

CANADA AND THE EMERGING ASIA-PACIFIC SECURITY DILEMMA

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This paper will outline the emerging world order particular to the Eastern Pacific region, and Canada's position and interest in the new strategic environment.

The international system is in a state of confusion, and instability, where states compete against each other for influence and power. The end of the Cold War brought about a major change in the international system. The world moved from a bi-polar alignment to a multi-polar arrangement, with many great powers and one superpower, the United States. The traditional great powers came back to the world stage including, Europe (the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Germany), Japan, Russia, the Peoples Republic of China, and perhaps India. In many ways the emerging world order has much in common with nineteenth century Europe and the Balance of Power.¹ In the new world order, major global conflict is less likely, while conflict between lesser states and sub-groups is more frequent.²

The Asia-Pacific Region became the focal point of world interest as Asian economies grew at an astounding rate when compared with their Western counter-parts. This keen economic competition was only increased by the regions financial crisis. Gone was the Euro-centred world of the last several centuries. National security was no longer strictly defined in terms of armies, navies and air forces, but also in terms of politics, economics, environment, culture, and social factors.

The end of the bi-polar world probably had the greatest effect in the Pacific. Since 1945, the Pacific was the domain of the United States of America. While the military power of the United States will likely decrease as its economy slows, and its people look to domestic pressures, such as medicare.³ It will likely be a generation before anyone power, or coalition, could challenge the sovereign might of the United States.⁴ In the last century the world flourished under Pax Britannia, and now it strives forward under Pax Americana. To maintain superpower status, the United States has to control the North and South American continents, and the ocean areas around its landmass, as well as its, and its allies' access to Middle Eastern oil.

If American superpower status is to continue the United States Navy must continue to rule the seas and particularly the Pacific.⁵ It must also find a way to get its regional allies such as Japan, the Western Europeans, and Canada to take on more of the defense burden. The question for the United States seems to be one of how do we maintain superpower status with the status quo, re-trench, or withdraw and reinvest. This is also a question that perplexes the rest of the world, which fears the consequences of America retreating to its isolationist roots. American withdrawal across the Pacific would likely mean the re-armament of Japan, and increasing tensions between Japan and China.

With the end of the Cold War, Russia started to settle into its role of Eurasia great power as it continued its steep decline from superpower. Russia's borders by 1998 were barely recognizable from its Soviet past, and are likely to continue to change as various ethnic groups decide to

assert their independence in Russia's southern flank, as is the case with Chechnya. The question will be as to whether Russia will, or even can, restore its old empire, or maintain what it has at present.⁶ Russia for its part is attempting to redefine its global role. It is no longer a power that rivaled the United States. The end of the Cold War and defeat of the Soviet system, left Russia as the sick power of Eurasia.

Russia's military strength rests almost solely on nuclear deterrence and a first strike stance.⁷ It maintains a large field army, and the key residual strengths of its once powerful navy, however, it is Russia's nuclear weapons that maintains its great power status. Russia only has an estimated 8 divisions ready for action, and 4 are earmarked for peacekeeping. The air assault units are down to 60 per cent strength, and the air force only has 30 per cent of its old training time. Naval strength is estimated to have fallen by 50 per cent in both personnel and ships.⁸ Russia now has more to fear from an unrestrained growing China, and its interest in mineral rich Siberia, and its old buffer zone of Central Asia, than it does the United States.⁹ Additionally, Europe and China are far stronger than Russia economically, and an enlarged Europe threatens to sandwich Russian between itself and China.¹⁰ Russia must modernize if it is to maintain its great powership into the next century. This is proving a difficult task for the lame Yeltsin regime.

With the virtual disappearance of a Soviet threat, China emerged as the dominant regional power.¹¹ Indeed, China was the real winner in the old Soviet Union's collapse. Its economic growth rate at over ten per cent per year, its population, and its three-million-man Peoples' Liberation Army backed by nuclear weapons, make it a formidable growing world power.

Indeed, China is adopting a more aggressive international stance that may signal a more aggressive China as it emerges as a superpower. Factors that support this contention include: China has expanded its national security objectives; China has changed its patterns in the use of military force; China is developing a modern sea control capability and; China has concluded a series of diplomatic agreements that allows it to concentrate its efforts on Eastern Asia-Pacific.

China, a great power with old claims on territories stretching from Siberia, and Korea in the North to the Spratly Islands, South China Sea, and Vietnam in the South has become a cause of regional concern. If China could secure its own oil source in Central Asia or Siberia, and continue its economic performance, its military power could grow enormously within a generation. Whether it will replace the United States as the dominant world power is open to question.

