eng/satellites/radarsat/data-serve-canadians.asp.

[103] Robert Fife and Steven Chase, "Top defence official says China is a threat to Canadian Arctic,".

weapon. Given the limitations of its tangible assets to safeguard its security and prosperity over such a large swath of territory, Canada must marry its efforts to a less tangible but arguably more influential instrument— the RBLIO.

The Rules-Based Liberal International Order and Canada

The author's *Something Fishy in the SCS: Challenges to Maritime Security* drew out the key connections between the RBLIO and Canada's maritime strategic interests. From a policy perspective, deForest found that references to the RBLIO were featured heavily in capstone Global Affairs Canada (GAC) documents.[104] Further, as per figure 4, DND's SSE places the RBLIO on the same footing as "global stability" and "collective defence," but arguably the former is a product of a robust RBLIO and the latter a tool of RBLIO enforcement.

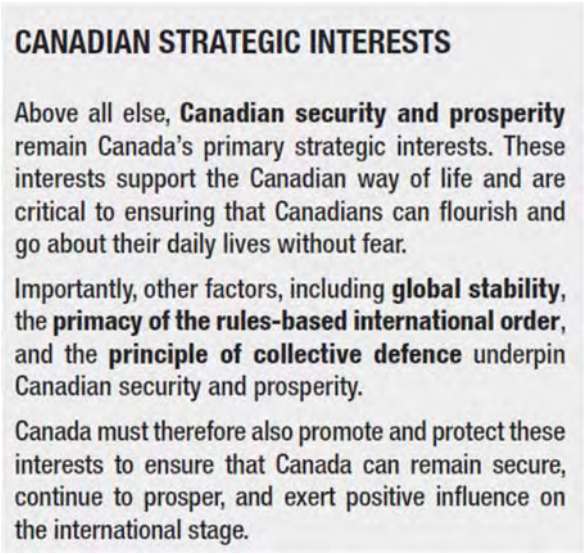

Figure 4 - Canadian Strategic Interests
Source: *Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, 59.

[104] Ryan C. deForest, "Something Fishy in the South China Sea: Challenges to Canadian Maritime Security," (Joint Command and Staff Program, Canadian Forces College, 2020), 11.

The order itself truly underwrites Canadian security and prosperity, and three aspects are salient for completing the Canadian context of this paper.

Firstly, deForest found that in the face of increasing system anarchy and rising great power competition in the emerging security environment, the RBLIO and international law function to reduce uncertainty and grant agency to middle powers who lack the tangible, "hard power" assets to fully back their strategic interests. He found that sovereign control, especially for Canada, would be jeopardized by a diminished RBLIO or disregard for international law.[105] Second, the multilateral institutions of a robust RBLIO provide Canada the conduits through which to wield influence on the global stage. Should the order be diminished, Canada's prospects of shaping favourable international support or compliance to multilateral decisions would be commensurately weakened. deForest pointed to Jeremy Paltiel's observation that efforts to uphold the RBLIO are "built on the hope of sustaining an inclusive global order, but also on the fear that a fragmented liberal world will leave us isolated and deprived of a sustaining global platform."[106] deForest also found that this position is not just Canada's. With unique national perspectives, other advocates of the RBLIO, such as Japan, Australia, and South Korea wish to discourage deviation from extant international customs or law.[107] With its global influence rooted staunchly in the RBLIO, Canada ought to be distressed at efforts to diminish it.

In addition to those points found in *Something Fishy in the South China Sea,* it is essential to highlight Canada's security relationship with the order's chief source of

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[105] deForest, 12.
[106] *Ibid*.
[107] *Ibid.*

staying power- the US. Lynette Ong of the University of Toronto succinctly captures the association:

> We must remain aware that the underlying premise for Canadian policymakers remains that our national security and economic prosperity are dependent on the United States. Three-quarters of Canada's merchandise exports, representing a fifth of GDP, go to the United States. Such is the destiny shaped by geography and our common histories.[108]

Roland Paris of the University of Ottawa echoes this outlook. He is unequivocal, observing that "The United States is our closest ally and trading partner. We must make the relationship work as best as possible."[109] Although the economic linkage is undeniably essential to Canadian prosperity, the security relationship goes beyond a neighborhood-watch association that is focused only on the defence of North America. The US has been the champion of the RBLIO and middle power democracies such as Canada depend on it to maintain that role. Despite its apparent withdrawal under the bellicose rhetoric of former President Donald Trump, the US has continued to use its unmatched military power to stand up for the core tenets of the RBLIO by providing significant support to formal alliances, such as NATO, and less formal arrangements, such as its engagement with defence partners in the IAP region. Multilateral engagement may grow under the Biden administration, where the new US president's recently "proposed approach involved renewing a leader-of-the-free-world ethos from the last century to rally democratic friends against this century's authoritarians."[110] This is

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[108] Ong, 4.

[109] Roland Paris, "Threats, Allies and Canadian Strategy," *CDA Institute*, 21 August 2020, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://cdainstitute.ca/cda-institute-interview-with-roland-paris-rethinking-canadian-foreign-policy-for-a-new-era/.

[110] Alexander Panetta, "China and Russia try to skewer Biden's attempt to restore leader-of-the-free-world role," *CBC News*, 20 March 2021, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/biden-china-russia-1.5957607.

welcome news to nations who depend on the RBLIO, like Canada, who could seek additional opportunities to shape the evolution of the RBLIO globally.

The Rules-Based Liberal International Order through a realist lens

Given the importance of the core tenets of the RBLIO in underpinning Canadian maritime security and prosperity, it is tempting to suggest using a liberal institutionalist framework to assess the impacts of Chinese maritime power on Canadian maritime strategic interests. However, doing so situates the RBLIO as the "natural" or "self-evident" order, which as the US unipolar moment fades, is clearly not the case. As Colin Robertson succinctly puts it, Canada must act "with recognition of our limitations and a realistic appreciation of the world as it is, not as wishful thinking imagines it to be."[111] That means assessing threats apart from ideology and against the foundations of Canadian security and prosperity, wed as they may be to an order that seems on the defensive from a host of actors. In an increasingly multipolar world, is it reasonable to expect this to remain the dominant world order? An evolved RBLIO may drop the "Liberal" from the title, focusing less on the export of liberal, democratic values but on the core tenets of international law, multilateral institutions, and the collective will to defend this order. To do so requires a better understanding of cultures "outside" the RBLIO society, and compromise. However, reaching any compromise in an evolved world order requires Canada to work with aligned partners to support those core tenets to not jeopardize its security and prosperity in the process.

[111] Robertson, 18.

Canada "joined the bandwagon" of the RBLIO in the post-World War II period and has remained a committed partner since. It was a realist decision then and remains so in 2021, acknowledging that liberal, democratic values are not the "natural" order for the globe, but that the RBLIO grants agency to middle powers and provides a blanket of security far beyond what ships, planes, and vehicles can provide. Vast sovereign territory. Global interests. Limited power projection domestically and abroad. This is the Canadian context. Dependent on the RBLIO to protect that sovereignty and project influence globally, it must champion these core tenets as this world order evolves within the emerging security environment. Walt's BoT theory, setting aside ideology, visions of what the world order "should be," and expanding on classical BoP theory, acknowledges threat is a realistic and complex product of objective facts and subjective interpretations of intent concerning a state's core interests. The next two chapters will explore each of Walt's four factors through this chapter's Canadian context. Chapter Four will consider the objective factors— aggregate power, geographic proximity, and offensive capabilities, and Chapter Five will delve into an interpretation of China's offensive intentions in the maritime domain to formulate an overall threat assessment of the level of threat posed by China's application of maritime power on Canada's maritime strategic interests.

CHAPTER 4: CHINESE MARITIME POWER AND ITS IMPLICATIONS THROUGH BALANCE OF THREAT THEORY, PART ONE

The next two chapters represent this paper's analysis of Walt's four BoT factors through those interests and capabilities established in the preceding chapter, the Canadian Context. Chapter Four will explore the objective factors, which in IR theory formed the basis for Waltz's earlier BoP theory. Although insufficient on their own, conclusions from the factors of aggregate power, geographic proximity, and offensive capabilities indicate that while geographic distance places an evident gap between the two nations, China's impressive aggregate power and offensive capabilities far outweigh those of Canada. The result is that China's maritime power represents a high level of *potential* threat to Canadian maritime strategic interests and gives context to subsequent interpretations of intent.

Aggregate Power

The resurgence of China's presence on the world stage in recent decades is manifest in a myriad of ways, including many of the elements that comprise BoT's aggregate power category, such as population, industrial capacity, and economic potential. At present, China has a population of just over 1.4 billion, which is expected to peak in 2030 and then slowly decline towards 2050. India is predicted to surpass China to become the most populous country by 2030, but China will remain far ahead of Canada, which will continue to grow to be just over 40 million in 2030.[112] While China's large population represents an opportunity, given the muscle it could provide to industrial

[112] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Population Dynamics," last accessed 12 April 2021, https://population.un.org/wpp/Graphs/.

capacity and the military, one aspect that stands out as a serious internal threat is its rapidly aging demographic and low birth rate. In fact, China is now facing a "severe labour shortage" that could have long-term repercussions for its society and economy.[113] This is the economy that has become the second-largest in the world and noted to have Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of nearly 10% a year since 1978, lifting more than 850 million people out of poverty.[114] In just 20 years, China's GDP rose from USD 1.2 trillion to 14.3 trillion in 2020, while Canada rose from 742 billion to only 1.7 trillion over the same period, although GDP per capita is four times greater in Canada.[115] Feeding this frenzy of growth has been a steady supply of raw materials, particularly via sea trading routes, bringing its reliance on sea-borne trade into focus. Indeed, China's appetite for energy is voracious, having become "the largest global energy consumer in 2011 and is the world's second-largest oil consumer behind the United States."[116] Addressing this increasing need for raw materials is a key objective of China's Belt and Road (BRI) initiative, which is demonstrating global reach as it seeks to develop and secure supply chains from source through to domestic intake.[117] Therefore, at the national level, China possesses a significant economic and industrial advantage over Canada. However, the World Bank notes a plethora of challenges as China transitions from "low-

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[113] Elizabeth Matsangou, "China suffers ageing population nearly 40 years after introduction of one-child policy," *World Finance*, 20 November 2017, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.worldfinance.com/strategy/china-suffers-ageing-population-nearly-40-years-after-introduction-of-one-child-policy.

[114] The World Bank, "The World Bank in China," last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview.

[115] The World Bank, "GDP (current US$) – China, Canada," last accessed 21 April 2021, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=CN-CA&name_desc=false.

[116] Sakuwa, 322.

