

KEY POINTS

- Canada's continued economic prosperity relies on the successful diversification of its markets. This requires a comprehensive strategy to improve trade ties with the Asia-Pacific, given the Government of Canada's argument that strong economic growth has made that region a key priority.
- Canada can strengthen its relationship with the Asia-Pacific in its humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR). Over the past three decades, this region has experienced the sharpest rise in the frequency and impact of natural disasters. These non-traditional security threats expose people and assets to increased risks, making HADR a key security matter in the region.
- To improve its economic and diplomatic standing in the Asia-Pacific, Canada should adopt a "whole-of-crisis" approach to HADR. This entails focusing on disaster awareness and preparedness, as well as crisis response capability to help address regional security needs.

DISASTERS AND DIVIDENDS: AN ASIA-PACIFIC STRATEGY FOR CANADA

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ACRONYMS

AADMER	ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response
ADMM	ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting
ADMM+	ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus
AHA Centre	ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance
ARDEX	ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
DART	Disaster Assistance Response Team
DFATD	Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development
DiREx	Disaster Relief Exercise
ERAT	Emergency Rapid Assessment Team
HADR	humanitarian assistance and disaster response
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

INTRODUCTION

Canada has demonstrated a strong interest in strengthening economic partnerships across the Asia-Pacific, having recently expanded its diplomatic presence in the region through the establishment of a mission to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and reaffirmed its desire to join such forums as the East Asia Summit. While Canadian officials routinely find themselves simply passing through Asian capitals, Canada's market share in the Asia-Pacific is below potential and Canada lags behind in comprehensive trade agreements signed with the region's states (Dobson 2012). As Canada

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seeks to expand trade ties in the Asia-Pacific, its active engagement must come not only through sustained presence in economic forums, but also through tangible investment in the region's security architecture.

Canada has been encouraged by its Asia-Pacific partners to further its involvement in "soft" regional security matters. Former ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan effectively summarized the regional perception of Canada in 2012, noting that, "The goodwill is there. The name is there. But you don't see the sustained effort of trying to project it out" (quoted in Clark 2012). By taking such encouragement as an invitation to deepen its engagement in the Asia-Pacific, Canada will clearly demonstrate a commitment to the region's resilience and a willingness to foster the sort of goodwill necessary to build stronger economic partnerships.

Over the past three decades, the Asia-Pacific has experienced the sharpest rise in the frequency and impact of natural disasters globally. These tragedies offer Canada an avenue for constructive engagement in the region. HADR programming in the Asia-Pacific offers a productive means to maximize Canada's diplomatic visibility, even under conditions of fiscal restraint. Canada is well equipped to contribute to the region's HADR infrastructure given its track record of demonstrated ability, most recently during Operation Renaissance in the Philippines.

WHY ASIA-PACIFIC, WHY NOW?

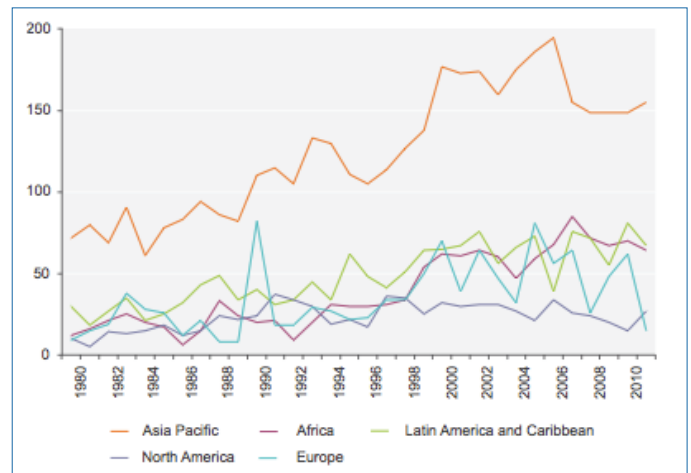
The Asia-Pacific region is currently in the midst of brisk economic integration, marked by a proliferation of preferential trade and economic partnership agreements — both bilateral and multilateral. As the region's economic architecture develops, its diverse collection of emerging markets will continue to gain dominance in

global trade. GDP in these markets is expected to grow by 6.4 percent annually to 2020, compared with 2.5 percent GDP growth in the United States and just 1.3 percent growth in the euro zone (Ernst & Young 2012). This trend will endure, as Asia-Pacific states feel compelled to conclude their own agreements with critical markets in order to avoid marginalization as part of broader trade negotiations (Zhang and Shen 2011). These dynamics represent a crucial opportunity for Canada to place itself on the radar of a region powering global economic growth.

