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China's rise from a cloistered, inwardly-focused, agrarian Communist country to an internationally engaged, economically vibrant, authoritarian country is the great story of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Lifting hundreds of millions of its people out of poverty, China has engaged in the largest modernization and urbanization project in history. For example, between 2011 and 2013, China used more cement than the United States used in the entire twentieth century.[1] Keeping apace with China's economic, social, and political evolution since reforms were initiated in 1979 has been a military modernization program that has seen double-digit budget growth for over fifteen years.[2] China is now the world's second largest defense spender, behind only the United States (though by a considerable margin). While still limited in its ability to project power, China has made great strides in closing the gap between itself and the modern, high-tech info-centric militaries of the United States and many of its NATO allies. To accomplish this, China has focused primarily on Anti-Access and Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities. A2/AD uses short- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles and information-based warfare (space and cyber-based, for example), among other capabilities, to limit and frustrate the ability of an outside power (read: the U.S.) from intervening in a conflict, for example, one between Taiwan and China. A2/AD is a strategy meant to reduce

[1] Ana Swanson, "How China used more cement in 3 years than the U.S. did in the entire 20th Century," *Washington Post* (online), March 24, 2015. http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2015/03/24/how-china-used-more-cement-in-3-years-than-the-u-s-did-in-the-entire-20th-century/

[2] Adam P. Liff & Andrew S. Erickson, "Demystifying China's Defence Spending: Less Mysterious in the Aggregate," *The China Quarterly* 216 (December 2013), 808.

the asymmetry in capabilities between the U.S. and China, or, to borrow from political scientist Thomas Christensen, to "pos[e] problems without catching up,"[3] should China need to.

In response to China's 'challenge,' the United States has reasserted its presence in the region. The Obama Administration's 'Pacific Pivot' was announced in 2011 through a series of speeches by high-ranking officials, including one by President Barack Obama in the Australian parliament, and most notably in an article in *Foreign Policy* written by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.[4] Comprised of enhanced economic, political, and military engagement in the Asia-Pacific region, the policy is seen partially as recognition of the strategic and economic importance of the region for the United States (and the world), and partially (if not mostly) as a response to China's rise and the uncertainty surrounding its long-term strategic intentions and ambitions. The pivot – which has since been re-branded as a 'rebalancing' – is a strategy which has been described by current Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter as "prudent hedging."[5] It is within this strategic and political context that Elinor Sloan offers insights into how the emerging rivalry between the U.S. and China affects Canada and its own ambitions in the Asia-Pacific region. And as tensions between China and its neighbors rise in the South and East China Seas over disputed territories, the article offers a timely contribution. For a region of the world described by the government of Canada as a "key priority," the lack of any formal response to the situation is problematic.[6] As Canada aims to increase its influence in the region, particularly where crisis mediation is concerned, this silence is unlikely to go unnoticed by Canada's allies and partners in the region. Sloan's article directly addresses this disconnect between stated objectives/ambitions and actual engagement in Canada's Asia-Pacific policy.

The latest in a series of publications focused on China's military modernization, America's Pacific rebalancing, and their impact on Canada,[7] Sloan's article is succinct and informative about Canada's ambitions and capabilities in the Asia-Pacific. Sloan begins by outlining the strategic context for America's rebalancing in the region, offering a concise accounting of the military aspects of the policy on both the strategic and operational levels before shifting focus to their implications for Canada. The central argument is that Canada lacks the naval capabilities required to bring its economic and political ambitions in the region to fruition. What is more, the country has yet to offer either a formal policy response to the U.S. rebalancing or a comprehensive policy for Canada's engagement in the region. Despite this lack of a formal policy statement,

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[3] Thomas J. Christensen, "Posing Problems without Catching Up," *International Security* 24:4 (Spring 2001), 5-40.

[4] Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, November 2011.

[5] Ashton B. Carter, "Comments on Chen Zhiya's "Shaping China-U.S. Military Relations," in Richard Rosecrance & Gu Guoliang, eds., *Power and Restraint: A Shared Vision for the U.S.-China Relationship*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2009), 61.