[117] Norton Rose Fulbright, "The Belt & Road Initiative: A modern day silk road," May 2016, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.nortonrosefulbright.com/en/knowledge/publications/d2e05e9f/the-belt-road-initiative---a-modern-day-silk-road.

end manufacturing to higher-end manufacturing and services, and from investment to consumption."[118] Some observers note that the "economic model that propelled China through three decades of meteoric growth appears unsustainable," and these changes "will probably divert spending from both military development and the economic growth that sustains it."[119] Economist Milton Ezrati echoes this outlook, citing the demographic issues but also the limits of a centrally planned economy, and even went so far as to comment in December 2020 that "The inevitable dominance projected for this country, though certainly something to consider, is actually less likely than it seems."[120] Additionally, China relies on key sea lines of communication (SLOCs) to meet its energy and material demands that present strategic maritime vulnerabilities. While BRI seeks to diversify trade routes, their completion is not yet certain.[121] Therefore, while China's total aggregate power remains daunting from the Canadian perspective, it is beginning to face headwinds that may limit how much of the national treasury or industrial base is dedicated to projecting power in the maritime domain. However, even a modest decline still represents a major relative aggregate power advantage over Canada. Frederick Kliem, in his 2020 BoT analysis of China in the IAP, argued that "Chinese aggregate power is closer to the United States than any other competitor since WWII."[122] Further,

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[118] The World Bank, "The World Bank in China," last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview.

[119] David Axe, "The Chinese Navy Can't Grow Forever—The Slowdown Might Start Soon," *Forbes*, 12 November 2020, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidaxe/2020/11/12/the-chinese-navy-wont-grow-forever-the-slow-down-might-come-soon/?sh=7d0cdc387ac7.

[120] Milton Ezrati, "Behind Recent Good News, China's Economic Prospects Look Dubious," 3 December 2020, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.forbes.com/sites/miltonezrati/2020/12/03/behind-recent-good-news-chinas-economic-prospects-look-dubious/?sh=54b2a22f3de3.

[121] Matthew Mingey and Agatha Kratz, "China's Belt and Road: Down but not Out," *Rhodium Group*, 4 January 2021, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://rhg.com/research/bri-down-out/.

[122] Kliem, 288.

should China realize significant reforms to overcome the noted internal structural hurdles and develop its external BRI initiatives, its ability to underwrite maritime ambitions with its industrial and economic capacity will be greatly enhanced.

Geographic proximity in the maritime domain

Walt offered that "Because the ability to project power declines with distance, states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away," and this holds true in the 21st-century maritime domain. In the case of Canada and China, there is indeed a vast physical distance between the two. It is 10,500 km from Ottawa to Beijing over the North Pole, and 9,500 km across the Pacific Ocean between the nearest coastlines. For a naval task group traveling at a moderate speed, that represents a transit time of about 12 days! Compared to China's Asian and Oceanic neighbors, who are within mere days of Chinese naval bases or reach of Chinese missiles, Chinese maritime power may seem a world away. While partly true, vast oceanic distance does not completely mitigate the perception of threat. China's maritime power is heavily concentrated in its near-abroad, commonly referenced as out to the First Island Chain,[123] but it does have power projection capabilities that matter to Canada. It already can affect Canadian interests in the IAP, and as the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) becomes more proficient at self-sustaining at sea, it will be able to conduct longer duration operations further from its local bastions of power. Its sustainment is also enabled by port authority arrangements, such as establishing its first operational overseas naval base in Djibouti in 2017,

[123] The First Island Chain covers an area roughly from Japan, outside Taiwan to the Philippines, and into the South China Sea.

indicating a desire by China to establish forward basing options.[124] Additionally, space and cyberspace capabilities have altered the landscape of how proximity is perceived. Satellite-based ISR permits covert and precise worldwide situational awareness, if not the ability to act, and China has invested heavily in this enterprise. A 2018 Defense Intelligence Agency report noted that "the Chinese ISR and remote sensing satellite fleet contains more than 120 systems—a quantity second only to the United States."[125] As well, attention to cyber warfare has gained significant traction in the last decade and is deserving of its own research project. It is sufficient here to note that military assets are the most difficult targets to exploit, but Canadian maritime interests that lack defensive cyber abilities are vulnerable to exploitation from distant remote sites. Therefore, in the conventional sense of power projection, China is much less threatening to Canada than other adherents to the RBLIO, such as Japan or Australia. Yet, its ability to project power in the maritime domain is growing, and Canada will need to regularly review its perception of just how distant Chinese power projection truly is.

Offensive capability in the maritime domain

Offensive capability represents the *potential* for a state to pose a threat to another. Within the maritime domain, these capabilities are the tangible, discernible assets, such as ships and planes, and the associated competence to apply them effectively. In addition to defence of domestic interests and projection of soft power through methods like defence diplomacy, it includes "the ability to threaten the sovereignty or territorial

[124] Gerald Chan, *China's Maritime Silk Road: Advancing Global Development?* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020), 129.

[125] Defence Intelligence Agency, *Challenges to Security in Space* (Washington: Office of Corporate Communications, 2019), 19.

integrity of another state."[126] Walt concluded that "All else being equal, states with large offensive capabilities are more likely to provoke an alliance than those who are either militarily weak or capable only of defending."[127] These assets are indeed the "face" of maritime power, with the rapid re-emergence of Chinese maritime power no exception. As Lombardi found in 2016, "Military modernisation and expansion, and the strategic options that they are creating for Beijing, are the most tangible characteristics of the challenge China represents for Washington."[128] By assessing these maritime capabilities, namely its robust fleets of ships and Anti-Access/Area-Denial capabilities, relative to those Canadian interests and capabilities explored in Chapter Three, it is possible to determine the *potential* threat that China's maritime power poses to Canadian maritime strategic interests.

China's maritime fleets

One of the key elements of China's maritime power is the combined capacity of its fleets of ships, chiefly the PLAN, Chinese Coast Guard (ChCG), and its maritime militia. What is striking about this military and paramilitary force are both the speed of development and the size to which it has grown. It was only within the last three decades that serious expansion has occurred. Gerald Chan of the University of Auckland noted that in 1996, the PLAN "consisted of only fifty-seven destroyers and frigates with weak defence capability, and three-quarters of its roughly eighty Soviet-style attack submarines are old – they entered into service in the 1950s."[129] By 2020, the PLAN had become

[126] Cook, 7.
[127] Walt, 11.
[128] Lombardi, 48.
[129] Chan, 128.

"certainly the largest navy in Asia, with 300-plus surface ships, submarines, amphibious ships and patrol craft."[130] In 2020, Jonathan Caverley and Peter Dombrowski observed that since 2014, the "PLAN has launched more tonnage than all of Europe's navies combined."[131] Chan concluded that "If numbers matter, then China's ship counts, including the navy, coast guard and maritime militia, are formidable."[132] He does caveat this observation that in many other ways such as

> fire power, overseas bases, battle experience, inter-operability of weapon systems, amount of resources devoted to sustained military expansion over time, the overall capability of China's PLAN is commonly understood to be a long way behind that of the US Navy.[133]

While it is not necessary to account for every ship in the PLAN, ChCG or maritime militia, there are a few salient facts for establishing the difference in maritime capability between Canada and China.

First is the composition of China's surface fleets, which has enabled a strategic shift in how Beijing can assert power in the maritime domain. A 2020 US Department of Defence (DOD) report to Congress found that PLAN surface forces are "largely composed of modern multi-role platforms featuring advanced anti-ship, anti-air, and anti-submarine weapons and sensors."[134] As a snapshot of PLAN development, in the last 15 years, it has launched six Type 055 guided missile cruisers, 23 *Luyang III* guided-missile destroyers and 30 *Jiangkai II* guided-missile frigates, in addition to a host of smaller craft

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[130] Chan, 128.
[131] Caverley and Dombrowski, 584.
[132] Chan, 129.
[133] *Ibid.*
[134] Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020* (Washington: Office of the Secretary of Defense DOD, 2020), 44.

such as missile boats and corvettes that are adept at littoral warfare and A2/AD.[135] These ships boast an array of modern sensing and combat capability- the Type 055 cruiser alone sports 112 vertical launch missile tubes, which is nearly on par with the aging US *Ticonderoga*-class cruisers. For comparison, the 12 Canadian frigates, forming the backbone of the Canadian fleet, carry 12 short-range surface-to-air and eight surface-to-surface missiles. China's increasingly capable combatants are supported by a contingent of fleet auxiliaries that provide PLAN surface forces staying power at sea. Further, the PLAN is expanding its capability to operate aircraft carriers, having launched its first domestically built ship in 2017, and has begun work on its second carrier. This second carrier will include improvements to "extend the reach and effectiveness of its carrier-based strike aircraft," which is expected to be "operational by 2024, with additional carriers to follow."[136] To accommodate this growing fleet, China has expanded its naval infrastructure, such as the Yulin Naval Base facing the South China Sea, and "is large enough to accommodate ballistic missile submarines and aircraft carriers."[137] The result is that "No Southeast Asian state has the naval strength to deter PRC military actions and thus they rely on diplomatic tools and extra-regional support," chiefly the US.[138] Caverley and Dombrowski cautioned, though, that any US aircraft carrier "outclasses any existing or planned Chinese one."[139] Further, Sloan surmised that the PLANs "primary focus will remain preparing for operations within the 'first and second island chains,' with emphasis on a potential conflict with U.S. forces over Taiwan. This is likely to

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[135] Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020* (Washington: Office of the Secretary of Defense DOD, 2020), 46.

[136] *Ibid*., 47

[137] Sakuwa, 322.

[138] John F. Bradford, "Japanese naval activities in Southeast Asian waters: building on 50 years of maritime security capacity building," *Asian Security* 17, no. 1 (2021): 84.

[139] Caverley and Dombrowski, 586.

remain true until there is a resolution of the Taiwan issue."[140] Taiwan, indeed, remains an issue today, representing an increasingly overt feature of growing Sino-US tension.[141] While Taiwan may remain a key issue for China and the US, others have already envisioned potential expeditionary roles for the PLAN. Chan has offered that the PLAN will soon seek to

> safeguard the security of China's overseas interests" by gradually shifting "its focus from 'offshore waters defense' to the combination of 'offshore waters defense' with 'open seas protection.' In other words, the country needs to extend its capability to protect its maritime interests from near its coasts to far beyond.[142]

Therefore, while the developing PLAN may presently be focused within China's near-abroad, it is not inconceivable the PLAN will be used to patrol crucial SLOCs worldwide as China expands its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), including the Polar Silk Road through the Arctic. For states geographically closer to China, this sizable force represents a significant *potential* threat to their sovereignty and regional interests. For Canada, the prospect of China's sizeable surface fleets patrolling in or near its vast coastline underscores the importance of Canada's defence relationship with the US within the RBLIO.

The second salient element of China's maritime fleets is the nature of the PLANs robust submarine force. While it possesses many conventional attack submarines, over the past 15 years the PLAN "has constructed twelve nuclear submarines," where six are attack submarines (SSN) and six are ballistic missile submarines (SSBN).[143] In addition

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[140] Sloan, 272.

[141] Stephen McDonell, "Taiwan: 'Record number' of China jets enter air zone," *BBC News*, 16 April 2021, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56728072.

[142] Chan, 127.