Japan its age-old foe, a great power, and only real regional rival is deeply concerned about China's rapid economic and military growth, as are the ASEAN nations.¹² China and Japan are contesting ownership of the Diaoyutai/Senkaku islands. China has also laid claim to the entire South China Sea, which is the main passageway for Japanese oil.¹³ Both Japan and China are rivals for Siberia's resources and might be inclined to challenge Russia over ownership. Japan historically is also a player for Central Asian and Southeast Asian resources. Japan in China's eyes is an old enemy that invaded China and barbarized its civilian population. Japan and its enhanced security treaty with the United States, that allows Japan to assist the United States in times of regional crisis is viewed by China as an attempt to contain China and, and maybe the

rebirth of Japanese militarism.¹⁴ Additionally, Japan has faced threats from North Korea and is within the range limit of North Korea's missile forces, conventionally armed or otherwise.

Japan has a strong military and is even stronger economically than China, to the extent, that it could become an independent superpower. Japan's navy is the best equipped and strongest fleet in Asia outside of the United States. Estimates suggest that Japan could produce two aircraft carrier battle groups, fully operational in five years.¹⁵ If the need arose, Japan's satellite delivery vehicles/rockets, the H-2, could quickly be reconfigured into accurate ICBMs, and its surplus nuclear materials could rapidly be turned into 1000-2000 nuclear warheads within months.¹⁶ American withdrawal across the Pacific would likely mean the nuclear armament of Japan, and increasing tensions between Japan and China, and maybe war. The trick for the international community may be in recognizing emerging superpower China's regional dominance, and great power Japan's American client state status without ruffling the feathers of either state.¹⁷

The European great powers of the United Kingdom and France maintain residual power projection capabilities in the Pacific. Both France and the United Kingdom are nuclear powers with small, but highly accurate, and powerful, nuclear forces.¹⁸ France, and the United Kingdom also possess the ability to conduct amphibious and limited carrier operations in the Pacific. The arrival of the new French aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*, and the arrival of the United Kingdom's two new proposed aircraft carriers, and the new HMS Ocean would add considerably to the Europeans' power projection capabilities.¹⁹ If the European Union could agree to a common foreign policy and command structure outside of NATO, then the combined European Union could produce a fairly effective battle fleet for service in the Pacific, providing that they had the basing and logistics facilities to maintain them in the region.²⁰ What role they would take on if America withdraws is open to question. For example, any disruption of trade through the Straits of Malacca might provoke a European reaction independent of the United States. Europe might become more interventionist in the Pacific, given the European's experience with the balance of power concept. A clue may rest in Britain's attempts to get itself, and France, into the ASEAN regional forum as members.²¹ Furthermore, in March 1997, the United Kingdom deployed a battle fleet into the South China Sea of 20 ships including two nuclear submarines and an aircraft carrier to demonstrate both its capability and interest in the Asia Pacific region.²²

In terms of regional powers, the Koreans face conflict with one another over the issue of who will unify the country and how it will be executed. North Korea has outstanding border issues with its ally China. North Korea also threatens Japan on a regular basis, as it does South Korea. North Korea has been seen as a challenge to world peace ever since its invasion of the South in 1950, which led to the Korean War with Canadian participation. Today, Canada has very strong economic ties, and interests in South Korea, the constant focus of North Korean threats. The North has attempted to develop nuclear weapons and may even possess a few.

North Korea possesses a number of Short Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBM) in the form of Frogs 5-7, Scud Cs, and perhaps are re-engineering SS-21s.²³ The North Koreans are continuing to develop the 1,000 kilometre ranged No-Dong I, and the 1,500 kilometre range No-Dong II Medium Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBM) capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction.²⁴ Additionally, North Korean missile development is continuing on the 2000 kilometre range Taepo Dong I ICBM, and the anticipated greater range 6000 kilometre Taepo Dong II ICBM.

The Taepo Dong II was recently test fired over Japanese territory, and is believed to have the capability to strike targets in the United States or Russia.²⁵ A near or close release of a WMD upon the United States, would have immediate implications for Canada's national security.

North Korea has a biological and chemical weapons program, and both have been around for years. It is also clear from recent high level defectors that North Korea and its leadership are still dedicated to forcible reunion with the South.²⁶

The fact that the country is also going through a severe famine, and many people are faced with starvation, only furthers the tense atmosphere. Many experts fear that the North Korean regime will strike at the South out of an attempt to bolster its disintegrating support at home, and to divert attention away from its desperate domestic situation.²⁷ Scenarios also include a peaceful implosion of North Korea, a coup d' etat/humanitarian invasion of the North by China, and a South Korean invasion of the North. At present, the peace talks have collapsed.