Canada's continued economic prosperity is tied to the successful diversification of its markets. While it is crucial for Canada to maintain strong relationships with its trading partners in the West, the future prosperity of the rising East cannot be ignored. What increasingly matters is not where markets currently are, but where they will be in the future. Opportunities will emerge for Canada as Asia-Pacific states move up the value chain to demand more technologically sophisticated imports (Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development [DFATD] 2013). This may also carry the additional benefit of smoothing out some of the volatility associated with Canada's current reliance on natural resource-based exports (Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada 2014). Given constraints on resources and political attention, a focus on the Asia-Pacific region offers the greatest return on equity for Canada in its global economic dealings.

Economic aspirations in the Asia-Pacific cannot, however, be viewed as independent from regional security considerations. This is a region in which territorial disputes not only sharpen rhetoric and increase tensions, but also threaten to undermine prospects for sustained economic cooperation. Canada's sensitivity to this reality is critical given the complexity of overlapping disputes. The shift of Canada's future economic prosperity to the

FIGURE 1: OBSERVED INCREASE IN REPORTED NATURAL DISASTERS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION



Source: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) (2013, 15).

Asia-Pacific renders the continued political and military stability of this region central to national interest. If Canada can successfully contribute to the regional security architecture of the Asia-Pacific, economic benefits can be captured and sustained.

ECONOMIC RE-ENGAGEMENT THROUGH HADR

In order to strengthen economic relations with strategic partners in the Asia-Pacific region, Canada needs to demonstrate that it is tackling a core security challenge faced by the region. HADR constitutes a field in which Canada can make a valuable contribution in addressing the non-traditional threats posed by natural disasters — both in terms of proactive capacity building and reactive crisis response. This security issue has figured prominently on the agenda of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) (Dalpino 2014). ASEAN has also encouraged Canada to further its involvement in soft

regional security matters such as “providing expertise to...deal with disasters” (Clark 2012).

This area of engagement presents Canada with a tangible means to build synergies with regional partners to position itself as a vital asset, reliable partner and diplomatic friend. Technical, logistical and operational gaps in HADR capabilities have been observed in some of the region’s most recent responses to unfolding crises — most notably the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan, the November 2013 typhoon that befell the Philippines and the March 2014 disappearance of Malaysian Airlines MH370, which ultimately became the region’s largest multinational search-and-rescue operation ever (Neuman 2014). The past 30 years have seen a sharp rise in the frequency and impact of natural disasters in the Asia-Pacific — a trend only expected to continue (UN ESCAP 2013).

These disasters impose a high toll on the populations in affected areas and curtail basic economic development in the most vulnerable countries. The recent expansion of populations and economies across the region has exposed more people and assets to the hazards of natural disasters, with the resulting costs of physical losses and damages outpacing economic growth (Asian Development Bank 2013). Disasters also affect global supply chains, damaging core infrastructures and assets, while reducing outputs of the region into the global economy (UN ESCAP 2013). HADR is intrinsically tied to the economic development and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region. Greater Canadian involvement in this area will help foster tighter relations with the business communities, governments and peoples of several key global markets, including Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam.

An important avenue for increased engagement is presented by the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), of

which Canada is a member. The ARF has demonstrated significant interest in developing greater synergy in HADR programming between the region’s multiple security institutions (ARF 2013). Expanding involvement in this context would strengthen Canada’s case for membership in more exclusive regional gatherings, such as the East Asia Summit and the ADMM-Plus (ADMM+). This will in turn consolidate Canada’s image as a vital asset and reliable partner in the region, enhancing the country’s profile for future trade negotiations.

A WHOLE-OF-CRISIS APPROACH TO HADR

Successful HADR programming affects both sides of a disaster scenario: proactive capacity building and reactive crisis response. Canada should adopt a “whole-of-government”¹ approach to leverage the comparative advantages of all relevant domestic institutions, as well as a whole-of-crisis approach to facilitate sustained patterns of engagement that outlast the acuteness of provisional circumstances. DFATD, Public Safety Canada, the Canadian Armed Forces, and relevant public and private parties should share their respective HADR expertise to holistically and strategically enhance Canada’s involvement in proactive disaster risk management, e-navigation and emergency crisis response. Building resilience at both the national and regional levels — in collaboration with Asia-Pacific partners — will contribute to regional security and stability while also facilitating the establishment of long-lasting and mutually beneficial trading relations.

1 A whole-of-government approach establishes a collaborative system across public service departments and agencies, which maximizes the use of available resources to produce high-level outcomes and reach shared goals (Percy and Fellows 2009).