[143] Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments . . .* , 45.

to providing a nuclear deterrent and possessing long range patrol capabilities, the SSNs and SSBNs provide a measure of under-ice capability, which serves to "complicate American strategy [in the Arctic] by being able to pursue American and Russian submarines into the region."[144] However, other observers question the value of China braving the Bering Strait and US ASW capabilities to achieve dubious operational objectives, although they do concede "Chinese submarines may one day appear in the Arctic."[145] Adam Lajeunesse squares that question by suggesting China "would send a submarine across the polar waters" as a geopolitical statement of "Chinese technical capability and global reach," rather than specific military operational goals.[146] In the case of Canada, its four conventional submarines and proficient but limited ASW assets can provide some presence and deterrent in open seas and coastal choke points to counter adversary ISR and movements, but it remains unable to provide under-ice surveillance, let alone presence, in the Arctic sub-surface domain. Canada already faces this type of challenge concerning Russian submarines on the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic coasts, and works with its allies to monitor these domains. The addition of Chinese submarines further complicates this process. Perhaps most alarming would be the consequences of an accident aboard a Chinese nuclear submarine in or near Canada's coastline, but especially within the fragile Arctic ecosystem. While accidents in these submarines are rare, less experienced operators like China are most likely to suffer an incident. Again, reliance on defence partners and multilateral institutions ubiquitous to the RBLIO underwrites the

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[144] Rob Huebert, "Mahan and Understanding the Future of Naval Competition in the Arctic Ocean," *Canadian Naval Review* 14, no. 3 (2019), 13.

[145] Adam Lajeunesse and Timothy Choi, "Are Chinese Submarines Coming to the Arctic?," *NAADSN Quick Impact*, July 2020, 3.

[146] Adam Lajeunesse, "Polar Silk Road: Deconstructing Chinese Ambitions in the North," *CDA Institute*, 18 December 2020, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://cdainstitute.ca/adam-lajeunesse-polar-silk-road-deconstructing-chinese-ambitions-in-the-north/.

regional security order in this harsh and challenging undersea environment, in both Arctic and non-Arctic waters.

The third relevant aspect of China's maritime fleets is the role of the ChCG and its People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia (PAFMM). In 2018, a reorganization of the ChCG structure brought it under the Central Military Commission (CMC), which is likely to facilitate "closer coordination between the CCG and the PLAN" where the paramilitary ChCG is primarily used in maritime disputes and the PLAN in an overwatch role, if required.[147] "Militarization" of the ChCG has continued, with new legislation in February 2021 giving ChCG ships "permission to fire upon foreign vessels operating within its claimed territorial waters."[148] Its rapid development is similar to the PLAN, with China now having "the world's largest number of coast guard vessels," although it is arguably less capable than its less numerous Japanese or American counterparts.[149] The PAFMM is organized by region and "vary widely in composition and mission."[150] It is notable that PAFMM vessels are largely civilian fishing vessels and "train with and assist the PLAN and ChCG in tasks such as safeguarding maritime claims, surveillance and reconnaissance, fisheries protection, logistic support, and search and rescue."[151] While unusual by Canadian standards to see civilian ships used in such a way, it is all part of the combined maritime power China is increasingly exerting to achieve its coercive aims short of conflict. For RCN ships operating in the SCS and other Chinese coastal regions,

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[147] Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments . . .* , 70.

[148] John Feng, "China Uses Coast Guard to Assert Claim Over Japan-controlled Islands," *Newsweek*, 9 February 2021, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.newsweek.com/china-coast-guard-assert-claim-japan-controlled-islands-1567802.

[149] Chan, 129

[150] Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments . . .* , 71.

[151] *Ibid.*, 71.

the ChCG and PAFMM presence has become commonplace and is not unexpected. Indeed, China simply having a robust coastal patrol force within its EEZ and local disputed areas is not palpably a threat to Canadian maritime strategic interests. However, analysis of ChCG and PAFMM actions in the next chapter will reveal a deeper understanding of China's wider intent in the maritime domain that gives meaning to this *potential*.

The role of Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD)

The other element of Chinese maritime power that is relevant for the BoT analysis is the role of A2/AD. Largely driven by the fact that the US "remains the only global naval force" and enjoys a qualitative advantage over its Chinese counterparts, Beijing has sought methods to asymmetrically counter US strengths chiefly in its near-abroad, but this has potentially wider implications in the future.[152] Where the US had previously enjoyed relatively unhindered global reach across the maritime commons enforcing the RBLIO, it is now increasingly challenged by expanded elements of sea denial out as far as the First Island Chain. China has pursued "formidable advanced technologies," including within space and cyberspace, "that threaten the U.S. and allied model of power projection and maneuver."[153] Hutchens, et al concluded that "Unless countered, these challenges will reduce the credibility of U.S. security guarantees and the confidence of legitimate users that they will continue to enjoy unconstrained access to the global commons."[154] This means of sea denial is not just limited to the Chinese mainland. As part of its island-building campaign in the SCS, China has demonstrated an ability to

[152] Caverley and Dombrowski, 586.
[153] Michael E. Hutchens *et al,* "Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons: A New Joint Operational Concept," *Joint Force Quarterly* no. 84 (First Quarter 2017): 135.
[154] *Ibid.*

deploy weapons, ISR sensors, and air and port infrastructure to isolated, artificial islands. Not only does this project hard power in the form of missiles and aircraft further abroad, but they serve as forward basing for PLAN, PAFMM, and ChCG to execute their mandates. While this does potentially threaten Canadian or allied freedom of navigation and trade routes near the Chinese coast or SEA, it does not immediately threaten other Canadian strategic interests in its current geolocation. Therefore, from the Canadian perspective, Chinese A2/AD capabilities represent a dangerous tool that best serves as an indicator of intent.

The fusion of aggregate power, geographic proximity, and offensive capabilities

This chapter's focus on the objective factors that comprised classical Balance of Power theory has shown China to possess significant *potential* to threaten Canada's maritime strategic interests. Although the geographic distance between the two countries somewhat mitigates the threat, the vastness of the Pacific Ocean is not a barrier— it is a rather long but traversable highway. The analysis of Chinese maritime capabilities, paired with its impressive aggregate power, paints a very disproportionate picture when compared to corresponding Canadian capabilities. Indeed, China is beyond being a "near-peer" to Canada. Its population, economy, and industrial base far exceed that of Canada and while it is facing headwinds, China has several options to grow within this aggregate factor. In fleet size and power, if we entertain even that, ton-for-ton, China may not be the qualitative better of Canadian ships and aeroplanes yet, its quantitative size is vastly superior, and is growing. Additionally, it is pushing into domains that Canada cannot reach, such as deep ocean undersea capability and the possibility of operating under Arctic ice. However, the ChCG and maritime militia elements are less influential for

now, given their largely geostatic location in China's near abroad. The same can be said for its impressive A2/AD shroud out to the First Island Chain, which doesn't directly threaten Canada but is becoming substantial, and worrisome, for both regional states and those that rely on freedom of the seas. In these latter cases, deriving China's intent from their actions is perhaps more important than the actions themselves. Indeed, as Sara McLaughlin Mitchell found, "States with greater naval capabilities make more claims to offshore maritime areas and use more coercive strategies unless they are facing countries with similar naval strength."[155] Therefore, Chinese maritime power has significant *potential* to present a serious threat to Canada's strategic interests, although Elinor Sloan noted "Military capability means little to an outside observer without an assessment of intentions."[156] Sloan's comment naturally leads to the next chapter of this paper, which is to assess China's intentions in the maritime domain and how these intentions give meaning to the significant *potential* threat posed by China's aggregate power and maritime capabilities.

[155] Mitchell, 667.
[156] Sloan, 269.

CHAPTER 5: CHINESE MARITIME POWER AND ITS IMPLICATIONS THROUGH BALANCE OF THREAT THEORY, PART TWO

Identified in Chapter One as the most influential factor of BoT theory in determining threat, intent brings the other three factors of the previous chapter into focus and gives meaning to their *potential*. While it is possible to incorporate elements of China's stated national goals, this is exceptionally difficult because "China releases very little information, and what it does is strictly controlled or highly generic in nature."[157] Therefore, this paper will make deductions and conclude how threatening China's aggregate power and maritime capabilities are chiefly from analyses of past and present actions from 2010 to 2021. The introductory paragraphs provided background information about the emerging multipolar security environment, and it is within this recent paradigm shift that interpretations of China's intent must be made. These interpretations vary widely. On one side, observers argue the existence of an accommodating Chinese regime that seeks to work within the extant RBLIO, and its actions do not threaten the order's integrity.[158] Such a circumstance would be welcome news to Canada and other adherents of the RBLIO, situating China as a cooperative partner in regional and global maritime security. However, others see a revisionist regime that wishes to fundamentally alter regional security dynamics and is locked in an offensive realist, zero-sum struggle with the US over regional and possibly global power. Evans and Dobson rightly note that the "current liberal world order is not *the* world order," and that "China is proposing adjustments and changes to suit Chinese interests

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[157] Sloan, 269.

[158] Adnan Ali, Kristen Csenkey, Jeremy Loshak and Noor Mirza, "Canada's Contribution to Peace, Stability and the Rule of Law in the South China Sea", in *Strengthening the Rules-Based International Order* (Waterloo: Balsillie School of International Affairs, 2019), 72.

and reflect shifting power realities."[159] This interpretation, which fits easily into the post-liberal institutionalist emerging world order, is far more alarming to those who depend on the RBLIO for security and prosperity. In assessing China's intent in the maritime domain, several geographic regions will be explored, but one stands out as an exemplary indicator of how China has sought to resolve disputes, shape regional dynamics, and what regard it holds for the RBLIO, international law, and multilateral cooperation. That region is the South China Sea (SCS), and although it is in China's "backyard," its actions there hold significant implications far beyond the region itself.

China's behaviour in the SCS from 2010 - 2021

Over the past decade, China's increasing assertiveness in the SCS as it presses its vast "Nine-Dash Line" claim has alarmed both regional and global states over the extent of sea denial or sea control China presently wields, or has the potential to, in the region.

[159] Wendy Dobson and Paul Evans, *The Future of Canada's Relationship with China* (Toronto: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2015), 15.