South Korea faces a large hostile one million man army forward deployed on its borders, and millions of starving desperate refugees from the North. South Korea also has out-standing territorial issues with Japan its old colonial master, particularly over the disputed Takeshima/Toktos Islands.²⁸ Presently, the Koreans are in on-again/off-again talks, but a unification of the Koreas would add an entirely new player to the Asia-Pacific equation. It would take time for a cash-strapped South Korea to swallow North Korea, but once that was completed, money could be spent on a powerful military. Presently, the South Korean military is well led, disciplined, large, and equipped with modern military hardware. A united Korea would be a force to be reckoned with if its economic strength was matched with military power. It might even be open to an alliance with China against Japan.

Vietnam another regional power in the Southeast Asia region finds itself under pressure, and at times under attack from China, in terms of its border, the Spratly, and Parcel Islands. This was the Vietnamese reason for joining ASEAN in 1995, in hopes that strength in ASEAN numbers would deter the far stronger Peoples' Republic. The Vietnamese military is one of the largest in the world with 557,000 personnel, but they utilize old equipment. The problem for Vietnam is that it lacks the ability to project power off shore against its neighbours, and its competitor in the Parcels and Spratlys, namely China.

The Taiwanese military is very well equipped by Asian standards and very modern, but it faces an increasingly powerful, and aggressive China set on reunification. At present, China does not have enough power projection assets to cross the straits to seize Taiwan in an invasion. But China has other options. It could launch nuclear or conventional missile attacks, mine the area, or hold long term war games in an attempt to wreck Taiwan's economy. Whether the United States is prepared to sacrifice Los Angeles in showdown with China over Taiwan is open to question. This may re-waken the dormant Taiwanese nuclear programme.

The medium and smaller states of the Western Pacific region such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Australia, and New Zealand are caught in the middle of the new Asia-Pacific security dynamic. No longer is there a fear of the Soviet Navy and domination, but a renewal of old boundary disputes, and conflicting interests, on and under the

resource-rich high seas. East-West conflict is no longer the threat, it becomes one of many regional opponents, hyped by fears of American withdrawal, and Chinese-Japanese competition. Since 1985 defense expenditures in ASEAN countries have raised by more than 50 per cent, and as of 1995, overtook the Middle East in arms purchases.²⁹ The adoption of the 1992 Law of the Sea Convention and the 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), led to 13 disputed EEZs within the region.³⁰ Furthermore, the Law of the Sea Convention set up a number of countries to rape their EEZs for their valuable resources.

China has claimed an area that equates largely to the entire South China Sea, particularly, the Spratly and Parcel Islands, and this is a major concern for ASEAN countries. However, China is not seen as the only threat, as Singapore bases its strategy on threats from Malaysia, and Indonesia. Thailand and Indonesia are building up their navies to deal with their neighbours. With fisheries, oil, natural gas, and national pride at stake, state on state territorial conflict looks more and more likely. International law may have sown the seeds for war in the ASEAN region.

Lastly, the India and Pakistan present an interesting counter balance to Asia-Pacific, in an almost 'wild card' fashion. India is a potential ally for both Russia and Japan. Its population and growing economy give it military power. India is known to have a nuclear arsenal and recently completed a series of tests surprising the world. India possesses, airplanes, and Agni and Prithvi IRBMs capable of delivering said weapons.³¹ While the quality in Indian forces is not necessarily in place due to lack of funds, and age/maintenance, its sheer numbers do serve as a potential counter-balance to Chinese power.³² India and China are still feuding over their Northeast border after the 1962 war.³³

India must be weighted against a nuclear-armed Pakistan with Ghauri IRBMs, which is an ally of China.³⁴ In effect, both cancel each other out and it is unlikely that either could project conventional power into the Pacific in any meaningful way in the near future, although this might change.

New Global Concerns

Superimposed on this chaotic new world order is a series of global concerns including: environmental degradation; breakdown of the nation state; proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD); international terrorism; and the international drug trade.

Environmental security is based upon the notion that the world is depleting its natural resources and degrading its environment due to over population and overuse of finite materials such as, fresh water, soils, forestry, fisheries, and other life support systems. The greatest environmental challenges to world peace seems to hinge on the issues of freshwater and fisheries.³⁵ The major flash points of concern in the Pacific centre on the Han River between North and South Korea.³⁶ The situation is further exasperated in the Pacific by virtue of the fact that the population is very young, and there is a drought/famine in North Korea potentially raising the risks of war.

The conflict over international fishing stocks is another potential source of global instability. Some coastal nations such as, Thailand and Malaysia, depend heavily on their fishing industry and are forced to adopt desperate methods to protect their fish stocks.

