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**Great Power Transitions and Canada's Security
Interests in the Asia-Pacific Region**

Shakir Chambers

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Great Power Transitions and Canada's Security Interests in the Asia-Pacific Region

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May/mai 2014

Shakir Chambers is a second-year PhD student in Political Science at Carleton University who has spent time in China and continues to expand his research interests to include the growing trade relations between Canada and the Asia-Pacific region. Shakir's research focuses on North America's foreign and security relations with the Asia-Pacific region, broadly speaking. He is concerned with how Canada and the United States can engage with the regional security dynamics in Northeast Asia, and the implications of China's rise for regional security.

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Great Power Transitions and Canada's Security Interests in the Asia-Pacific Region

By Shakir Chambers

Introduction

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has re-emerged on the world stage with one of the most remarkable economic transformations in modern history, an extensive military modernization program, and increased regional and international political clout. "The size of China's displacement of the world balance is such that the world must find a new balance in 30 or 40 years," observed former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, "[i]t's not possible to pretend that this is just another big player. This is the biggest player in the history of man."¹ Certainly, if China continues its extraordinary growth in national power, it will alter the regional and global balance of power. Needless to say, as China ascends towards international prominence, it is making its presence felt. The rise of China, however, implies the relative decline of the United States and this geopolitical phenomenon has led to several queries concerning the current state of global affairs. Is the continued rise of China and the relative decline of the United States inevitable? Are we at the end of the 'American Era'? What implications does China's rise have for Canada? This paper aims to address these questions. To achieve this objective, the paper will be divided into two parts.

Part 1, "The Fall and Rise of the United States – The Future of US Power in an Era of Great Power Emergence," addresses the question, is the rise of China and the decline of the United States inevitable? This section assesses the literature of self-styled 'declinists' – those who argue that the United States is doomed to the fate of past hegemons and great powers; it will decline in relative power. And it assesses the literature relating to the 'revivalists'² – those who contend that the United States will remain the preeminent power in world politics. And it presents their arguments about the possibility of a great power transition between the United States and China.

Part 2, "US-China Relations and the Implications for Canada," examines the impact of China's rise on Canadian foreign policy and Canada-US bilateral relations. It begins by briefly documenting how China's growing economy is affecting Canada-US trade relations. It then discusses the Canada-US 'special relationship' and how the deep economic, political and security ties between these two countries will influence Canadian foreign policy towards a rising China.



Part 1: The Fall and Rise of the United States – The Future of US power in an Era of Great Power Emergence

China: Rising to the Challenge

Considerable evidence supports the notion that the United States is experiencing a relative decline in national power and global influence. US concerns about China's emergence as a great power reflect Washington's anxiety about the military and economic implications, and the consequent shift from a unipolar to a multipolar world order. To be sure, China is not the only state growing economically, militarily and in global influence, although it is the frontrunner. That the United States is witnessing a relative decline is reinforced by both academic literature and government documents.³ The US National Intelligence Council (NIC) has reported that the changing geopolitical landscape is poised to create a new set of international alignments and institutions commensurate with the changing global order. With the international system shifting from a uni- to a multipolar world, the United States will experience a growing inability to deploy its hard power capabilities to achieve desired foreign policy outcomes. To this end, China, as other rising powers in general, has combined sustained high economic growth, expanding military capabilities and active promotion of advanced technologies to close the gap in relative power between the United States and itself.

China's rise and eventual eclipse of US national power is not inevitable, however. Some scholars confidently argue that the United States is only at the beginning of its power, and the twenty-first century will be another 'American century.'⁴ While declinists aver that China will soon join the United States atop the global order, revivalists, by contrast, remain sceptical about the prospects of China becoming a peer competitor to the United States. Revivalists contend that future political change, adverse demographics and other potential domestic setbacks mean that China will rise, but it will not supersede the United States as the most powerful country in the world.⁵ Revivalists explain that despite pessimistic prognostications about US power, the United States possesses a greater share of world power than any other country in history.⁶ Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth interpret the resurgence of declinist literature as a product of changing "estimates of the political utility of America's primacy." They explain that after 2003, "Suddenly, scholars were impressed by the fact that material preponderance does not always translate into desired outcomes."⁷ To revivalists, the failure to achieve desired outcomes consistently does not equate to the erosion of American power; there is a difference between a power base and power as control over outcomes.⁸ Therefore, it is necessary to question how the projections of US decline and China's rise fare against closer scrutiny.

An Economic Shift from West to East?