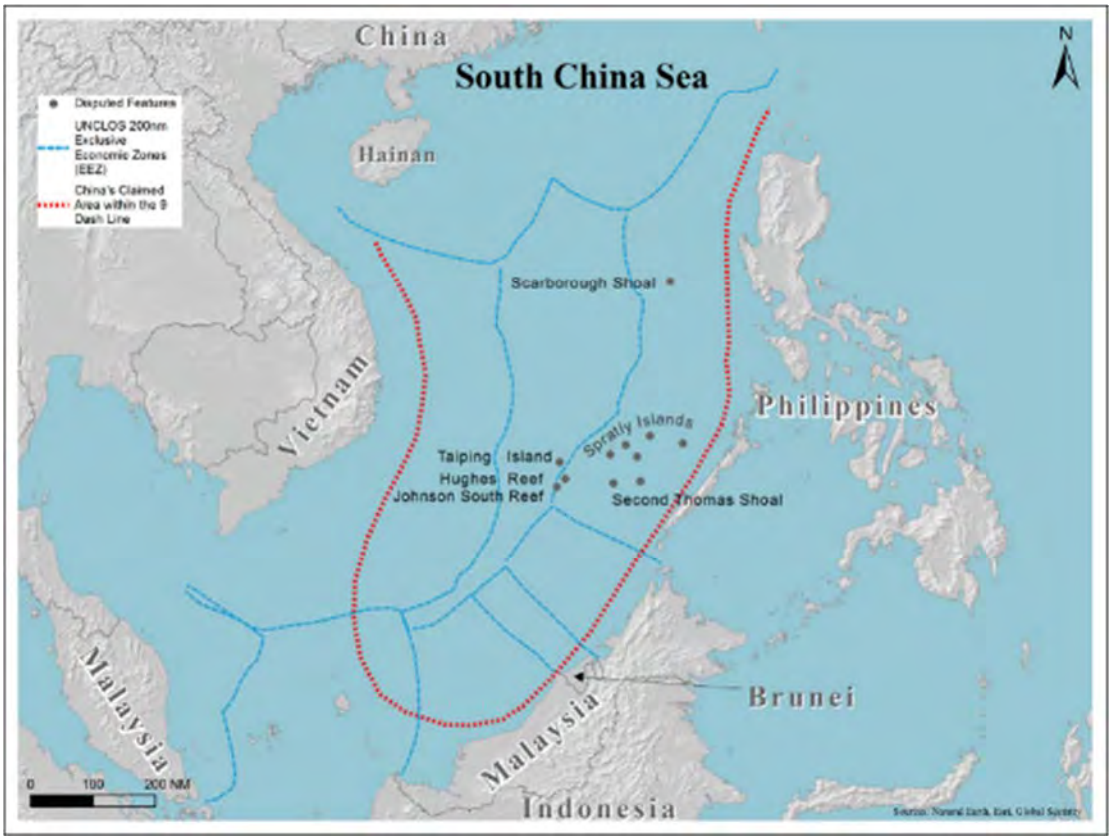

Figure 5 – SCS Exclusive Economic Zones and the "Nine-Dash Line"
Source: https://sites.tufts.edu/lawofthesea/chapter-ten/

In the author's *Something Fishy in the South China Sea*, deForest found that while access to natural resources is certainly enabled by China's growing military presence in the region, its robust expansion aids a larger objective- command of the sea lanes of communications (SLOCs).[160] He drew two potential significant impacts to Canada. First was the impact on maritime trade, and second, the dangerous possibility of the US being drawn into conflict with China over access and freedom of navigation.[161] However, the first could be mitigated and the second was judged unlikely. He concluded that the existence of Chinese power projection in the SCS itself is not of primary significance to

[160] deForest, 6.
[161] *Ibid.*, 9.

Canada in the region. Rather, most significant to Canada is the intangible, more subtle, revisionism China is exerting on the RBLIO.[162] In fleshing out the concept, deForest found that the principles of multilateralism and respect for international law, both of which underpin Canadian maritime security and prosperity, were under existential threat in the region. In the latter case, Beijing's utter rejection of the Permanent Court of Arbitrations (PCA) ruling in 2016 that had been initiated by the Philippines paints a stark picture of Beijing's view of international law. Some observers have cautioned against hawkish interpretations of the event. deForest pointed to Stephanie Martel and David Welch's argument that, despite openly rebuffing the PCA ruling, China has tempered its more aggressive tones while domestically maintaining this position for reasons of internal stability.[163] However, many other observers have different interpretations. Andrew Chubb's objective analysis concluded public sentiment in China had little to do with Beijing's charted courses in the South and East China Seas.[164] Yang and Mingjiang have stated, "In matters of the South China Sea, the primary goals of China are to 'create new facts on the water' and to pre-empt US involvement."[165] Benjamin Lombardi concluded in 2016 that "China's refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Court in areas of maritime boundary disputes undermines a peaceful means of conflict resolution."[166] As well, the appalling environmental destruction produced by China's island reclamation efforts was determined by the PCA to be a breach of international law.[167] In his final

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[162] deForest, 10

[163] *Ibid.*, 14.

[164] Andrew Chubb, "Assessing public opinion's influence on foreign policy: the case of China's assertive maritime behavior," *Asian Security* 15, no. 2 (2019): 159.

[165] Fang Yang and Mingjiang Li, "Comparing China's Claims and Policies in the East and South China Seas: Implications for Regional Security," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 3, no. 2 (2016): 146.

[166] Lombardi, 47.

[167] deForest, 15.

analysis, deForest concluded that many observers of the SCS have found that China's pursuit of an altered regional security dynamic in the SCS is intensely revisionist, undermining international law and the RBLIO at the expense of the US and its allies. Indeed, he pointed to Michael Tkacik's comment that "Beijing's actions in the SCS have been aggressive, revisionist, and lacking in merit by most standards of the liberal international system" and Somen Banerjee's position to be that "China's revisionism is disrupting and damaging the existing order and is advancing its national interest at the expense of others."[168] These realist interpretations are consistent with the wider emerging multipolar security environment identified in this paper's introduction and indicate China's revisionist intent in the SCS is capably backed by its aggregate power and maritime capabilities, representing a true threat to the RBLIO. Indeed, just as China's actions in the SCS are powerful indicators of its intent in the maritime domain, its behaviour elsewhere supports these interpretations, namely Taiwan and the East China Sea (ECS).

The PRC and Taiwan

Taiwan, known formally as the Republic of China (ROC), has been a source of tension in the region since republican forces lost the Chinese Civil War in 1949 and retreated to the island. While official recognition of the ROC as the "official" China is understood to have ceased with their being replaced by the PRC in the UN in 1971, many nations, including Canada and the US, have maintained unofficial relations with the small island nation. The political difference in 2021 between the PRC and ROC could not be

[168] deForest, 5.

starker. In contrast to communist PRC, the ROC was minted a "full democracy" in The Economist's *Democracy Index 2020*, where its "performance was spectacular," ranking 11 out of 167. The PRC ranked 151.[169] Supporting this tiny democracy is the US, which has been providing equipment and training to its military forces for decades, including formal US legislation in the form of the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979. Not to be deterred by *de facto* recognition by the US, reunification remains a core priority for the PRC. Among the various territorial claims the PRC maintains, "With its 24 million inhabitants, developed economy, and strategically-valuable location, the island of Taiwan is by far the most vital of these claims."[170] At the same time, Taiwan represents a bulwark of the RBLIO and a critical US maritime interest, leading Caverley and Dombrowski to observe "The most pressing issue between the [US and PRC] remains the status of Taiwan, an inherently maritime problem."[171] The PRC has kept up steady pressure on Taiwan. For example, in 2018 the People's Liberation Army Air Force "flew H-6K bombers and Su-35 Flanker E combat aircraft in "training flights" around Taiwan as an attempt to discourage Taipei from making any moves toward independence."[172] Beijing has only intensified its intimidation, exercising its active aircraft carrier group just off the coast of Taiwan in April 2021, and indicated "such drills will become regular."[173] To be clear, many scholars concur that "China has indicated it would fight a war to prevent Taiwanese

[169] The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2020* (2021), 7.
[170] Ryan D. Martinson, "Counter-intervention in Chinese naval strategy," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 44, no. 2 (2021): 268.
[171] Caverley and Dombrowski, 580.
[172] *Ibid.*, 589.
[173] Aljazeera, "China's Liaoning aircraft carrier leads naval exercise off Taiwan," 6 April 2021, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/6/chinas-liaoning-aircraft-carrier-leads-naval-exercise-off-taiwan.

de jure independence."[174] Given the fact that Taiwan's *de facto* independence rests largely on continued US support, those nations reliant on the RBLIO are watching closely to measure the commitment of the US in the event of a conflict in the Taiwan Strait. A failure to support Taiwan against PRC hostility would send shockwaves through the IAP and around the world as nations would re-evaluate their position with the US and the order it has underwritten. It is even possible that IAP states who value the RBLIO and the US' role in regional stability may abandon the status quo and seek to bandwagon to Beijing if they perceive the US as an unreliable guarantor. Further, the PRC's intent would be clear- if it perceives that within the changed regional security dynamic the US would not intervene, Beijing would be less restrained in applying its maritime power in pursuit of its revisionist or expansionist policies elsewhere, including in or near Canadian coastal interests.

China's behaviour in the ECS

Although China's actions in the ECS are less aggressive than the SCS, it does contain indications of China's overall intent, especially concerning multilateral institutions and international law. A key issue in the ECS region is disagreement between China and Japan regarding overlapping EEZ and continental shelf claims (maritime disputes), and sovereignty of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (a territorial dispute), the latter dating to 1895.[175] Parallel to the growth of China's assertiveness in the SCS since 2010, China has since declared an Air Defence Identification Zone over the disputed area,

[174] Fiona S. Cunningham, "The Maritime Rung on the Escalation Ladder: Naval Blockades in a US-China Conflict," *Security Studies* 29, no. 4 (2020): 737.

[175] Yang and Li, 138.

taking tensions to an all-new high.[176] However, in the ECS, China has invoked UNCLOS to buttress its position in addition to a "historic right" claim, which seeks to displace Japanese occupation of the islands.[177] Yang and Mingjiang suggest China's use of international law is arbitrary, using UNCLOS to defend its claims in the ECS yet "downplays the role of UNCLOS" in the SCS.[178] Further, they concluded, "there is little evidence to suggest that China may be interested in resolving the disputes through legal means."[179] Benjamin Lombardi echoed this outlook. He found "China's attempts to alter maritime boundaries, and its unilateral interpretation of international law regarding its EEZs in the South and East China Seas (thereby restricting navigation for military vessels), are consistent with its maritime strategy."[180] The Japanese perspective shares the linkage between the two regions. John Bradford of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies has observed "China, the most aggressive of South China Sea claimants, seems to be using similar strategies to gain the upper hand in disputes with Japan over the control of islands and sea space in the East China Sea."[181] Kentaro Sakuwa found that increased naval capabilities and aggressiveness in the SCS "signals that China is able and willing to expand its maritime sphere of influence in the western part of the Pacific Ocean."[182] Caverley and Dombrowski note "various elements of China's maritime capability—coast guard, fishing fleet, maritime militia—continuously

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[176] Rebecca Strating, "Maritime and Sovereignty Disputes in the East China Sea," *The National Bureau of Asian Research*, 9 February 2021, last accessed 21 April 2021, section 2, paragraph 6, https://www.nbr.org/publication/maritime-and-sovereignty-disputes-in-the-east-china-sea/.

[177] Rebecca Strating, "Maritime and Sovereignty Disputes in the East China Sea . . . ," section 2, paragraph 5.

[178] Yang and Li, 141.

[179] *Ibid.*, 149.

[180] Lombardi, 46.

[181] Bradford, 84.