Since the end of the Cold War, and the break-down of the Soviet Empire, the world has been plagued by a growing number of civil wars between tribes, ethnic groups, and religion. Due to the cross-border nature of certain ethnic and religious groups, many conflicts cross borders, and several countries and even entire regions become de-stabilized.³⁷ The East, Southeast, and South Asia region have some 21 countries with 62 minorities at risk for a total of 400 million people.³⁸ The treatment of Chinese minorities in Asian countries might well be a future source of conflict with emerging China.³⁸

Since the 1970 signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, several countries have either manufactured WMD (Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical) such as, Israel, India and Pakistan, or they are attempting to do so such as, Iran, Iraq, Libya, and North Korea. Furthermore, thirty nations now possess ballistics missiles and some seventy states maintain an inventory of cruise missiles. The break-up of the Soviet Union has only increased the problem of trying to limit the WMD community, as many former Soviet facilities lack security, and are vulnerable to theft,³⁹ and many scientists are willing to sell their knowledge to the highest bidder. The effect of this has been a less than stable world where it is possible for any nation or sub-group to obtain or manufacture WMD.⁴⁰

Additionally, there have been a number of terrorist incidents in Canada sponsored by radicals involved in factional fighting in other countries. Sikh Terrorists operating from Canada are believed to have destroyed an Air India jet off Ireland with a loss of 331 lives. In 1986 and 1988, assassination attempts were made against two prominent Punjabi politicians.⁴⁴

The national security challenge of international drug trafficking should not be under-estimated by any country. Some experts believe that drug traffickers have targeted Canada as a potential market due to our lax security, and at a time when the government has eliminated Ports Canada Police. Just look at the difficulties being encountered in British Columbia due to Asian-based gangs.

Canada Pacific Power - Pacific Interests

It is in this setting of change, conflict, and global challenges that Canada must examine and determine its new Asia-Pacific Security policy.

Canada is a middle power situated on the northern part of the North American continent, wedged between a great military power further to its north, Russia, and a superpower, the United States. It is a maritime nation with the longest coastline in the world of some 250,000 kms, and bordered by three oceans, the Atlantic, Arctic, and Pacific. Canada is a partner in NORAD and is also a member of NATO. We were one of the founding members of the United Nations and have participated widely in peacekeeping operations. Lastly, Canada is a major economic player in the World, and as a member of the G7, has considerable business interests around the globe, particularly in Europe and Asia.

Canadian national interests in the Asia-Pacific region might be defined as, China and the regional security dynamic, and economic.

As Chinese economic power grows, China's political-military power will also grow, and the global military balance may topple in China's favour. It is unlikely that an emerging superpower will continue to play a low-key role as China has done over the last few years. Lastly, shifts in the global balance of power have rarely been peaceful, and thus Canada has a major interest in the emergence of China.

Canada's interests in Asia-Pacific are strategic economic. By the year 2000 60 per cent of the world's population will be found in Asia. Asia will produce 50 per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product. It is estimated that over the next ten years that Asia will contribute between one half and two thirds of the world's economic growth.⁴⁵ In 1996, Canadian exports to Asia Pacific nations reached 27 billion dollars, the second highest export market after the United States. Particularly, the ASEAN nations of Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, and the Philippines represents the top ten export markets in the world for Canadian goods. These economic interests are of high strategic importance to the Canadian economy and Canadian national security.⁴⁶

Furthermore this strategic economic relationship was best demonstrated during the recent Asia economic crisis.⁴⁷ The Asia economic crisis is expected to trim a full percentage point or more off economic growth in Canada.⁴⁸ The situation affected the Canadian dollar plunging it below 65 cents United States, and led to a recession in British Columbia where companies were under cut, and lost Asian markets. The situation was so frustrating for Canada's Finance Minister, that Paul Martin proposed an international office to monitor nation's economies.

Canada also has an economic interest in Asia-Pacific due primarily to our immigration influx from that region. Based upon 1996 figures, several East Asia Pacific nations are among the top ten source countries for immigrants to Canada. Overall, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Philippines and Vietnam produced 33.89 per cent of Canada's immigrants. In 1996, one quarter of Canada's new immigrants was Chinese, and Chinese is now the third most common mother tongue in Canada. These immigrants are a key and important link in Canada's international trade with Asia, and there is a direct correlation between these new Canadians and strategically important Canadian-Asian trade.

In summary, the East-Asia Pacific environment is unstable due to an emerging world order, an aggressive China, and other global concerns. Canada is a nation with vital national interests in the Asia-Pacific region and must be prepared to protect those interests. Lastly, the only way to protect those vital interests is through the provision of combat ready military forces, particularly maritime forces.

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