The diffusion of capital to once poorer areas of the globe has eroded the foundation of American power: the relative superiority of its economy. Because state economies grow at different and uneven rates, some states are always gaining economic power while other states are losing power relative to others. China exemplifies the former. From the mid-1980s through the early 2000s, China's economy grew at an annual rate of roughly 10 per cent and, despite lower Gross Domestic Product (GDP) numbers in the second quarter of 2013, many predict that China will overtake the United



States in size of GDP within the next 10 to 15 years.⁹ Certainly, it is China's phenomenal economic growth that has driven its emergence as a great power.

Despite current economic trends favouring China, advantageous per capita growth rates and favourable demographics position the United States to maintain its economic edge. Due to a combination of the PRC's impressive growth rates and population size, the Chinese economy will likely equal or pass the American economy in size at some point this century. Yet, as Joseph Nye Jr. points out, even if overall Chinese GDP surpasses that of the United States, the two economies will be equivalent in size but not equal in composition. The key to national power, after all, is not merely size, but size *and* wealth.¹⁰ Aggregating many poor people into one economy does not make China capable of generating power internationally. Crucially, with the PRC's gradual transition from an export-driven economy to a consumption-based economy, there will be a slowdown in China's GDP growth and, by extension, per capita income. The gap in GDP per capita between the United States and China remains massive with that of the former close to \$51,000 and the latter at around \$6,100.¹¹ Because the United States is unlikely to be standing still as the Chinese economy loses steam, China may be a long way from posing a serious challenge to the dominance of the US economy.

Certainly, linear projections of economic growth can be misleading. While analysts project that the overall size of China's economy will rapidly approach that of the United States, many of these forecasts ignore the internal challenges facing China, which include: inefficient state-owned enterprises; growing inequality; possible political unrest; and a rapidly aging population. Indeed, the PRC is aging extraordinarily quickly and its fertility rate has dropped to one of the lowest in the world, undercutting a key pillar of its economic boom: a young and productive labour force. These factors will force the leadership in Beijing to outline new priorities, shifting funds away from investment and production towards health care, pensions and other benefits and services.¹² The United States, by contrast, has the highest fertility and immigration rates of all the G8 states, and its median age will be the lowest of any of the great powers (except India) by 2050 – China's median age will surpass that of the United States by 2020. Over the next 40 years, the American working age population will grow by roughly 31 per cent, while that of all other major powers (again, except India) will decline. Accordingly, the growing labour force in the United States will contribute to an expanding economy, and as Mark Haas writes, "Global aging is therefore not only likely to extend U.S. hegemony ... but deepen it as these other states are likely to fall even farther behind the United States."¹³ Indeed, it is an axiom that states grow through immigration, attracting the best and brightest because of the opportunities offered in that country. While the United States has continually produced some of the world's sharpest minds, and is home to 15 of the top 20 universities in the world,¹⁴ China is not in a similar position and one must question what will attract the next generation of Einsteins to China? The blend of immigration and opportunities will remain another advantage for the future of American power.

Dwindling American Military Power?

It is difficult to argue cogently that the United States is declining militarily – no state can match US military expenditures or its ability to project power globally. However, Robert Pape contends that if present trends of military spending by major powers continue, "subsets of major powers acting in



concert could produce sufficient military power to stand a reasonable chance of successfully opposing American military policies.”¹⁵ The United States has maintained a vast array of overseas commitments in the effort to ensure peace and stability around the globe. Maintaining these commitments requires enormous resources, a task made more difficult due to growing US government debt, domestic political gridlock, the waging of two wars (Afghanistan and Iraq), seeking to ensure that Iran does not develop nuclear weapons, NATO's overdependence on US defence expenditures, and the gradual rebalancing of US military assets towards the Asia-Pacific region, among other issues.¹⁶ The combination of these factors has cost the United States real power in today's world, specifically, in Asia, where regional states note that US influence is waning while China's is increasing.¹⁷ Due to the current US economic woes, political gridlock and the resulting automatic budget cuts (sequestration), the US Department of Defense has been mandated to make “across the board” cuts in defence spending.¹⁸ According to some US Service Chiefs, these cuts could diminish US global presence and US efforts to rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region. For instance, in statements and testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, US Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jonathan Greenert reported that sequestration could cause a 30 per cent reduction in the number of ships in the Navy by 2020 – two fewer carrier strike groups, two fewer amphibious ready groups, and a delay in the delivery of the next aircraft carrier.¹⁹ Further, such a prospect would “negate the ship force structure portion of [the US] plan to rebalance to the Asia Pacific region.” Defence cuts hinder American capability to project power, continued Greenert, which is increasingly concerning when potential adversaries are advancing their Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities.²⁰ Certainly, it is not lost on China that planned defence budget cuts would leave the US armed forces unable to fulfill their security commitments. While American officials fight over whether the US Navy should shrink, China is going in the opposite direction.