[182] Sakuwa, 323.

encroach on what Japan claims as its territorial waters surrounding the Senkaku/Diayou Islands."[183] Alarming is the fact that Japan's operational response has necessarily increased nearly 30-fold in just eight years, "scrambling jets 22 times in 2008, and 644 in 2016."[184]

Further, in the northwestern ECS, China has been observed to violate United Nations-enforced sanctions on North Korea *that China itself voted for*. A key enabler of these sanctions, the US-led Enforcement Coordinate Cell (ECC), is "primarily focused on illicit North Korea exports of coal and refined petroleum and looks at trans-shipments of fuels aimed at getting around sanctions."[185] In late 2017, the ECC revealed with strong photographic evidence that China was illegally transferring oil at sea from North Korean ships, but Beijing strongly denied the claims.[186] Later, in 2019, Chinese military aircraft conducted fast, low approaches on a Canadian warship conducting ECC embargo observation, and Chinese smuggling ships even allegedly directed lasers at the ships embarked helicopter crew, which can "cause blindness and other serious eye damage."[187] If China was truly committed to the UN sanctions it voted for within that august multilateral institution, it would contribute to or, at least, not hinder embargo enforcement. Instead, it tacitly supports smuggling efforts that enable the regime in Pyongyang. These two themes— inconsistent application of international law, and

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[183] Caverley and Dombrowski, 589.

[184] Caverley and Dombrowski, 589.

[185] Euroasia Security Forum, "Enforcement Coordination Cell – the "5 eyes +" hidden gem of Indo-Pacific security cooperation," 23 January 2021, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://euroasiasecurityforum.com/2021/01/23/enforcement-coordination-cell-the-5-eyes-hidden-gem-of-indo-pacific-security-cooperation/.

[186] Derek Grossman, "China's Reluctance on Sanctions Enforcement in North Korea," *RAND* (blog), 4 January 2018, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.rand.org/blog/2018/01/chinas-reluctance-on-sanctions-enforcement-in-north.html.

[187] Matthew Fisher, "Close Encounters During Operation NEON," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, 25 June 2019, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.cgai.ca/close_encounters_during_operation_neon.

contempt for multilateral institutions, only reinforces the key conclusions revealed in the analysis of China's actions in the SCS.

China's fishing fleets in international waters

While this chapter has so far drawn conclusions based on China's actions in maritime zones within its near-abroad, Chinese maritime power has been noted to flout international law further abroad in recent years. To be clear, in the matter of illegal or unreported fishing, China has been noted to be violating UN sanctions off North Korea with a massive fishing fleet in recent years, with observers commenting it is "the largest known case of illegal fishing perpetrated by a single industrial fleet operating in another nation's waters."[188] Further, in late summer 2020, Ecuador tracked up to 342 Chinese fishing vessels engaged in a marathon fishing expedition just beyond its EEZ around the sensitive Galapagos Islands. While all vessels may have complied with international law, the analytics company Hawkeye 360 noted "Dozens of Chinese vessels, some with a history of illegal fishing, went dark for up to 17 days at a time, which is illegal if done deliberately" and "during that same period, unidentified dark vessels were present inside the Ecuadorian EEZ on multiple occasions, including some directly adjacent to the Chinese fleet."[189]

[188] Ian Urbina, "Unmasking China's invisible fleet," *CBC News*, 23 July 2020, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform/china-at-sea.

[189] Alessandro Ford, "Illegal Chinese fishing in the Galapagos: a threat to the biodiversity of the Latin American Pacific," *Open Democracy*, 19 November 2020, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/pesca-ilegal-china-galapagos-biodiversidad-pac%C3%ADfico-latinoamericano-en/.

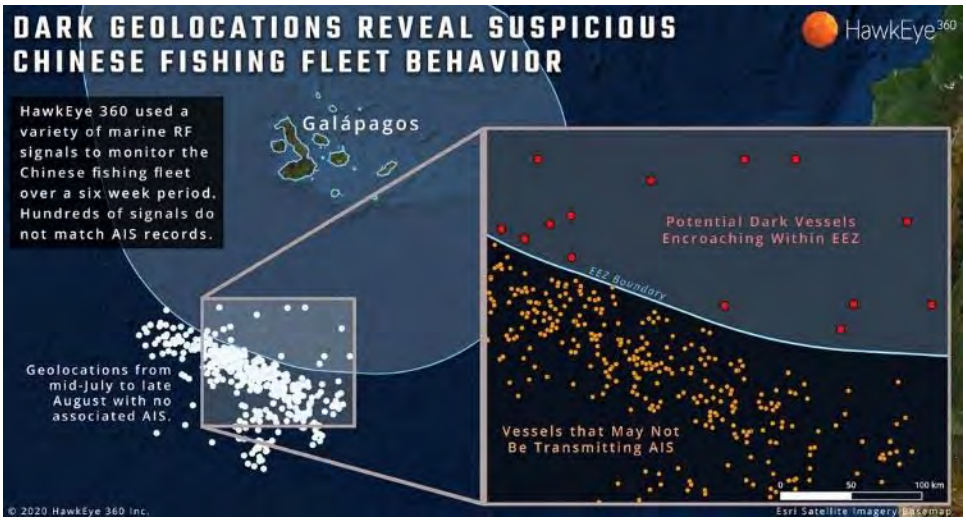

Figure 6 – Calculated positions of "dark" vessels outside and within Ecuadorian EEZ
Source: https://www.he360.com/insight/chinese-fishing-fleet-encroaches-on-the-galapagos-islands/

Beijing denied any illegal activity had occurred. As a result, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia are now working together in attempts to curb illegal and unreported fishing in their EEZs.[190] This ongoing saga is instructive to Canada. As Chinese fishing fleets venture further abroad to maximize their catch, Canada's vast Pacific EEZ boundary represents a potential fishing ground. In 2014, Canadian authorities apprehended a Chinese flagged fishing vessel in the North Pacific for illegal activity.[191] That was just one vessel. A fleet of hundreds represents an entirely different problem. Even more alarming is the prospect of Chinese fishing fleets exploiting the opening of Arctic waters. Adam Lajeunesse of St. Francis Xavier University, who has written extensively about Canada's interests in the Arctic and, more recently, about China's interest in the North

[190] Ford.
[191] CTV News, "Chinese vessel carrying half ton of salmon seized in Pacific," 5 June 2014, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://bc.ctvnews.ca/chinese-vessel-carrying-half-ton-of-salmon-seized-in-pacific-1.1854794.

American Arctic, has argued that it is unlikely China will sail its warships into this northern region. Rather, and similarly to the SCS and Latin America, Canada may experience "the same surge of "independent" fishing boats working on our continental shelf," concluding "it's often fishing fleets and maritime militia leading the way, not their navy."[192] Of course, this does not preclude China from dispatching the PLAN to reinforce what it considers perfectly legal fishing activity. While Lajeunesse concludes "many Arctic concerns are overblown," Chinese fishing fleets and their maritime militia have regularly violated international law.[193] This prospect is one reason that Canada's Deputy Minister of National Defence Jody Thomas told the Ottawa Conference on Security and Defence in March 2021 that "China has a voracious appetite and will stop at nothing to feed itself, and the Arctic is one of the last domains and regions left and we have to understand it and exploit it and more quickly than they can exploit it."[194] As a key component of their maritime capability, it directly contributes to interpretations of intent in the maritime domain.

Clearly, analysis from the Canadian perspective of China's capabilities and application of power in the maritime domain demonstrates it does so with intent that significantly threatens Canadian strategic interests. While not specifically in the sense of armed conflict at sea, this threat is most manifested in the revisionist approach China is taking to maritime regional security dynamics. It very visibly holds little regard for the RBLIO, multilateral institutions, and is willing to violate international laws and norms as it pursues an agenda of altering regional security dynamics to better suit its desires. It

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[192] Lajeunesse.
[193] *Ibid.*
[194] Robert Fife and Steven Chase, "Top defence official says China is a threat to Canadian Arctic."

may even risk war over Taiwan, putting the US commitment to the RBLIO under possibly its greatest stress in decades. A failure of the US and RBLIO allies to defend this democracy may result in a cascading effect that fundamentally weakens the order in Beijing's favour. One Canadian observer has even posited that the current regime in Beijing seeks to regain what it "regards as its traditional global position as the dominant civilization on the planet to which all other countries will be subordinated."[195] In hypothesising the shape of this new order, along with this paper's maritime analysis, consider the highly publicized events of 2020 and 2021: hostage diplomacy, suppression of democracy in Hong Kong, and egregious human rights violations in Western China. Despite important economic links with China, the CCP regime in 2021 represents a true threat to the maritime order on which Canada's security and prosperity so deeply relies. A revised order, led or at least heavily influenced by China, would be no friend to Canada.

[195] Charles Burton, "What a Biden presidency means for Canada-Chinese relations," *CDA Institute*, 26 November 2020, last accessed on 21 April 2021, https://cdainstitute.ca/charles-burton-what-a-biden-presidency-means-for-canada-chinese-relations/.

CHAPTER 6: MARITIME SOLUTIONS FOR CANADA

The final chapter of this opus is to consider how Canada could respond to the threat China's application of maritime power poses to Canada's maritime strategic interests. One way to frame potential solutions is to consider which of Walt's four BoT factors can realistically be mitigated by Canadian endeavours, narrowing the Sino-Canadian threat gap in the maritime domain. Geographic proximity is less a factor that can be mitigated and more a fact of geography and 21st-century technology. While not totally fixed, it best serves to help define China's application of maritime power in time and space. China's aggregate power and growing maritime capabilities are unlikely to be influenced by Canadian or even multilateral action through institutions grounded in core tenets of the RBLIO. China has risen, and will continue to develop its national capacities, further expanding the gap between commensurate Canadian levels and shrinking the delta with the world's pre-eminent superpower- the US. Walt's objective factors point to a Chinese regime that, indeed, will continue to grow its *potential* to apply power in the maritime domain in the decades beyond the 2020s. Therefore, if China's possession of significant maritime power is not reasonable to mitigate, then perhaps *how* that it applies that power can be. Of Walt's four BoT factors, shaping regional balancing and bandwagoning behaviour within the maritime domain represents the most realistic approach to mitigating the threat China's maritime power poses to Canada's strategic interests.

Maritime Solutions for Canada – The Ends

To pursue an effective strategy in the maritime domain, Canada must be explicit on what exactly it is trying to achieve. To be clear, China becoming a regional hegemon in the IAP through its application of maritime power is not intrinsically a direct threat to Canada or others. Indeed, the US projects power across the globe, and Canada and other defence partners are the very opposite of threatened. Rather, it is the *nature* of the altered security dynamic— China's demonstrated intent, divined in Chapter Five, that represents a fundamental threat to Canada's strategic interests. So long as Beijing seeks to erode the core tenets of the RBLIO, defined by adherence to widely accepted international law, respect for multilateral institutions, and the collective will to defend this order, Canada should hinder Chinese efforts to establish itself as a regional hegemon. This can be achieved without opposing Beijing directly, which is both counterproductive and unreasonable. Rather, in the political realist sense, the combined weight of the wider IAP region can provide an effective balancing response to China's revisionist agenda. While offensive realist John Mearsheimer has argued "the liberal international order is crumbling" and there is little evidence to suggest the extant world order has staying power in the emerging security environment, it is probably too soon to write off a global order that is essential to many developed and developing nations.[196] Roland Paris has suggested a realistic approach that is less focused on the export of liberal democracy and regime change around the world, and more on arranging broad coalitions that support the core tenets of the RBLIO. In 2020, he stated Canada has

> an interest in promoting the values of liberal democracy, not by imposing that system on anyone else, but by articulating its values and defending

[196] John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019): 30.