[6] "Canada and Asia-Pacific," Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada. http://www.international.gc.ca/asia_pacific-asie_pacifique/index.aspx?lang=eng&_ga=1.8205554.1156303849.1433907391

[7] For example, see: Elinor Sloan, "China's Strategic Behavior," Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, June 2010; "US-China military and security developments: Implications for Canada," *International Journal* 66:2 (June 2011), 265 – 283.

Sloan draws out "a particular strategic narrative," wherein Canada "wants to be in a position where it can effectively contribute to crisis de-escalation," by "playing an honest broker or mediatory role," (276). In the event of an actual crises, however, Sloan argues that Canada would have to make a choice "between a neutral stance with some degree of mediatory influence, or a historically more likely decision to contribute forces to a US-led coalition," (279). Given such an option, Canada is more inclined to choose the latter. The silver lining for Canadian military planners, Sloan writes, is that "both scenarios require the same attribute: credible and capable maritime forces" (279). The problem, of course, is that "credible and capable maritime forces" are precisely what Canada lacks, meaning neither neutrality nor direct engagement are actually viable policy options

Relying mostly on interviews with senior naval officers, both active-duty and retired, Sloan's article focuses on policy implications rather than engaging in a theoretical debate. In this respect, it is very effective. Sloan traces Canada's regional engagement and ambitions from the Cold War until the present, noting that "Canada has had a long but inconsistent security interest and involvement in the Asia-Pacific region," (273). It is an inconsistency which persists. Sloan describes Canada's naval strategy as primarily outlined in the 2008 *Canada First Defence Strategy*, which detailed an ambitious shipbuilding program to replace Canada's aging fleet of destroyers, frigates, submarines, and Arctic patrol ships. She continues with an overview of how these ambitions have since been tempered by cost-overruns and general budgetary restructuring.

After detailing the many setbacks the RCN has faced with respect to its current fleet and its expected replacements, Sloan writes, "how Canada has arrived at a situation where it will have no destroyers or supply ships for the better part of a decade is a difficult question to answer and will not be discussed in detail here," (281). In so doing, Sloan misses an opportunity to engage in the underlying problems in Canada's Asia-Pacific strategy. Ultimately, Sloan concludes, "the issue lies in a lack of appreciation at the highest levels of government of the strategic importance of navies for security and stability and therefore economic prosperity," (281). If Canadian policymakers lack this appreciation today, what will change when the new RCN fleet arrives? Avoiding the issue means that an important link between policy and capability is lost. To make an argument centered on requiring a capable and credible navy without detailing *why* Canada does not actually have such capabilities seems incomplete.

Sloan notes that the Asia-Pacific is, culturally, "an area of the world that leans toward realism and realpolitik: being there with concrete assets is what matters and what opens doors in the diplomatic (and economic) realm," (280). This helps to explain Canada's inability to gain membership in political/diplomatic forums like the East Asian Summit or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-plus meeting of defence ministers, as Sloan rightly points out. Canada lacks the ability to provide the material capabilities required to position itself as the 'honest broker' it wishes to be and will be unable to do so until 2020, at the earliest (282). It is here where Sloan misses another opportunity to engage in the wider debate about the strategic environment taking shape in the Asia-Pacific region. She argues that once Canada's navy has been "recapitalized" it should contribute more assets to the region to establish either a mediatory influence or a warfighting capability (285). However, by the time Canada is able to properly engage the region, the ability to help shape the strategic environment will have been missed. Instead, Canada will be contributing to a security architecture it had little-to-no role in creating, which further limits its voice in regional affairs. What the implications of such delayed engagement might mean for Canada's Asia-Pacific ambitions are not addressed. This point becomes all the more important in light of Sloan's seeming optimism in the RCN's ability to deliver its new fleet on time. On the one hand, Sloan notes the current replacement schedule and its many delays and downsizing (280-281). On the other, she seems willing to entertain the notion that the expected