China has combined its economic prowess, knowledge and technology in efforts to modernize its military.²¹ The PRC's military spending has increased at an inflation-adjusted rate of over 18 per cent per year since the 1990s and studies by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and others have projected that China will be a first-rate military power and will rival the United States in global power by 2020.²² Recently, the PRC unveiled its first aircraft carrier (*Liaoning*) and it is reported that it is currently constructing its first indigenous aircraft carrier.²³ Moreover, China's development of new missile and anti-satellite technology and advancement of its A2/AD capabilities threaten the command of the seas and skies on which the United States bases its Pacific supremacy. The PRC has also displayed the Chengdu J-20 (Black Eagle) and the Shenyang J-31 (Falcon Hawk), fifth-generation stealth jet fighters, and has recently engaged in test flights of its first combat-capable Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV or drone), while beginning research on Unmanned Marine Vessels for military purposes.²⁴ A common view in China is that military modernization will eventually convince the United States that it can no longer afford its military position in the Pacific. Therefore, while many discuss US strategy for the Asia-Pacific region, it is also prudent to examine American capability to uphold security commitments. The collective effect of increasing military responsibilities, and a diminishing capability to uphold them, means that preserving US hegemony, at least in the Asia-Pacific region, is unrealistic.

While declinists foresee a dire future for US military power, revivalists question whether the notion of an emerging challenger to US global primacy matches reality. Indeed, China's impressive economic



growth has enabled it to spend more on national defence, yet, its current military expenditures remain a small fraction of the US commitment.²⁵ There is little doubt that China is improving its military capabilities, and will continue to do so, but the People's Liberation Army (PLA) starts from "a primitive technological and organizational base."²⁶ By contrast, the United States leads the world in exploiting military applications of advanced communications and information technology, and has demonstrated an unrivalled ability to coordinate and process information about the battlefield.²⁷ Moreover, with a smaller, less advanced economy, and inadequate infrastructure to produce and use advanced weaponry, China cannot decrease the overall military gap vis-à-vis the United States unless it is able to devote a substantially greater proportion of its economic resources to defence than does the United States.²⁸ Even if the PRC significantly increased its defence spending, there are no guarantees that it would be able to match the US defence budget or military capabilities. Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry and William C. Wohlforth explain that "learning effects regarding production techniques, and barriers to entry in the production of high-end military power make the maintenance of unmatched [US military] capabilities far easier ... particularly in today's environment in which modern weaponry is so much more complex both to produce and to use than in past eras."²⁹ For instance, the Chinese aircraft carrier, *Liaoning*, is capable of carrying roughly 20 fighter aircraft compared to a US supercarrier which carries a range of 75 to 90 aircraft – this includes fighter jets and 'enabling' aircraft (e.g., radar-jamming planes, radar planes, cargo haulers, helicopters, etc.). To put this in better perspective, former US Defense Secretary Robert Gates pointed out, the US Navy "can carry twice as many aircraft as all the rest of the world combined."³⁰ Moreover, *Liaoning* uses a 'ski jump' ramp rather than a catapult for aircraft takeoff which means it cannot launch aircrafts with a full load of weapons or fuel. This will result in limited range and strike ability. Indeed, a special US task force charged with investigating US-China relations reached a similar conclusion on the state of military developments between the two countries. The task group members concluded that "as far as 2030 ... the Task Force finds no evidence to support the notion that China will become a peer military competitor of the United States." Further, "[t]he military balance today and for the foreseeable future strongly favors the United States and its allies."³¹

The growth of China's military power will also encounter a considerable hurdle: opposition and suspicion from other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Militarily, China will be unable to augment its power without simultaneously being viewed as a threat to its neighbours. Regional actors, such as Japan, Vietnam, South Korea and others, remain wary of China and its future regional intentions.³² The leadership in Beijing has displayed its aversion to multilateral forums to settle disputes when its vital interests are at stake, particularly with respect to historically-sensitive issues of territorial sovereignty.³³ Along with China's growth in economic and military power has been an expanded conception of its national interests. China's interests have evolved from merely protecting the mainland to a broader regional interest of ensuring "a favorable peripheral environment."³⁴ These broader interests were recently reflected by China's implementation of an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea and the angst it has generated among regional actors.³⁵