> ourselves and other liberal democracies against those who seek to undermine confidence in our democratic systems.[197]

A robust regional order, grounded in the core tenets of the RBLIO, that is sustaining security and prosperity for regional IAP states will not only encourage the continued subscription of regional partners but will *discourage* bandwagon behaviour towards a CCP-led order.

This is not unreasonable. Benjamin Lombardi has offered "Many of the countries in China's strategic periphery, including India, Japan, and Russia, all of which have smaller economies and armed forces, are deeply concerned by the rapid transformation in China's status."[198] Even communist Vietnam, once a foe of the US and ally to China, has preferred to expand its defence relationships with the former and cast a wary eye at the latter, chiefly over the struggles in the SCS.[199] Therefore, a restored China has a vision for East Asia, rooted in its ancient and storied past, but it is not aligned to Western interests and seemingly not appealing to China's neighbors. Indeed, "Given the choice, most countries would rather navigate a US-led world order. A survey of public opinion in six Asian countries in May–October 2019 found a median of 64% had favorable views of the U.S. while opinions of China were negative."[200] Clearly, a Chinese-led order seems unlikely to incite bandwagon behaviour favourable to China in the IAP. Canada and other adherents to the RBLIO could build on this regional atmosphere, drawing out collective desires for maritime defence and security in the region and being the champion of them.

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[197] Paris.

[198] Lombardi, 40.

[199] David Hutt, "US, Vietnam ties have never been better," *Asia Times*, 13 July 2020, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://asiatimes.com/2020/07/us-vietnam-ties-have-never-been-better/.

[200] Suisheng Zhao, "Rhetoric and Reality of China's Global Leadership in the Context of COVID-19: Implications for the US-led World Order and Liberal Globalization," *Journal of Contemporary China* 30, no. 128 (2021): 246.

At the same time, any effort to promote the core tenets of the RBLIO in the IAP through multilateral action should avoid the appearance of "encircling" or "containing" China. Indeed, this research paper's suggestion is not to isolate "China," but rather to isolate "defiance of international law, disrespect for multilateral institutions and efforts to drive a wedge between defence and security cooperation in support of these tenets." To do the former ignores the reality of the emerging security environment and China's prominent place within it. Pursuing pathways to cooperation with Beijing could enable this effort, drawing China closer to becoming a cooperative, rather than revisionist, maritime presence in the IAP. This is not to suggest it is a necessary condition that the PRC embarks on a path of liberal democratization and adoption of progressive ideals. Roland Paris has argued that China does not need to embrace democracy, but its ability to influence regional or global order, such as the dynamic in the SCS or further abroad in the Arctic, according to its authoritarian ideals must be curbed.[201] Areas such as climate change, piracy, and drug and human trafficking represent issues that affect both Canada's and China's maritime strategic interests. The World Bank makes it blindingly clear—"China is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, and its air and water pollution affects other countries. Global environmental problems cannot be solved without China's engagement."[202] China is also a contributor to anti-piracy efforts off the Horn of Africa, where in December 2018 Andrew Erickson of the US Naval War College found "China's navy has escorted more than 6,600 commercial ships and saved dozens from being

[201] Paris.

[202] The World Bank, "The World Bank in China," last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview.

pirated—not just PRC-flagged vessels, but also many foreign vessels as well."[203] Canada also contributes to global anti-piracy efforts, and support to Chinese anti-piracy deployments would go far in signaling the former's endorsement of the latter's application of maritime power. These are low-hanging fruit that open the door for greater cooperation in the maritime domain.

In such a regional security setting, Beijing would be forced to choose- pursue its revisionist objectives alone, having failed to generate a bandwagon effect favourable to its agenda or seek rapprochement with those states and institutions upholding the core tenets of the RBLIO. Rather than the blind idealism of the liberal institutional "integration by engagement" of the unipolar security environment, a defensive neorealist solution will maximize Canada's security through a careful balance of assertion and engagement.

Maritime solutions for Canada – The Ways and Means

Understanding "the ends" Canada could seek as desirable outcomes in the IAP, potential solutions, grounded in a balanced, defensive neorealist approach, can be explored within the context of Canada's instruments of national power in the maritime domain. To be fair, given the foreign policy approach Canada has exercised in the IAP between 2010 and 2021, Canada is already balancing against resurgent Chinese maritime power, and to suggest it as a scope of action would seem to simply endorse the status quo. Yet there is significant flexibility within this approach, and as noted in Chapter One,

[203] Andrew Erickson, "The China Anti-Piracy Bookshelf: Reflections of a Decade of PLAN Deployments to the Gulf of Aden," last accessed 30 April 2021, https://www.andrewerickson.com/2018/12/the-china-anti-piracy-bookshelf-reflections-on-a-decade-of-plan-deployments-to-the-gulf-of-aden/.

the Canadian government has yet to produce coherent policy for the region. Adam MacDonald of Dalhousie University has suggested the status quo- maintain the present policy of episodic, regional engagement in the IAP but resist overt balancing against China.[204] While there is nothing wrong with broadly supporting present efforts, the level of threat China presents to Canadian maritime strategic interests urges a more assertive Canadian position to sustain the core tenets of the RBLIO yet acknowledge the reality that China will continue to grow as a maritime power in the IAP and beyond. Before proceeding with a united diplomatic, military, and informational approach, the economic nexus to this regional security problem must be explored to provide a holistic solution.

Potential economic restraints on Canadian action

As made clear in this paper's analysis of aggregate power, China is an economic giant compared to Canada and the smaller country relies a great deal on imports from the Asian power. Charles Burton argued in late 2020 that Canada's vision of a balanced approach is to "not engage in any significant action against non-economic factors, and that the primary concern of Canada-China relations is the promotion of Canadian prosperity and the diversification of the Canadian economy away from the U.S."[205] He further stated that

> Other issues such as China's expansionist policies in the South China Sea, support of rogue regimes like North Korea, Chinese domestic human rights abuses, and other gross violations of China's commitments to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would be ignored in favour of the

[204] Adam P. Macdonald, "Rough Waters Ahead? Setting a course for Canada's augmenting military relations and operations in the Indo-Pacific region," *CDA Institute*, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://cdainstitute.ca/on-track-2019-4/.

[205] Burton.

larger issue."[206]

Prominent Canadians, such as former Premier of Nova Scotia Stephen McNeil, have even suggested that Canada seek deeper economic engagement despite the authoritarian regime's increasing aggressiveness on the world stage.[207] However, continuing to favour economic links with China over the existential threat it poses to the RBLIO is fraught with peril. First, it signals to Beijing that Canada is willing to compromise on support to the extant global order when it appears economically advantageous to do so. Knowing this, China can manipulate and bully Canada via economic means. Second, Canada's defence partners will fail to see Canada as a committed partner in their efforts to sustain the RBLIO. Roland Paris identified that "the dissociation between Canada's trade/investment pursuits and diplomatic/security ones runs counter to prevailing thought and practice" in the IAP region, which "acts to undermine any attempt by Canada to be accepted as an 'all-weather friend' whose interest and participation is comprehensive and constant."[208] Just how far Canada could be willing to go in fraying economic links to satisfy security requirements is an area deserving of further research, including options to diversify into other SEA states or India. The CPTPP is a demonstrable step in this direction. However, any effort to balance against China is likely to negatively impact the Sino-Canadian economic relationship, and Canada must be poised to accept the

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[206] *Ibid.*

[207] Tom Blackwell, " 'Let's go learn': Not for Canada to tell China it's wrong, N.S. premier Stephen McNeil says," *National Post*, 16 February 2021, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://nationalpost.com/news/lets-go-learn-not-for-canada-to-tell-china-its-wrong-n-s-premier-stephen-mcneil-says.

[208] Adam P. Macdonald and Carter Vance, 5.

consequences of supporting the intangible RBLIO foundations of Canadian security and prosperity.

A more engaged Canada in the diplomatic, military, and informational domains

For Canada in the IAP, the diplomatic, military, and informational instruments of national power are closely connected in defining its approach to defence and security in the region. The economic nexus highlighted gaps in Canada's message of commitment to the region, and this holds true for its diplomatic and military engagement. In pursuing a balanced, neorealist defence and security solution in the IAP, Canada's commitment could grow from episodic to consistent. Indeed, Canada's "revolving door of Asia-Indo Pacific focus has not been cost-free for Canada" and regional states, especially smaller ones, view Canada as an inconsistent partner and have accordingly excluded it "from full participation in numerous high-level venues such as the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus."[209] As Colin Robertson succinctly stated, "Being there reinforces and underpins our commitment."[210]

In moving beyond episodic contributions, Canadian engagement could take the form of participation in robust coalitions of defence partners who support the core tenets of the RBLIO. The concept of a Western defence arrangement in the IAP, if not a formal alliance, has been discussed for decades. James Manicom identified that as early as 2004, observers such as David Frum "advocated that Canada participate in an extended North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance into Asia."[211] Burton argued in late 2020

[209] Adam P. Macdonald and Carter Vance, 5.
[210] Robertson, 15.
[211] Manicom, 290.

that Canada should "join any multilateral organization directed at enforcing Chinese compliance with international norms."[212] Failing to join with long-standing defence partners at this formative point in the emerging security environment risks isolating Canada, which surely only benefits states such as China who favour bilateral relations with weaker states. Paris has argued Canada needs "to work with our allies to counter challenges such as these. If China arbitrarily arrests an Australian, Australia should be able to rely on Canada and vice versa."[213] Chief among Canada's allies in an IAP partnership would sit the US, who will likely lead any effort. This is little change from observations nearly a decade ago when in 2013 Manicom noted "the strategic consequences of China's rise have recently been laid bare by China's posture towards its neighbors, which has arguably triggered balancing behavior in favor of the United States."[214] While the US presently has a far more competitive relationship with China, Canada has more freedom than the US to temper prospective coalition conduct, due to not being "rooted in the American head-on competition for dominance."[215] As noted by former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, "Canada's influence in the world is measured to a significant degree by the extent to which we are perceived as having real influence in Washington."[216] Indeed, the US recognizes the influence Canada brings to multilateral efforts, and the latter's participation would be "an effective way of pressuring China to comply with international norms."[217] Canada would equally benefit, allowing it

> to regain respect from the Chinese regime and allow us to show strength in concert with our allies. Under those circumstances, Chinese cost- benefit-

[212] Burton.
[213] Paris.
[214] Manicom, 288.
[215] Ong, 4.
[216] Robertson, 16.
[217] Paris.