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

An important first step is to support the development of a better understanding of the risks associated with natural disasters among national and regional actors. More precise and accurate information will inform disaster risk management and capacity-building initiatives (Thuzar 2013). Asia-Pacific countries need to improve cooperation in the collection and sharing of data on hazards, exposures, vulnerabilities, losses and risk mapping to better identify risks and subsequently mitigate them prior to disasters. Institutions like the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre) currently exist to facilitate the circulation of disaster risk data between member states, as well as with regional and international partners in crisis situations. However, these bodies have been underutilized by states in the region. Canada is well positioned to serve as a valuable asset in enhancing information gathering and sharing mechanisms, given that undertakings of this type are complex, time-consuming and require technical expertise and funding (Organisation for Economic Co-ordination and Development [OECD] 2013).

Disaster risk assessment is an area particularly ripe for regional and international collaboration given that the number of experts capable of properly estimating the impact and extent of damage to assets is quite limited, and commonly agreed upon standards for damage estimation are required (*ibid.*). The nature and level of risk for each country must also be constantly re-evaluated, given the dynamism of the threats posed by natural disasters (Thuzar 2013).

In terms of disaster preparedness, there is also a need to further implement and operationalize the HADR mechanisms created by regional institutions like ASEAN. Several Southeast Asian countries are struggling

to implement the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), which aims to reduce the losses due to disasters in the region and facilitate coordinated joint responses to crisis situations (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction 2013). AADMER encourages member countries to designate a national focus point for the sharing of information on disaster risk management and identify competent authorities for the approval of foreign emergency disaster response initiatives. However, such mechanisms were not effectively used in response to recent disasters, such as the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan and the 2013 typhoon that struck the Philippines. Proactive civil-military coordination mechanisms should also be consolidated regionally to prepare for the rapid deployment of military assets when needed in crisis situations.

The ARF has indicated that it welcomes co-sponsors willing to fund and host projects developed by lead countries on specific HADR areas of engagement, as well as project proposals. Thus, an institutional space is open for Canada to provide valuable assistance to the region, build stronger ties with key ASEAN countries and enhance its reputation as a committed partner on regional security matters (ARF 2012).

E-NAVIGATION COMMERCIALIZATION

A whole-of-crisis approach to HADR programming also requires building forward capacity ahead of unexpected crises through the transfer of technological know-how. E-navigation refers to the harmonized collection, integration, exchange and presentation of maritime information onboard and ashore by electronic means to enhance berth-to-berth navigation and related services (Hagen 2012). It has proven instrumental in search-and-

rescue coordination and humanitarian response (Baldauf et al. 2011). E-navigation is also central to facilitating and increasing maritime trade, providing tangible benefits to trading partners.

Canada has taken a leadership role in e-navigation development and implementation at the International Maritime Organization, having built significant technical and operational expertise across a variety of maritime environments. This has included the deployment of automatic information and long-range identification tracking systems, the successful completion of multi-jurisdictional pilot projects across the country and the leadership of international working groups (Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Canadian Coast Guard and Maritime Services Directorate 2008). The Canadian e-navigation experience has been marked by significant collaboration with key stakeholders, particularly in the private sector.

Given the systematic growth in Asia-Pacific maritime traffic — and the corresponding propensity for crises, whether accidental or malignant — Canada is well equipped to take a leadership role in the promotion of international collaboration on regional e-navigation. Canada holds specific expertise in the areas of equipment standards, regulatory frameworks, personnel training, technical architecture, operational policies and communications technologies, spanning bilateral and multilateral environments.

Canada is also capable of lending much needed support to the harmonization of emerging e-navigation models in the Asia-Pacific through implementing agencies like Transport Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard. China represents one opportunity, as it develops one of the most comprehensive regional frameworks (Danish Maritime Authority 2013). Canada is well positioned to provide critical know-how on system integration, standardization

and data management — common obstacles that afflict emerging e-navigation models.

As an emerging area of technology transfer and subsequent capacity building, e-navigation represents a relatively depoliticized, commercially viable avenue to build forward capacity, alongside HADR operations, for unexpected crises needing an immediate response. In Canada, e-navigation development has seen sustained collaboration between port authorities, government agencies, professional associations, industry bodies and the private sector. The multi-stakeholder character of e-navigation lends itself exceptionally well to the dense institutional environment of the Asia-Pacific region.

CRISIS RESPONSE

Canada already contributes to crisis response in the Asia-Pacific, yet its demonstrated capabilities offer opportunities to become an even greater asset. The Canadian Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) provides an impactful tool for crisis response that is relatively uncontroversial compared to other possible uses of the Canadian Armed Forces in the region. These personnel are some of Canada's best representatives abroad, having saved thousands of lives in past deployments.