Certainly, outstanding territorial disputes remain a primary concern to both China and its neighbours, and competing sovereignty claims persist over the Spratly and Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, and Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea. China's ADIZ has heightened tensions in the dispute



in the East China Sea among Japan, China and South Korea. In the disputes in the South China Sea, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Brunei all vie for certain segments of the Spratly and Paracel Islands, while China claims possession over all of them.³⁶ Because the South China Sea seabed, and the Spratly Islands in particular, are believed to harbour vast quantities of natural gas, phosphorous and oil, these territorial disputes are no trivial issue to the claimants.³⁷ Accordingly, Beijing has released ominous statements declaring the Spratly Islands to be “within Chinese territory” and its resources vital to the mainland’s continued existence.³⁸ As China continues to regard the South China Sea as its own, and augments its ability to enforce this view, this site remains a potential area for regional instability.³⁹ The United States assumes the unenviable task of trying to mitigate tensions over these territorial claims, while bolstering and assuring US allies of its commitment and understanding of their security concerns. Unnecessarily aggravating China, however, is also not in the best interests of the United States. Thus, US policy in the region walks a tightrope: accommodate China without giving in to it. Decision-makers in Washington must maintain their key regional alliances, but must be cautious of offering carte blanche guarantees and support to allies as this could encourage adventurous behaviour by them. Alternatively, granting inadequate support could result in doubts about US staying power and commitment to its allies in the region.

Nonetheless, a continually aggressive Chinese military posture could produce a regional counterbalancing coalition and ultimately weaken China’s power and influence. Accordingly, part of the American military advantage over China derives from its geographic position. On the North American continent, the United States is bounded by oceans on two sides and militarily weak and friendly neighbours on the other sides. In comparison to China, the physical distance of the United States from other major powers makes it less vulnerable and also less threatening to other powers. Consequently, the United States can play the protector role and be an ‘off-shore balancer’ in Asia by engaging with its allies, a prerogative not afforded to China.⁴⁰ Thus, to revivalists, US power will remain durable well into the twenty-first century and claims of China becoming a peer competitor to the United States are hyperbole.

Part 2: US-China Relations and the Implications for Canada

Whether or not China surpasses the United States atop the global order, China’s rise will influence Canadian foreign policy and Canada’s relations with the United States. The re-emergence of China, and the rise of Asia in general, have already begun to affect Canada’s economic relations with other states and have been important factors in Canada’s search to reduce its overreliance on American markets. While the Canada-US trade volume has remained fairly constant in the decade since 2003, Canada-China trade has quadrupled over the decade. In 2003, Canada exported \$4.8 billion worth of products to China; in 2012, this number grew to \$19.4 billion.⁴¹ As the Conference Board of Canada illustrated in its 2012 report “Walking the Silk Road: Understanding Canada’s Changing Trade Patterns,” in international trade “the importance of the U.S. to Canada has been trending downward.”⁴² Whereas the United States once accounted for 87 per cent of Canadian merchandise exports, in 2011 the number had fallen to 74 per cent. The volume of Canadian imports from the United States since the early 2000s also indicates that US exporters have lost market share in Canada. In 2001, the United States accounted for 64 per cent of Canadian imports, a decade later that number had



declined to 51 per cent, and the Conference Board of Canada labels China as “the single biggest factor in this change.” Chinese imports into the Canadian market have more than tripled since 2001, currently making China Canada's second-largest source of imports.⁴³

Although Canada-US trade has declined as a percentage, the future of Canada-US trade is not solely about trade volume. Canada's trade with the United States is structural in nature in that bilateral trade supports an integrated economy and manufacturing base. Undoubtedly, then, the United States will remain Canada's largest trading partner for the foreseeable future, but as China and other emerging countries continue to increase their share in the global economy, it will also affect Canada's trade numbers. Calls for Canada to diversify its trading partners will continue and a likely destination, particularly for Canadian energy exports, will be Asia. This development may accelerate the decline of the US market share in Canada.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, Canada remains a middle-sized power with longstanding economic, security and political relationships with the United States. Growing Canada-China economic ties are unlikely to pry Canada away from its relations with the United States. In fact, because of the deep historical ties between Canada and the United States, some scholars have posited that China's rise, and the subsequent US decline, will equate to Canada's decline as well.⁴⁵ Unlike the scope and reach that accompanies US national power, Canada cannot independently shape or influence events external from its region. Historically, within Canada-China bilateral relations, Canada has sought to engage economically with the PRC in the hope that economic engagement would yield progress in other policy areas. Canada-China relations between 1993 and 2003 exemplify this notion. Under the Jean Chretien government massive trade missions, dubbed Team Canada, promoted a one-dimensional Canadian policy towards China focused on economic interests with the assumption that deeper economic engagement could facilitate progress on political reform or human rights violations, for example.⁴⁶ The current government of Canada came into power in 2006 with a decidedly unfriendly attitude towards China, its domestic political structure, and its approach to human rights. Yet, as noted above, despite the chilly political relationship between Canada and China, the economic relationship continued to develop. And the Stephen Harper government has engaged in an about face concerning its relationship with the PRC. Due to pragmatic concerns such as seeking economic diversification, promoting Canada as an ‘energy superpower’ and China's thirst for secure energy imports, and the growing number of Asian immigrants arriving in Canada and the perceived electoral benefits this has provided the Conservative Party of Canada, Prime Minister Harper has struck an increasingly cordial tone and embraced the leadership in Beijing. Indeed, current Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird has referred to China as an “important ally.”⁴⁷