platform replacements in 2020 will arrive as planned (or close to that date). If anything, the Canadian government's inconsistency in delivering new defence platforms 'as promised' should invite skepticism of Canada's ability to follow through with its plans to engage the Asia-Pacific region in the future. An example of this disconnect is Canada's submarine fleet, which consists of four boats procured from the British government in 1998. Sloan uses the submarine fleet as an example of a Canadian naval capability that can be deployed to further its ambitions in the region. Noting Canada's plans to upgrade all four boats with sonars and torpedoes that are on-par with those of the U.S. Virginia-class nuclear-propelled submarines, Sloan cites one Canadian submarine, the *HMCS Windsor*, which "will be back at sea with these capabilities by the end of 2014," (284). The *Windsor*, like the rest of Canada's submarine fleet, is emblematic of Canada's wider naval troubles. Of the four boats, only the *HMCS Victoria* is currently capable of firing torpedoes.[8] The *HMCS Chicoutimi* recently returned to the water for sea trials after spending nearly ten years dry-docked after a fire (which killed a sailor). The fourth boat, the *HMCS Corner Brook*, is out of commission until at least 2016 after a collision with the sea floor tore off two torpedo doors and shattered the bow. And the *Windsor* was taken out of the water in March 2014 due to an engine failure just eighteen months after a $209 million, five-year refit – a refit which was supposed to have taken only two years and to have cost $45 million.[9] It has since returned to the water, though under restricted conditions, after a $17.2 million repair.[10] So while submarines would be a useful tool for furthering Canada's aims in the Asia-Pacific, the fleet has yet been able to sustain an operational tempo commensurate with Canada's policy objectives. The *HMCS Windsor*, for example, was only at sea for 174 days between November 2012 and March 2014.[11]

The difficulties the RCN has faced with its submarines, like the delays and adjustments suffered by the RCN shipbuilding program, are well known. Sloan does not fully incorporate these realities into her analysis, however. Instead, the article focuses on how the RCN of 2020 (or whenever it is fully capable) should use its resources to effectively engage the Asia-Pacific region. That is certainly a reasonable focus, and to that end Sloan's article is very effective. However, when placed alongside the reluctance to delve into the reasons why the RCN is in the shape it is in, the failure to directly link Canada's naval realities with its aspirations leaves the article lacking some depth. Rather than outline the U.S. 'pivot' in as much detail, which in many respects is secondary to the central argument, Sloan's article would have been better served by engaging in some of the underlying causes of Canada's naval predicament and its likely consequences on future capabilities vis-à-vis the nation's ambitions.

Overall, Sloan continues to provide timely, insightful, and policy-relevant analyses which Canadian policymakers should carefully consider. Indeed, Sloan's article helps fill a gap in the Canadian foreign policy and academic landscape, which seems woefully lacking in in-depth consideration of Canada's role in what is

[8] Rob Gordon, "Submarine HMCS Windsor shore bound after engine failure," *CBC News* (online), February 5, 2014. http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/submarine-hmcs-windsor-shore-bound-after-engine-failure-1.2524501

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Molly Segal, "Submarine HMCS Windsor back in water, with restrictions," *CBC News* (online), January 13, 2015. http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/submarine-hmcs-windsor-back-in-water-with-restrictions-1.2899186

[11] Segal, "Submarine HMCS Windsor back in water, with restrictions."

likely to be the most important strategic and economic region of the twenty-first Century. While there are dedicated 'China watchers' in Canada, the policy and academic communities engaged in international relations have yet to fully embrace the Asia-Pacific as a long-term reality for Canada – an ambivalence reflected by Canada's historically inconsistent engagement in the region and the current lack of a formal, cohesive Asia-Pacific policy from the government. As Sloan notes, even America's rebalancing to the region "has not elicited an official government response," (284). While this could be a strategic move on the part of the government and its desire to position itself as a neutral mediator in the region, it is still surprising that Canada has not responded more directly to a major foreign policy shift by its most important strategic partner, the United States. Until Canada is able to reconcile its ambitions with its material capabilities, particularly its navy, it is unlikely such a policy will emerge. Sloan is correct to argue that regardless of Canada's role in the region, be it mediator or warfighter, the country requires "capable and credible naval forces" (285). What is missing, however, is more insight into why that is not a reality for the RCN and what the long-term implications are for Canadian foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region.

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