DART distinguished itself in 2013 during Operation Renaissance in the Philippines, with the first engineers' work commencing barely a week after Typhoon Haiyan struck. Three hundred and nineteen Canadian soldiers operated in the country for just over a month, during which they provided medical care and other humanitarian services to over 6,000 people (Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces 2014a). DART is a relatively low-cost tool to maintain. Its annual budget of CDN\$500,000 is among the lowest for

organizations within the Canadian Armed Forces (CBC 2010). While Operation Renaissance had an additional cost (to standard military costs) of over CDN\$30 million (Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces 2014b), this expense should be considered in the context of a massive international response to a cataclysm that inflicted billions of dollars in damages. There are opportunities for discretion offered by DART's modular nature, with the force being subdivided into different platoons and units. The size and expense of a deployment can be scaled according to need, as the amount of funding for each mission is determined by Parliament on a case-by-case basis.



Local citizens wrote "Thank You Canada" on the roof of their house to thank the Canadian Armed Forces for their contribution during Operation Renaissance in Roxas City, Philippines on December 12, 2013. Photograph by Marc-André Gaudreault, Canadian Armed Forces.

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Military involvement in HADR operations creates openings for the building of professional relationships. DART deployments require liaisons to provide local information, which is an opportunity for bridge building. Importantly, DART does not displace local disaster relief agencies, but complements their work by specializing in rapid-response services such as purifying drinking water and providing basic medical care in areas struck

by catastrophe (Canadian Armed Forces 2014). DART is a stopgap measure that helps a devastated area cope until local resources are fully mobilized.

Canada is also presented with other avenues for enhanced cooperation with regional partners in the area of crisis response. ASEAN operates a field Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ERAT), comparable to Canada's Interdepartmental Strategic Support Team, which scouts out an area prior to a DART deployment. ERAT members also participate in the annual ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX), alongside national agencies and invited observers. The ARF holds a comparable event, known as the Disaster Relief Exercise (DiREx). Previous DiREx events have brought together teams not only from ASEAN nations, but also Japan, the United States and the European Union (EU 2013). These HADR exercises increase the interoperability of regional and international military assets in preparation for future collaboration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Canada should support information sharing on past disasters to build up the regional inventory maintained by the AHA Centre and further promote its use for joint disaster monitoring and risk mapping. Canadian expertise in building and maintaining the Canadian Disaster Database could be shared with Asia-Pacific partners through workshops.

Canadian disaster management experts should leverage their experience to assist Southeast Asian countries struggling to implement the AADMER. These experts would be from the Canadian Forces or relevant government bodies, such as DFATD, depending on which areas of AADMER are being assisted, military or civil. Canada's national HADR framework was tested

with success during the 2011 Slave Lake fire and the 2013 floods in Alberta, and could serve as a model for partners in the region. Furthermore, Canada's DART team follows strict guidelines on humanitarian action and civil-military coordination, and therefore holds expertise that could be shared with other militaries and governments in the Asia-Pacific region to facilitate the use of military assets in crisis situations (Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces 2013). Canada should organize and participate in workshops, training sessions and joint exercises on this topic.

Canada should leverage its extensive experience in e-navigation development and implementation to build platforms for regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. Canada is well suited to provide expertise in the areas of regulatory frameworks, operational policies and communications technologies. The harmonization of emerging e-navigation models should receive Canadian support in the Asia-Pacific through implementing agencies like Transport Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard. The multi-stakeholder nature of the Canadian e-navigation experience provides Canada with the sort of system integration, standardization and data management know-how required in the Asia-Pacific.

DART's current operational capabilities need to be maintained and expanded as required to support its HADR missions overseas. DART can serve as the tip of Canada's diplomatic spear, helping establish Canada as a life-saving player in the region.

Canada should expand its engagement in Asia-Pacific HADR exercises by participating in the next installments of ARDEX and DiREx and supporting ERAT in training and equipment to enhance interoperability between regional crisis response partners.

CONCLUSION

Canada currently lacks a strategic approach to engagement in Asia-Pacific security programming, which in turn constitutes a barrier to closer economic ties in the region. Countries in the Asia-Pacific value commitment and dependability, which necessitates an increased effort on Canada's part to substantiate itself as an asset to regional security.

Implementing a new regional strategy on HADR provides Canada with an opportunity to build important connections with regional governments while steering clear of more controversial security matters. The brief's recommendations leverage Canada's unique assets and capabilities to become a constructive player in dealing with issues that matter to Asia-Pacific countries. A focus on HADR is particularly timely in light of Canada currently seeking invitation to the ADMM+, which has articulated an explicit HADR focus. If Canada can establish itself as an asset in this regard, the prospects for joining more exclusive regional forums will surely be improved.

If adopted, these recommendations will lay the groundwork for Canada emerging as a dependable, committed partner in Asia-Pacific security. These recommendations will in turn pay dividends for Canada's diplomatic and economic goals across the region.

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