In light of the economic incentives, Canada has not been a stranger to East Asia's security environment. In the context of regional security in East Asia, Canada has had a record of Track Two diplomacy on non-traditional security issues. This type of security engagement eventually fell victim to budget cuts and shifting priorities in the late 1990s and the current Canadian government has not sought to reinvigorate this form of diplomacy.⁴⁸ Recently, however, Peter MacKay, the former Canadian Minister of National Defence, articulated Canada's desire to join regional institutions in Asia, such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+).⁴⁹ An invitation has yet to be extended, and Canada's



previous episodic commitment to the region does not bode well for its immediate inclusion into Asia-Pacific regional forums. As Paul Evans pointed out over two decades ago, "Several Asian leaders have recognized the value of a sustained Canadian presence but have politely questioned the long-term staying power of Canada in a region that has never been of fundamental importance to it."⁵⁰ Despite diplomatic forays into the region during the 1990s, such scepticism about Canada's long-term commitment to the region remains. This will hinder Canada's ability to build durable partnerships and become accepted as a 'Pacific player.'

Canada would like to re-engage with regional institutions and the security architecture in Asia, but Canada cannot independently affect the evolution of the security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region. It is difficult, for example, to envision Canada playing a decisive role in settling the region's maritime territorial claims. Canada simply lacks the military muscle and economic clout in comparison to China, for instance, and thus, by itself, Canada can do little to alter Chinese defence policy or deter China and its neighbours from taking belligerent steps over their respective maritime disputes. While Canada lacks the capacity to shape and influence international events unilaterally, it can act in coalition to achieve its preferred outcomes.⁵¹ In this regard, the Canada-US 'special relationship' is significant in formulating Canadian foreign policy towards a rising China and the Asia-Pacific region.

Canada-United States: The 'Special Relationship' and the Asia-Pacific Region

David S. McDonough has pointed out that Canada's strategy for the Asia-Pacific region is "largely confined to adapting to and managing strategic relations with its superpower patron [the United States]."⁵² Bruce Gilley has also indicated that the reconfiguration of the international environment as a result of China's rise will be less acute for Canada than for other states because Canada's "external environment will be shaped far more by the geographically contiguous United States."⁵³ Thus, Canadian foreign policy towards China will be influenced by the trajectory of US foreign policy in the region. Yet, Canada need not merely acquiesce to US foreign policy decisions. Canada has always balanced its loyalty to the United States with "a certain ambivalence" towards US foreign policy preferences.⁵⁴ Matters such as Canada's decision not to participate in the invasion of Iraq and the absence of Canada from US missile defence plans are demonstrative of Canada's ability to make decisions at the international level despite US pressure. Nonetheless, Canada's previous engagement with the Asia-Pacific region has been underpinned by a concern over the direction of US strategic policy in the region.⁵⁵

The United States has announced that it will split its naval assets 60-40 between the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans, respectively, by 2020,⁵⁶ and recently Canadian military observers have debated repositioning Canadian naval assets from Halifax, NS, to Esquimalt, BC, to reflect the growing importance of the Asia-Pacific region. While the traditional configuration of Canadian naval assets once made sense, it is now the Pacific theatre that is becoming increasingly volatile – the Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Australians and Americans, among others, are all beefing up their fleets. It is logical to accompany Canada's gradual economic shift towards the Pacific with the requisite defence resources. For such a repositioning to occur, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) would need to relocate a greater share of its frigates, destroyers and submarines to the West Coast in order to have the capacity to



engage effectively in the Pacific theatre. Yet, despite this discussion, there has been no decisive shift in priorities for the RCN.⁵⁷ Realistically, the RCN is not a large navy. A fleet repositioning would not alter the strategic balance in the Pacific, but it would send an important signal to both the United States and Canada's Asia-Pacific allies.

The Canadian contribution would not be decisive in any potential conflict in the Asia-Pacific region, but all signs are pointing to a future in which the United States requires its allies to share a greater burden of military responsibility. Repositioning submarines to the West Coast could lend a hand to Canada's allies in the Pacific region and open the door to a permanent Canadian presence overseas, as "[m]ost of our allies in the region are increasingly fixated on anti-submarine warfare."⁵⁸ Indeed, maritime territorial disputes and, as a result, the acquisition of naval assets by various states in the region characterize the security situation in the Asia-Pacific region. Thus, the RCN presents Canada with the greatest capacity with which it can contribute to stability and engage with the region. Canada should not base its entire naval policy on the worst-case assumption of potential Sino-American war, but it should prepare and assist the United States in its re-engagement with the region and prepare for the possibility – or eventuality – of greater strategic competition with China.⁵⁹