> analysis could tip towards returning [Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor] safely to Canada so that relations could return to a fairer and more reciprocal basis.[218]

In realizing the potential of any coalition, Canadian maritime power would be at the forefront of its efforts in the IAP region. Lombardi identified that navies throughout the region have expanded and/or modernized "against a backdrop of strategic uncertainty, including challenges to maritime boundaries and sovereignty assertion in EEZs—concerns that are underscored by Beijing's own increasingly assertive policy declarations and behaviour."[219] Caverly noted the defense diplomacy role played by navies, having argued "maritime forces' activities during peacetime play a much more important role than other forms of military power in international politics."[220] Adam MacDonald has observed "As the Indo-Pacific region is primarily a maritime region, the RCN has and will likely continue to spearhead Canadian efforts to establish a visible and regularized military presence there."[221] A vision of Canadian maritime power, participating in a robust coalition of RBLIO partners, is a sensible and realistic path for Canada to enforce the core tenets of the extant world order directly in the IAP region and, indirectly, more globally. Even a decade ago it was recognized that a multilateral approach is best for securing the global commons at sea, given both Canada and its defence partners, and even China to some extent, have a "mutual interest in securing the global commons against the illicit hybrid threats that emerge from rogue actors, terrorists, criminals, and

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[218] *Ibid.*
[219] Lombardi, 40.
[220] Caverley and Dombrowski, 582.
[221] Adam P. Macdonald, "Rough Waters Ahead? . . ."

weapons and drug traffickers."[222] Luckily, there are defence partners and options available for Canada in the IAP *right now* that would bring this vision to reality.

International perspectives of China in the IAP

The security and military debates regarding the impact of China's growing clout are far more mature in IAP states than in Canada, most obviously due to the geographic proximity factor. While direct parallels between these regional states, such as Japan, India, and Australia are imperfect due to unique sets of national interests, they do share the core security concern of the integrity of the RBLIO, including respect for customary and treaty international law, and freedom of the global commons. Indeed, the concept of a "free and open IAP" (FOIP), which is grounded in the RBLIO, was initially championed by Japan and now endorsed by the US.[223] With "95% of Japan's energy imports and 40% of its total trade" passing through SEA waters, Japan is particularly sensitive to Chinese aggressiveness in the SCS and perceived risks to secure and stable SLOCs.[224] As a result, Japan has sought closer ties with other regional powers, namely India, where in 2014 the two nations issued a joint statement regarding rising tensions in SCS, where they emphasized the "commitment of Japan and India to the freedom of navigation, unimpeded commerce and peaceful settlement of disputes based on the principles of international law."[225]

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[222] Sloan, 283.

[223] Nicholas Szechenyi and Yuichi Hosoya, "Working Toward a Free and Open Indo-Pacific," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 10 October 2019, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/10/10/working-toward-free-and-open-indo-pacific-pub-80023.

[224] Bradford, 81.

[225] Sakuwa, 324.

India has been similarly alarmed by China's growing maritime power in the SCS and Indian Ocean region. Through its Maritime Silk Road and "String of Pearls" concept of investment and control of key shipping nodes, India has perceived Chinese efforts as "intended to encircle India and thereby restrict its strategic outreach in the IOR."[226] Other observers interpret Chinese actions as aimed at displacing India "As the intended net security provider for the entire Indian Ocean region."[227] Parvaiz Ahmad Thoker of Central University of Punjab concluded "it is, therefore, obvious for India to boost its collaboration with other major powers, especially with the US to counter the Chinese strategic designs."[228] As a powerful ally, the US would support India as the net security provider in the Indian Ocean region, giving a broad coalition an effective means to "counterbalance Chinese maritime power in the Indian Ocean."[229]

Finally, there is Australia, which "is the most similar state to Canada in the Asia-Pacific region."[230] It recently released its *Strategic Update 2020*, which has been noted to be heavily "influenced by China's increased militarization of the South China Sea."[231] Executive Director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute Peter Jennings has argued that this update was well received by SEA states, "largely because there appears to be an unspoken census in the region that China is the number one problem."[232] Like Japan and India, Australia is seeking to strengthen multilateral support in the region to counter a

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[226] Thoker and Ramzan, 7.
[227] Shishir Upadhyaya, *India's Maritime Strategy: Balancing Regional Ambitions and China* (Oxon: Routledge, 2020), 136.
[228] Thoker and Ramzan, 7.
[229] Upadhyaya, 195.
[230] Manicom, 290.
[231] Peter Jennings, "Canada + Australia in the Indo-Pacific," *CDA Institute*, 28 August 2020, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://cdainstitute.ca/peter-jennings-interview-canadian-australian-collaboration-countering-china-in-the-indo-pacific/.
[232] Jennings.

Beijing that has been very effective at splitting coalitions. Indeed, one scholar's interpretation of Australia's 2016 *Defence White Paper* found that "Canberra increasingly views with pessimism the prospect that China will leave the existing liberal rules-based order."[233] Another observer commented the defence paper highlighted "the defence of the RBO as one of three core strategic interests within Australian defense strategy."[234] As a concise summary through a defensive neorealist lens, Frederick Kliem's BoT analysis of these states and the US vis-à-vis China found perceived threat levels to range from medium-high to very high, as per figure 7.

	Role	Aggregate Power	Geographic Proximity	Offensive Power	Aggressive Intentions	Perceived Threat Level
USA	Security guarantor	High	Medium	High	High	High
Japan	Primary regional FOIP driver	High	High	High	High	Very high
India	Still hesitant middle power	High	High	Medium	Medium-high	High
Australia	Increasingly concerned middle power	High	Medium	Medium	High	Medium-high

Figure 7 – IAP Role and Perceived Threat Levels
Source: Kliem, 290

[233] Sorpong Peoua, "Regional Security Governance in the Indo-Pacific: Critical Problems and Long Term Prospects," *CDA Institute*, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://cdainstitute.ca/on-track-2019-3/.

[234] Jeffrey Reeves, "Canada and Indo-Pacific: 'Diverse' and 'Inclusive', not 'Free' and 'Open'," *Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada*, September 2020, 40.

Drawing from the conclusions of Chapter Five, which found Canada's perceived threat level of China to be significant, it clearly has several partners to work with in addition to the US in seeking to enforce the RBLIO in the IAP.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue

As it happens, there is a defence and security option that best represents Canada's chance to join IAP defence partners in balancing against China's revisionist maritime power and shaping the latter's engagement in the maritime domain. That is the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), which is an informal strategic association for Australia, India, Japan, and the United States "to exchange views on current security challenges and coordinate their strategic approaches."[235] Initiated in 2007, it was largely dormant until 2017 when the four nations revitalized the dialogue in the face of increasing aggressiveness from Beijing.[236] Indeed, Australian observers readily admit that their country

> walked away from Quad 1.0 in 2008 because we had high hopes about China and doubts about Japan and India; Canberra bet on Beijing rather than Tokyo and New Delhi. Now the race has changed dramatically, the stakes are even higher, and Australia puts new wagers on Japan and India to reinforce its traditional bet on the US.[237]

In his BoT analysis of QUAD vis-à-vis China, Kliem has concluded that "Quad 2.0, however, will endure in symbiosis with China's increasing assertiveness of the Xi Jinping era, and resulting threat perceptions in Washington, New Delhi, Canberra and Tokyo will

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[235] Kliem, 272.
[236] Peoua.
[237] Graeme Dobell, "First Quad leaders' summit polishes the democratic diamond," *The Strategist*, 15 March 2021, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/first-quad-leaders-summit-polishes-the-democratic-diamond/?fbclid=IwAR3rt5ESsN_vTDhhRZZS6UCoI9h76qvnXDVUsuUbNVKBIw34lmVQm1b1COU.

propel the Quad and similar networks to ever greater importance".[238] Indeed, in Kliem's article, he found "that all characteristics of a high threat perception, as laid out by Walt, are met."[239] Since the publishing of Kliem's article in 2020 arguing in favour of the neorealist staying power of QUAD 2.0, the informal coalition has been gathering momentum. For the first time, state leaders of the four states met in March 2021 and issued a joint statement confirming their demand that the IAP remain "free, open, inclusive, healthy, anchored by democratic values, and unconstrained by coercion."[240] For a nation that shares the core strategic interest of a robust and resilient RBLIO, the QUAD 2.0 has great appeal to Canada as it seeks to better balance against revisionist Chinese maritime power.

Thankfully, QUAD 2.0 has already sought to include voices, albeit not total membership, beyond its original four members. Held initially in March 2020 to discuss COVID-19 pandemic responses, the QUAD-Plus dialogue included nations like New Zealand and Vietnam. This first meeting represents great potential for other regional stakeholders to contribute to an RBLIO vision of the IAP. As noted by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (APFC), "For those hoping the FOIP concept can become an inclusive, comprehensive mechanism for co-operation between states, the Quad 'Plus' is arguably the first tangible proof that such engagement is possible beyond the original FOIP states."[241] Observers of the QUAD 2.0 have noted that Canada has already been courted for involvement in the defence association. In January 2021, Canada participated in the US-led ASW Exercise SEA DRAGON near Guam, where Canada's involvement

[238] Kliem, 273.
[239] *Ibid.*
[240] Dobell.
[241] Reeves, 34.

with the QUAD 2.0 members sparked the term "QUAD +1."[242] Robert Fife and Steven Chase of the Globe and Mail captured expert opinions on the matter, who suggest that although Canada has not been formally asked to join QUAD 2.0, it is only a matter of time. Retired U.S. Rear Admiral Robert Girrier has stated "Canada would be a logical member of the Quad as the group expands to include other countries in the Indo-Pacific," and "Retired Canadian Vice-Admiral Mark Norman agreed that Canada should seek membership in the Quad but only if Ottawa is willing to make a significant contribution to Indo-Pacific defence."[243] This latter point by Norman is particularly salient and is connected to the issues of consistent engagement identified earlier in this chapter. However, Canadian participation in QUAD 2.0 is not without its detractors.

Critics of Canada's involvement in the QUAD 2.0 suggest other multilateral mechanisms, such as ASEAN and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), are better balancing options for Canada. They argue these latter options are more inclusive of all regional partners and that "Canada would have little to gain in working with FOIP proponent states through the Quad, which China views – quite correctly – as being directed against its interests in the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions."[244] The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (APFC) has further argued that "Canadian involvement in the Quad would send a clear message to Beijing that it too sees China's activities in the Indian and Pacific Ocean areas as inherently threatening."[245]

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[242] Abhijnan Rej, "Quad Plus Canada Participate in Anti-Sub War Exercise," *The Diplomat*, 22 January 2021, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://thediplomat.com/2021/01/quad-plus-canada-participate-in-anti-sub-war-exercise/.

[243] Robert Fife and Steven Chase, "Canada urged to play bigger role with allies to counter China in the Indo-Pacific," *The Globe and Mail*, 4 April 2021.

[244] Reeves, 83.