Towards the Future: Canada's Place in US-China Relations

Canada and the United States share values, strategic interests and visions of the world order. Despite these ties, free-riding on the US re-engagement with the Asia-Pacific region would be erroneous. Canada cannot assume that on every policy issue its interests in the region will be harmonious with those of the United States. For example, James Manicom has pointed out that there are two areas in which Canadian and American policy diverge. First, Canada's engagement with Asia-Pacific is driven by a desire to acquire a share of a growing market and lessen Canada's economic dependence on the United States, as doubts persist about the reliability of US markets for Canadian energy exports. Second, while closer economic ties with China and the region will not initiate a break in Canada-US relations, deepening economic interdependence with China could undermine Canada's willingness to support the United States on tough regional security issues in the Asia-Pacific region. Noticeably, Canada has been relatively silent on navigational freedoms in the region, which is a primary security concern between the United States and China in East Asia.⁶⁰ Accordingly, Canadian strategy for the region must not focus solely on economic engagement or military capabilities but also on diplomacy, specifically, maritime diplomacy.

Repositioning the Canadian naval fleet is one method to highlight the growing importance of the Pacific theatre; Canada can complement this move by strengthening bilateral ties with Asia-Pacific states as opposed to concentrating solely on multilateral mechanisms. Multilateral mechanisms will continue to help Canada advance its agenda but strengthening bilateral relations with countries in Asia-Pacific will also facilitate an exchange of views on issues of common interest, discussions on future defence engagement between Canada and countries in the region, and overall practical cooperation between the Canadian military and the states in the region. Improvements in Canada-China bilateral defence relations are a good step in this direction. Agreements between the two countries, such as the establishment of a Defence Coordination Dialogue and a Cooperation Plan Initiative between the



People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Canada's Defence Team, will help guide defence-related issues and foster understanding on defence issues of mutual concern. Canada has pursued additional bilateral arrangements with other states in the region, such as the 2010 Canada-Japan Joint Declaration on Political, Peace and Security Cooperation, and the Mutual Support Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Canada and South Korea.⁶¹ These are appropriate steps as bilateral connections are likely to remain the most common instrument in the region's security architecture for the foreseeable future. A report from the Center for a New America Security concluded that over the past decade Asia-Pacific security ties have been characterized by a "diverse array of bilateral security ties.... Regional actors are integrating with each other in unprecedented ways, from India training Vietnamese submariners to Japan's first security agreement outside the U.S.-Japan alliance (signed with Australia) to countries turning to their neighbors for arms." In short, governments in the region have deepened their political, security and economic relationships with like-minded states.⁶²

Before Canada engages in dialogue with Asia-Pacific states, it is imperative for Canadian foreign policy-makers to outline clear objectives for strategy towards China and the region. The Canadian think tank Asia-Pacific Foundation has noted, "The hardest challenge for Canada ... has been to define clear objectives and commit the resources necessary to become a significant player" in the region.⁶³ Compared to the United States, and many key Canadian allies in Asia, Canada has not articulated any clear strategic priorities for the region aside from expanding economic engagement. Contemporary Canadian debates about China's rise have only recently begun to discuss the military and security implications.⁶⁴ This is striking considering that China's defence expenditures now stand at \$166 billion for 2013 and between 2003 and 2012, China's military spending rose by 175 per cent, the largest increase for that period among the world's top 15 spenders.⁶⁵ The discussion, however, has not evolved into any clear policy pronouncements. Because of the scepticism many states in the Asia-Pacific region harbour about the prospect of Canada being a long-term player there, it is imperative that Canadian policy-makers articulate the geopolitical logic of Canada's Asia-Pacific security policy – that is, Canada must convince countries in the region why it is in Canada's interest to get involved in their affairs. Canada has found itself on the sidelines of many key Asian initiatives including the Shangri-La Dialogue, several ASEAN-related activities and, until fall 2012, the Trans-Pacific Partnership. While it is convenient to consider Canada a "Pacific nation," Canada remains militarily negligible in the region and, so far, unwilling publicly to address tough questions concerning security in the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, it follows that other states in the region have difficulty thinking of Canada as an important player in their affairs.

Maritime diplomacy offers Canada an opportunity to enhance its profile in the region. With numerous Asian economies relying on seaborne trade, maritime security and counter-piracy efforts provide one avenue for Canada to enhance its cooperation with Asian countries – both traditional and non-traditional allies. A reinvigorated attempt at maritime diplomacy would focus on high-level military-to-military exchanges with a number of states in the region. Continuing naval cooperation with traditional Canadian allies such as Australia, Japan and South Korea must remain a priority, but Canadian naval cooperation, or at least strengthening defence relationships, must also incorporate non-traditional regional allies, such as China.⁶⁶ Enhancing bilateral military ties with traditional and non-traditional allies alike sets the foundation for Canada to join the region's institutional forums and, more important,



high-level military exchanges will establish a mechanism whereby Canada can discuss defence and security issues directly with the countries involved. This offers a venue for Canada to use diplomacy as a means to defuse any potential regional conflicts, as heightened regional tensions will also disrupt the regional stability on which Canada's economic strategy is predicated. Increasing bilateral ties with friends and foes alike not only facilitates communication and dialogue, it also grants Canada a voice – albeit a small voice for the time being – in the region's future development. As well, it demonstrates to states in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly to the Chinese, that Canada is not merely a proxy of the United States. Certainly, Canada will remain a close ally of the United States – there is no escaping this – but the Canada-US partnership should not curtail Canadian attempts to deepen and improve both economic and security relations with China. A diplomatically engaged Canada can only help further Canada-US mutual interests in the Asia-Pacific region, and Canada should not rely on the United States to accomplish its foreign policy goals.

To be sure, a Canada that pursues bilateral engagement with Asia-Pacific states will still be mindful of US foreign policy preferences. While Canada-US interests may diverge on certain issues, because of Canada's deep economic and military integration with the United States, Canadian foreign policy towards China and the Asia-Pacific region will evolve within the shadow of American strategic rebalancing.⁶⁷ This does not mean that Canada must adopt a band-wagoning strategy in regards to US policy towards the region. Canada can still aim to reinforce its ties with Asia-Pacific states in hopes of enhancing Canadian interests. Indeed, Canada's overall objectives for the region can be best served by initiating a formal and permanent bilateral dialogue with the United States that focuses on US objectives for Asia, and China in particular. The recent signing of a Canada-US Asia-Pacific Cooperation Framework will certainly increase mutual efforts in the region by “foster[ing] ties among our respective military attaches in the region as well as improv[ing] coordination for high-level visits and military-to-military activities where appropriate.”⁶⁸ Certainly, identifying US priorities towards the Asia-Pacific region will better inform Canada's strategy for the region and highlight specific areas for collaboration, as well as potential tension.⁶⁹ Coordinating future policy with the United States and establishing bilateral ties with Asia-Pacific states can help Canada work effectively within its own limitations and within the constraints of the US role in the region.

Conclusion

In understanding US-China relations there are two competing schools of thought: those who claim that the United States is in decline and will eventually be surpassed by China; and those who argue that the United States will remain the preeminent power in global politics for the foreseeable future. For the latter, the twenty-first century will be another American century, but the literature on this issue is mixed. The ‘declinists’ are confident that the United States will never again experience the global dominance it enjoyed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Those days are over. In contrast, ‘revivalists’ refute the notion of US decline and explain why the United States will remain an unrivalled global force. To these scholars, the US economy remains more dynamic, its citizens much wealthier and its military more powerful than its nearest economic competitor, China. Therefore, China is rising, but it is a long way from catching up to the United States.



While debates simmer over a possible power transition between the United States and China, there is wide consensus that the re-emergence of China and the rise of the Asia-Pacific region in general will influence the trajectory of Canadian foreign policy. Canada has pursued deeper economic engagement with the region but the requisite security and institutional commitments have not followed. This paper proposed that Canada continue to engage with the Asia-Pacific region but do so with a multi-dimensional approach – not solely economic, but also military and diplomatic. The RCN presents Canada with one avenue in which to pursue maritime diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region but Canada has yet to reposition its naval assets to reflect the growing importance of the region. Canada is, however, in the nascent stages of deepening defence relations between the Canadian military and defence establishments in Asia-Pacific. While the future of Canada's Asia-Pacific policy will develop in the shadow of US foreign policy for the region, there will be areas in which Canadian and American interests conflict. To this end, Canada must not be viewed as a free-rider on US initiatives, nor must Canada be perceived as a proxy of the United States. It is important for Canada to devote the necessary resources to this important region and, while working in conjunction with the United States, Canada must also pursue an independent foreign policy, one that advances Canada's economic and security interests, has clear strategic objectives and demonstrates to Asia-Pacific states that Canada is ready to re-engage with the region for the long term. To become a true Pacific player Canada will have to diversify its strategy for the Asia-Pacific region and display a willingness to stay engaged there. The task is difficult but necessary if Canada wants to be taken seriously in the Asia-Pacific region.