[245] *Ibid.*

That is the point- Beijing's behaviour *is* threatening. Further, Canada could use its influence as a "sounding board" to temper more hawkish tones within QUAD 2.0. While the APFC correctly identifies that charges of Chinese revisionism "assume Chinese motivations and intentions in line with their own worldview of a Western-led security order – one where China is a security recipient and not a security provider," Chapter Four of this paper identified a new security order led by the extant Chinese regime as anathema to Canadian strategic interests. Appeasement is unlikely to serve Canada well in the long run.

Paired with a coherent engagement strategy for the IAP, consistent and meaningful contributions to multilateral associations such as QUAD 2.0 offer a comprehensive umbrella under which elements of Canadian maritime power, chiefly the RCN and RCAF, can support its defence partners, reinforce the core tenets of the RBLIO and shape engagement with China. Current efforts are limited to the episodic Operations *Projection, Artemis,* and *Neon*. Operation *Projection* is particularly notable, given its flexibility and scope. Typically of six months duration, Canadian planners can send ships to areas of strategic interest a variety of ways- sometimes even through geopolitically sensitive areas such as the SCS or Taiwan Strait. While not "Freedom of Navigation" exercises that the US is known for, they do attract China's attention.[246] The deployment has even included port calls in China itself. Further, the deployment is segmented to permit inclusion in multinational exercises such as the US *RIMPAC*, and the Australian *Kakadu*. However, given their episodic nature, these operations represent entry points to

[246] Lee Berthiaume, "Top officials weighed Canadian warship's passage through sensitive strait near China," *CTV News*, 27 November 2020, last accessed 21 April 2021, https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/top-officials-weighed-canadian-warship-s-passage-through-sensitive-strait-near-china-1.5206882.

maritime engagement in the region, and risk sending a message that Canada is not committed to its partners in the region.[247] Jeffrey Kucharski has suggested the forward deployment of an RCN asset in "Asia would go a long way to demonstrating that regional security in the Indo-Pacific is also in Canada's interest."[248] While this would maximize Canadian maritime engagement in the region by eliminating lengthy oceanic transits and conveying a message of commitment, such an endeavour would need to be squared with the capacity challenges facing the RCN and the logistical hurdles of forward basing. Yet, as the US is still considering reviving its US First Fleet for operations specifically in the IAP, it represents an opportunity for Canada to make a parallel asset shift to the region.

[247] "COVID-19, Canada, China, and the Indo-Asia-Pacific theatre", *CGAI Defence Deconstructed,* 8 May 2020, https://www.cgai.ca/covid_19_canada_china_and_the_indo_asia_pacific_theatre.

[248] Kucharski, 8.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

It may seem melodramatic to suggest Canada is at an inflection point in its relations with China, but the Liberal minority government of Canada in 2021 does indeed have much on its plate as it considers its relations with the Asian power, the US, and others. Gone is the idealism of the liberal institutional movement suggesting integration chiefly by engagement, instead replaced by an increasingly multipolar emerging security environment with features of a realist *realpolitik* international system. Within, a resurging China is expressing its vision for at least regional, and possibly global, order and governance in the maritime domain. To Canada and other adherents to the RBLIO, little is more alarming within the province of global governance. This paper analyzed this debate, using Stephen Walt's "Balance of Threat" theory to establish that a revisionist China's increasingly assertive application of maritime power within the emerging security environment threatens Canada's strategic interests directly, in tangible and material ways, but more significantly is actively used to alter the foundation that underpins Canadian maritime security and prosperity- the RBLIO.

Chapter Summary

Walt's theory is particularly useful for this issue. Chapter Two explored other major schools of IR thought and, while they have merit, realism emerged as the most appropriate for analyzing state-on-state perceptions of threat within the emerging security environment, and, in particular, was found as a powerful way to understand China's maritime interests. Further, defensive realism, with its nuanced approach to balance and moderation, fits cleanly with the reality of Canadian international power. Finally, in 1985 Walt refined the classic defensive realist "Balance of Power" theory by astutely

observing power alone is not sufficient to explain balancing or bandwagoning behaviour; it is how *threatening* one state is perceived by another, modifying and motivating state actions based on threats. He argued that the four factors of aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and offensive intent constitute this perception of threat, with the first three determining how much *potential* threat exists, and the latter giving meaning to that potential. Walt's theory has not simply remained a theoretical exercise. Even as recently as 2020 his theory has been utilized by scholars in exploring interstate behaviour and alliance tendencies between single states or larger groups, such as the European Union.

Chapter Three provided the Canadian context to this paper's analysis. Within the maritime domain, Canada has both domestic and global strategic interests that require safeguarding and development to ensure national security and prosperity. While security of the global commons for trade and immigration and a stable and sustainable fishery are key maritime issues for Canada, concerns in the Arctic region are particularly salient, given the region's remoteness but vast potential. Underwriting their maritime security are modest but professional and capable military, coast guard, and OGD elements. However, they can only cover so much of Canada's vast coastline and international interests. The ultimate guarantor of Canadian maritime security and prosperity are the core tenets of the RBLIO— adherence to international law, respect for multilateral institutions, and the collective defence by partners (chiefly the US) committed to this order. Canada should be alarmed by efforts to erode or revise this order and could use its instruments of national power, including its maritime elements, to reinforce it.

Turning to an analysis of China's maritime power from the Canadian context and through Walt's BoT framework, Chapter Four explored the level of threat posed by China's aggregate power, its geographic proximity, and its offense capabilities in the maritime domain. Together, these are the objective factors that formed classical Balance of Power theory but under Walt's BoT, they represent the *potential* threat one state can pose to another. This chapter found the PRC's aggregate power superiority over Canada is not in doubt- merely its scale is debatable. With the vast Pacific Ocean separating the two countries, its geographic proximity is less of an issue compared to IAP defence partners, but it can still affect Canadian global interests, and improvements in technology shrink the real battlespace. In very short order it has developed a vast quantitative advantage in maritime capabilities and is advancing its qualitative competency, allowing the PLAN and other PRC elements of maritime power to range further abroad. These objective factors combine to establish that China's maritime power presents a significant *potential* threat to Canada's maritime interests.

In Chapter Five, analysis of China's intent in the maritime domain fused and gave meaning to the *potential* threat identified in the previous chapter. With explanations of intent ranging from a conciliatory China to an offensive regime locked in a zero-sum contest with the US, interpretations varied between scholars. However, based on the PRC's actions in the SCS, ECS, and towards Taiwan, it is clearly acting in an aggressive and revisionist manner towards its regional neighbors. Further, its behaviour has become increasingly alarming further abroad, given it has done little to rein in the illegal activity of its vast fishing fleets. As China seeks to rewrite regional security dynamics in its

favour at the expense of the US and other adherents of the RBLIO, the efficacy of the entire order is subsequently put under threat.

By considering which of Walt's BoT four factors can reasonably be mitigated by Canadian action in the maritime domain, Chapter Six explored options for how Canada could respond to this existential threat. Acknowledging that geographic proximity is difficult to influence, and China's aggregate power and maritime capabilities are likely to grow regardless of international engagement, influencing Beijing's intent— that is, *how* it applies its maritime power, is the only rational choice to influence. Investigating the "Ends, Ways and Means" to achieve this, realism's "balance or bandwagon" predictions to threats external to the state suggested a reasonable and desirable outcome for Canada is a robust regional security dynamic, grounded in the core tenets of the RBLIO, that encourages regional balancing favourable to the extant order and discourages bandwagon behaviour favourable to Chinese authoritarian ideals in 2021. Such a course would present Beijing a choice- continue its aggressive and revisionist agenda alone or seek rapprochement with those states and institutions upholding the core tenets of the RBLIO. Engagement on maritime issues of mutual concern represents pathways to cooperation to enable the latter potential outcome. Through investigating "Ways and Means" via the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power, it is clear that Canada would likely face economic consequences of supporting the RBLIO in the region. However, with sufficient national will and diversification from China, the economic cost could be borne. Further, joining with allies does not necessarily mean isolating China. Fusing the diplomatic, informational, and military elements within an informal association, such as the QUAD, Canada could use its influence on Washington

to temper more hawkish excesses, not be perceived as simply a client state of the US, and promote defence engagement with Beijing on matters of mutual interest. Drawing China towards the RBLIO remains a credible goal and given the option to choose between pursuing a revisionist agenda in isolation or becoming a more active warden of the core tenets of a robust and widely accepted RBLIO, the latter may yet gain traction in Beijing.

Further Research

In exploring the Sino-Canadian maritime power dynamic, this research paper revealed three areas that should be explored in future research. In Chapter One, this paper acknowledged that a deeper understanding of the rise of the Chinese Communist Party and its goals would aid in further refining Canada's perception of Beijing's overall intent, including in the maritime domain. Chapter Five acknowledged that standing up for the RBLIO may incur the ire of Beijing, and the latter may resort to "economic coercion" to dissuade Canada from pursuing such a course. A deeper understanding of the Sino-Canadian trade relationship, what coercive measures China may employ, including using other states by proxy, and the actual impact on the Canadian economy would provide essential data to any "cost-benefit" analysis Canadian policy-makers may undertake. Finally, future efforts could be expended to refine or discover creative solutions that satisfy the requirement to demonstrate to Beijing that its revisionist agenda will not be entertained in the IAP or elsewhere, but also find meaningful ways to engage with China. The consequences of this research question are happening in real-time, and Canadian policy-makers must be adaptable and creative to effectively implement this paper's recommended balanced approach.

Concluding Remarks

In 2021, a more appropriate narrative is that *China has Risen— The Rise of China* ended with a dramatic shift under Xi Jinping at the dawn of the second decade of the 21st century. Wielding considerable maritime power and demonstrating assertive and revisionist intent, it has already altered regional security dynamics in its favour in the IAP and is beginning to do so elsewhere. The answer to this paper's research question is abundantly clear- in the period from 2010 to 2021, the People's Republic of China's application of maritime power represents a fundamental threat to the RBLIO and Canada's maritime security and prosperity. In dealing with this problem there are several potential solutions, but a balanced approach grounded in defensive neorealism offers the rational path forward. Canada could promote engagement with China when and where it can but must defend the system on which its security and prosperity rely, even when the consequences from revisionist powers may hinder the national livelihood in the short or medium term. While it is possible to draw Beijing towards more active participation in the RBLIO, nothing is certain. China is renowned for "playing the long game." It is time Canada did the same.

Summary of Recommendations

- **In the IAP, deepen engagement with defence partners who support the core tenets of the RBLIO. The QUAD represents Canada's best opportunity to do so within the diplomatic, informational, and military domains.**
- **Better align economic and defence and security policies in the IAP. Deepen economic engagement with RBLIO partners and be willing to divest from China.**
- **Enhance Canada's maritime presence in the IAP, including via increased air/sea platforms and staff/liaison officers in multilateral endeavours.**

- **Through multilateral institutions, including QUAD, engage with China on matters of mutual interest, such as climate change, piracy, and drug and human trafficking.**

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