NOTES

- ¹ Lee Kuan Yew quoted in Nicholas D. Kristof, "The Rise of China," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 5 (November-December 1993): 74.
- ² The term "revivalists" is borrowed from Michael Cox, "Whatever Happened to American Decline? International Relations and the New United States Hegemony," *New Political Economy*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2001): 313. In his article, Cox uses the term to describe the authors who in the 1990s inspired self-confidence in the United States in response to the declinists' arguments of the 1980s.
- ³ National Intelligence Council, "Mapping the Global Future: Report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project," Washington 2004: 47; National Intelligence Council, "Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World," Washington, 2008: 7, 30; Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008): 125; For overviews of this economic shift and its possible geopolitical consequences see, Bill Emmott, *Rivals: How the Power Struggle between China, India, and Japan Will Shape Our Next Decade* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2008); James Kyngé, *China Shakes the World: A Titan's Rise and Troubled Future -- and the Challenge for America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006); and William H. Overholt, *Asia, America, and the Transformation of Geopolitics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- ⁴ See, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Twenty-First Century Will Not Be a 'Post-American' World," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (2012): 215-217; Roger C. Altman, "The fall and rise of the West: Why America and Europe will emerge stronger from the financial crisis," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 1 (January-February 2013); and George Friedman, *The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century* (New York: Doubleday, 2009).
- ⁵ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011): 202.
- ⁶ Robert Jervis, "The Remaking of a Unipolar World," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Summer 2006): 7.
- ⁷ Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008): 2.
- ⁸ See, Bruce Russett, "The Mysterious Case of Vanishing Hegemony; or, is Mark Twain Really Dead?" *International Organization*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Spring 1985): 207-231, esp. 208.
- ⁹ Christopher Layne, "China's Challenge to US Hegemony," *Current History*, Vol. 107, No. 705 (January 2008): 13; Christopher Layne, "The Waning of U.S. Hegemony: Myth or Reality? A Review Essay," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Summer 2009): 163; "China's economic growth at 7.5% in April to June period," *BBC News*, 15 July 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-23310975> (accessed 16 July 2013).
- ¹⁰ Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power*: 180-181; See also, Ashley Tellis, Janice Bially, Christopher Layne and Melissa McPherson, "Measuring National Power in the Postindustrial Age," RAND, Santa Monica, 2000: chapters. 2-4.
- ¹¹ Josef Joffe, "The Default Power: The False Prophecy of America's Decline," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 5 (September-October 2009): 27; "World Bank cuts China growth forecast," *BBC News*, 13 June 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-22883830> (accessed 20 June 2013); Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out Of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008): 40; World Bank, "GDP per capita (current US\$)," <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD> (accessed 1 August 2013). All figures are in US dollars.
- ¹² "A Slow-Burning Fuse: A Special Report on Ageing Populations," *The Economist*, 27 June 2009, <http://www.economist.com/node/13888045> (accessed 28 June 2013); China's one-child policy is to be blamed for its rapidly aging population. The policy has also led to a dramatic imbalance in the number of males versus females in China. See, Wang Fend, "China's Population Destiny: The Looming Crisis," *Current History*, Vol. 109, No. 728 (September 2010): 244-246. For a debate on the future of Chinese growth see, Minxin Pei and Jonathan Anderson, "The Color of China," *National Interest*, No. 100 (March-April 2009): 13-32. For a detailed analysis of the many internal challenges facing China see, Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Eva Paus, Penelope B. Prime and Jon



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¹³ Mark L. Haas, "A Geriatric Peace? The Future of U.S. Power in a World of Aging Populations," *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Summer 2007): 113, 139.

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¹⁵ Robert Pape, "Empire Falls," *National Interest* Vol. 99 (January-February 2009): 30.

¹⁶ Pape, "Empire Falls," 21; Leon Panetta, "Shangri-La Security Dialogue: As Delivered by Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta, Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore, Saturday, June 02, 2012," US Department of Defense, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1681> (accessed 15 August 2013); "US begins government shutdown as budget deadline passes," *BBC News*, 1 October 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-24343698> (accessed 1 October 2013). Former US Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, and current U.S. Defense Secretary, Chuck Hagel, have both expressed US displeasure with the meager financial commitments by various NATO members. Gates and Hagel have made it clear that if European states are unwilling to pay an equitable share for their defence and security, shrink the gap in defence capabilities among NATO members, and bear the burdens of alliance commitments, the United States will be unwilling to shoulder the bulk of these responsibilities – one remedy for those concerned about overstretch. See, Robert M. Gates, "The Security and Defense Agenda (Future of NATO)," US Department of Defense, 10 June 2011, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1581> (accessed 29 December 2013); Chuck Hagel, "Department of Defense News Briefing with Secretary Hagel at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium," US Department of Defense, 5 June 2013, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5253> (accessed 29 December 2013).

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⁶³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁴ Manicom, “Canadian debates about China’s rise,” 287; Elinor Sloan, “U.S.-China military and security developments: Implications for Canada,” *International Journal*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (Spring 2011): 265-283.

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